The London School of Economics and Political Science

Competing for the Kaiser's Ear. The Struggle for Control over Germany's British Policy, 1898 – 1909

Michael F. Hemmersdorfer

A thesis submitted to the Department of International History of the London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Master of Philosophy
London, February 2022

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I declare that my thesis consists of 61112 words.

Abstract

The dissertation attempts to provide a structured account of the factional competition among German diplomats between 1898 and 1909. It will analyse how these rivalries impacted on Anglo-German relations during the period. The hypothesis of this work proposes that the centre of gravity in German foreign policy making shifted between 1898 and 1909 from the civilian opponents of the Emperor's interference in foreign affairs to the supporters of 'personal rule', and that this shift then allowed the navy to become the most influential agency in foreign policy making.

While the faction which resisted the Kaiser's meddling was strong when Bernhard von Bülow entered government in October 1897, its influence declined as the Foreign Secretary, who became Chancellor in 1900, consolidated his power and acted as the foremost champion of the Emperor's 'personal rule' in foreign affairs. By tying his political career to being the executive tool of the Kaiser's will, Bülow eventually paved the way for the navy to become the dominant factor of influence in Anglo-German relations. The civilian policy makers had thus lost their ability to determine the course of Germany's foreign affairs without constant consideration for the military branch most favoured by the emperor. Effectiveness of Germany's British policy was also conditioned by the strategic reassessment that British foreign policy underwent during the period under consideration

Table of Content

Acknowledgements

My warmest thanks go to Professor David Stevenson, my supervisor, to whose kindness, guidance and unshakeable patience I owe that I have managed to complete this dissertation in the first place.

I also owe much gratitude to Professor Alan Sked who encouraged me to embark on a research degree and supervised my progress until unfortunate circumstances forced me to interrupt my work.

I could never have undertaken this project and overcome the countless obstacles which presented themselves during its course without the unfaltering support and understanding of Silvia Hernández Reyes, my wife, who egged me on, regardless of all difficulties.

Roswitha S. Jaindl - née Skiebe, my mother, has taught me to appreciate history and first got me interested in the epoch of my research. She would have loved to see its result and would have doubtlessly made some keen observations. I dedicate this thesis to her memory.

Introduction

This dissertation attempts to provide a structured account of the factional competition among German diplomats between 1898 and 1908/9. It will analyse how these rivalries impacted on Anglo-German relations during the period. The hypothesis of this work proposes that the centre of gravity in German foreign policy making shifted between 1898 and 1908 from the civilian opponents of the Emperor's interference in foreign affairs to the supporters of 'personal rule' and that this shift then allowed the navy to become the most influential agency in foreign policy making. Beyond the scope of this work the hypothesis proposes a further shift of the centre of gravity towards the army, which began to dominate the policy choices of German diplomats by 1912/13.

While the faction which resisted the Kaiser's meddling was strong when Bernhard von Bülow entered government in October 1897, its influence declined as the Foreign Secretary, who became Chancellor in 1900, consolidated his power and acted as the foremost champion of the Emperor's 'personal rule' in foreign affairs. By tying his political career to being the executive tool of the Kaiser's will Bülow eventually paved the way for the navy to become the dominant factor of influence in Anglo-German relations. The civilian policy makers had thus lost their ability to determine the course of Germany's foreign affairs without constant consideration for the military branch most favoured by the Emperor. The effectiveness of Germany's British policy was also conditioned by the strategic reassessment that British foreign policy underwent during the period under consideration.

The present work is a truncated version of what was supposed to become a PhD thesis that would have covered the slightly longer period of 1898-1912. Whereas the research included here ends with Bülow's Chancellorship, its overarching hypothesis, which will be developed

further in the following historiographical section, spans the entire period originally envisioned. I therefore beg the reader for patience when the historiography considered below occasionally refers to events outside the scope of this thesis.

Historiography

The historiography on Anglo-German relations prior to the First World War neglects personal and factional rivalries among German policy makers. While occasionally mentioning the conflicts among individuals or government departments, it treats them as a side show to the greater pictures of the domestic or international political environment and belittles their influence on decision making. Paul Kennedy agrees that Germany's ruling elite was far from being a monolithic block and that differing personal preferences were a major factor influencing which course of action was taken in a particular case.[1] In his seminal work on the Anglo-German antagonism he nevertheless rejects the usefulness of studying the role of individuals or departments during that period because: "The stream of time […] possessed currents affecting the Anglo-German relations which few if any individuals could steer against".[2]

Despite the dominance of structural factors, it is hard to see how individuals and their affiliation could not have mattered at a time when the institutional set-up of imperial Germany in general and the Emperor's 'personal rule' in particular gave some members of the ruling elite ample room for personal initiatives to influence policies according to their own interests. The German army, according to a contemporary joke, regarded Russia as the

[1] Kennedy, P.: *The Kaiser and German Weltpolitik* . in: Röhl, J. et al*., Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations.* Cambridge, 1982, p. 153
[2] Kennedy, P.: *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, London* 1980, p. 434

enemy, the foreign ministry France, and the navy England.[3] Even if exaggerated, such competing views surely must have had some impact on policy making. And a change in the relative strength of their respective proponents might also result in adjustments of policy. Hence, rather than rational deliberations driven by anonymous forces and channelled by political procedures it was often individuals driven by personal ambitions and the desire to maximise the power of their respective faction who informed Germany's policies – always of course, against the backdrop of the domestic and international environments.

Keith Neilson criticizes the prevailing tendency in modern history writing to neglect the individual and warns that too narrow a focus on generalized abstractions is particularly perilous in the history of international relations, where it would lead to inaccurate and oversimplified accounts. While his concern is with British foreign policy makers before 1914, his argument can easily be extended to include their German counterparts as well. He suggests that policy was made by individuals who are easy to identify and belonging mainly to the diplomatic service or the Foreign Office. Although their options were constrained by structural factors, they nevertheless retained an ample range of choice when it came to making decisions or taking initiatives. And this was precisely where the individual came in, Neilson argues. Personal beliefs, background and character came all into play, as did the opinions policy makers held of other countries and their mental maps that lay behind the content of diplomatic correspondence.[4] Thomas Otte agrees that in order to understand international history, individual personalities need to be properly considered. While the political system shapes the policies which are adopted in a given context, uncovering the

[3] Ibid, p.434
[4] Neilson, K.: 'My Beloved Russians': Sir Arthur Nicholson and Russia, 1906-1916; in: *The International History Review* , Nov., 1987, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Nov., 1987), pp. 521-554

underlying assumptions and 'hidden axioms" shared by individual decision makers, is key for a more comprehensive appreciation of history.[5]

Lamar Cecil observes that of the three German Emperors only Wilhelm II asserted his prerogative to exercise complete control over his foreign ministry, granted to him by articles 11 and 18 of the Imperial Constitition of 1871. After the Kaiser had ousted Bismarck in 1890 he extensively used his right to make important appointments and to interfere - albeit sporadically - in the formulation of foreign policy.[6] The German Foreign Office became thus a "creature of the crown". The intermittent character of the Emperor's meddling in diplomacy and the relative weakness of Chancellors and State Secretaries after 1890 meant that the tight rein on which Bismarck had kept his diplomats and officials gave way to an unprecedented degree of freedom in internal affairs. Cecil matchlessly summarizes the effects of this development: "[R]ivalries and enmities between diplomats and between branches of the Wilhelmstrasse were now able to surface. Officials in Berlin began to disregard those in the field, who in turn snubbed the Wilhelmstrasse and complained to the Kaiser. Diplomats abroad, aided by their confederates in the capital, laboured to 'demolish' their rivals, while the military figures involved in diplomacy took advantage of the situation to assert their independence from the Foreign Office and aligned themselves more closely to the crown. The Wilhelmstrasse became an undisciplined and noxious 'Giftbude' (poison shack)."[7] Cecil's summary furnishes the impressionist sketch whose dots this thesis will attempt to colourize.

John Röhl, the biographer of Wilhelm II, stresses the pervading nature of 'personal rule' which made the will of the Emperor the guiding principle in all policy matters. His paranoid

[5] Otte, T.G.: Personalities and Impersonal Forces in History; in: Otte, T.G. and Pagedas, C.A. (eds.): *Personalities, War and Diplomacy. Essays in International History*; London 1997, pp. 1-9; (Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd edition, New York 1999, is a classic, more theoretical account of the 'rational actor' model and the 'bureaucratic politics' model in explaining choices in foreign policy)

[6] Cecil, L.: *The German Diplomatic Service, 1871-1914*, Princeton 1976; pp. 190
[7] Ibid; pp. 321

personality and mercurial character made him susceptible to random influences and resulted in sudden shifts of his policy preferences and the fall from grace of even his most intimate advisors. The erratic policy outcomes which were a hallmark of Wilhelm's reign are according to Röhl best explained by Norbert Elias's sociological concept of the 'kingship mechanism' whereby the sovereign balances out the tensions among competing stakeholders, taking care to prevent any group from becoming too powerful.[8]

Röhl's focus is, however, on the Kaiser himself. While rivalries between selected policy makers are touched upon, it is their relationship with the Emperor and his final accountability that Röhl is primarily interested in.

Wolfgang Mommsen dismisses the usefulness of the 'kingship mechanism' as an explanation of German foreign policy, because it exaggerates the dependence of the elites on the ruler.[9] While recognizing the damaging effects of 'personal rule' on the political system, the bureaucratic elites supported the neo-absolutist monarchy as a bulwark that protected their largely uncontrolled sphere against the adoption of parliamentarianism. Rather than seeking the favour of the Emperor, it was the elites that exploited him for the pursuit of their own policies which on occasions differed widely from the monarch's wishes - a case in point being the First Moroccan Crisis.

While Mommsen highlights episodes when individual diplomats attempted to enlist imperial authority for their objectives, his view of the elites as an aggregate force unified by the desire to prevent constitutional rule cannot account for the element of competition that divided policy makers and thus facilitated 'personal rule' in the first place.

[8] Röhl, *Kaiser, Hof und Staat : Wilhelm II. und die deutsche Politik.* München 1988, pp. 116-140
[9] Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem Schuld? Wilhelm II. und die preussisch-deutschen Machteliten*, München 2002, p. 12

Hans-Ulrich Wehler studies the pressures on the traditionalist elites which resulted from rapid socio-economic change and threatened their control over German society. Wehler has coined the concept of 'polycratic chaos', by which he characterises the policy making process in imperial Germany. Accordingly, the power vacuum left by Bismarck led to what Wehler calls a polycratic system of competing power centres, which due to a lack of coordination caused the erratic policies that are deemed typical of imperial Germany. His analysis remains on this abstract level, however, and he does not seek to substantiate it empirically.[10]

Unlike Röhl, who is primarily concerned with how the Emperor worked the 'kingship mechanism', Wehler's concept points to the uncoordinated rivalry, to which one only needs to add the sovereign as a focal point to return to the 'kingship mechanism', but instead of looking at its top-down implications, it can thus be viewed from the bottom up. From this perspective, vying for the Emperor's support and attempting to influence him according to the preferences of the respective group seem to be logical consequences of such a constellation.

Isabel Hull identifies a division among the civilian elites which consisted on the one hand of representatives of the ministries and foreign office, who were committed to the state and the system as a whole, and on the other of those who dedicated their career to the person of the Emperor. As Wilhelm considered the latter group to be more trustworthy, their advice was more readily accepted than the more balanced views of the better-informed diplomats and officials. Hull concludes that the Emperor was surrounded by men more conservative than himself who fomented the reactionary tendencies in his thinking. Moreover, the influence of the slightly more moderate civilian entourage diminished considerably over time. According

[10] Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1918*, 7th ed. Göttingen 1994, pp. 69

to Hull, by 1908 it was the military men of the military and naval cabinets who controlled Wilhelm's perceptions and thus limited the policy options conceived to be open for debate.[11]

Two aspects of Hull's findings will be significant for this thesis: that there were two civilian groups of policy makers as distinguished by their principal allegiance, and that civilian influence on the ruler declined over time whereas that of the military became stronger.

The authors discussed above have broached the issues of factional rivalry, the relationship between the monarch and the ruling elite, and their impact on policy making in imperial Germany. However, they do not provide a structured account of the prevailing competition among policy makers. The following section will attempt to highlight indications of personal and departmental rivalry over foreign affairs as contained in the general historiography on Germany before the First World War. The objective is to establish whether it is possible to interpret this rivalry in terms of an overall pattern.

The two most influential figures in foreign policy making at the beginning of the period were Bernhard von Bülow who became Foreign Secretary in 1897, and Friedrich von Holstein, the Foreign Ministry's head of the political department. Despite his subordinate rank, Holstein had directed German foreign policy since Bismarck's fall in 1890.[12]

Winzen argues that once Bülow assumed charge of the ministry, it was he who controlled foreign policy and that neither Holstein nor the Kaiser had much say in its course.[13] He stresses the continuity of Bülow's political strategy, which from the outset was aimed at challenging the British empire and destroying British naval supremacy,[14] a view shared by

[11] Hull, I.: *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918.* Cambridge 1982, pp. 293-306
[12] Canis, p. 381
[13] Winzen, P.: *Bülows Weltmachtkonzept: Untersuchungen zur Frühphase seiner Aussenpolitik 1897-1901*. Boppard am Rhein 1977, p. 427
[14] Ibid, p. 431

Mommsen, who maintains that Bülow pushed through his "Weltmachtkonzept" even in cases where the Emperor disagreed. The Chancellor thus exploited the monarch for the pursuit of his own political goals.[15]

This sharply contrasts with the interpretation of authors such as Lerman, who have critizized the course of the Foreign Secretary who became Chancellor in 1900 as opportunistic and directed mainly at advancing his own career by closely following the often megalomaniac wishes of his imperial master. According to his own claims Bülow kept his policies close to Wilhelm's wishes in an attempt to prevent or mitigate the worst imperial mistakes. However, as Lerman points out, while he managed to establish a harmonious relationship, his manipulation seldom reached beyond the achievement of personal advantages.[16]

Contrary to Winzen, Canis maintains that Holstein remained in control of policymaking after Bülow became his superior. His principle of maintaining a free hand between Britain and Russia continued to guide foreign policy at the turn of the century. Thus, he predicted that Germany would eventually benefit from the conflicts of the other two powers over influence in the Middle East and China.[17]

Although it would seem unlikely that Holstein relinquished without reserve his enormous powers as soon as Bülow took up his post, it is conceivable that Bülow gradually expanded his degree of freedom in foreign policy making while consolidating his rapport with the Kaiser and at the same time strengthening Holstein's confidence in the abilities of his former protégé. This is indeed the picture that Norman Rich draws in his Holstein biography when he argues that despite Holstein's earlier observations on Bülow's "aggressive insincerity" the

[15] Mommsen, W.: *Grossmachtstellung und Weltpolitik : die Aussenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1870 bis 1914*. Frankfurt am Main, 1993, pp. 139
[16] Lerman, K.: The Chancellor as Courtier, Cambridge 1990, pp. 249
[17] Canis, K.: *Von Bismarck zur Weltpolitik. Deutsche Außenpolitik 1890 bis 1902*, Berlin 1997, p. 391

Foreign Secretary soon managed to charm his counsellor into believing in his political judgement.[18]

While Bülow might have tightened his grip on foreign policy making over time, Holstein's influence on the other hand never became confined to mere lobbying in the background for some policy or another. As Afflerbach points out, on many occasions it was Holstein who took the lead, the early abandoning of Bülow's talks with the Russian Foreign Secretary about a neutral status for Austria-Hungary in 1905 being a case in point where Bülow followed his counsellor's advice.[19]

That Bülow frequently relied on Holstein's advice should not obscure the chasm which divided the political outlooks of both men. As Hewitson suggests, Bülow, owing his appointment to a clique of courtiers and favourites, was the Kaiser's man who, in tune with his master's wishes, pursued the goals of national aggrandisement and prestige associated with Weltpolitik, whereas Holstein remained focussed on the European stage.[20] Bülow's course at least implicitly accepted the possibility of deteriorating relations with England, and by some accounts he even viewed it as unavoidable in the long run. Holstein on the other hand tried to preserve Germany a free hand by avoiding clashes with the imperial ambitions of other powers and making gains through mediation.[21] However, this is probably too pacific a picture of the counsellor, who did not refrain from advocating the intimidation of other powers, as illustrated by the First Moroccan Crisis. Hewitson also omits Holstein's pro-British inclination, which, combined with a strong aversion against Russia, made the division of both officials over foreign policy goals even more pronounced.

---

[18] Rich, N.: *Friedrich von Holstein. Politics and Diplomacy in the Era of Bismarck and Wilhelm II.* Cambridge 1965, pp. 547

[19] Afflerbach, *H.: Der Dreibund : europäische Grossmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*. Wien, 2002, pp. 485

[20] Hewitson, M.: *Germany and the causes of the First World War*; Oxford 2004, p. 174

[21] Ibid, p. 175

Most crucially however, Holstein strongly resented the Kaiser's interference in foreign-policy-making and attempted to curb the influence of political extremists and ultra-conservatives on the monarch.[22] As Rich points out, the counsellor's habit of conveying remonstrance through intermediaries who presumably toned down his protests for imperial consumption might have saved his career, albeit reducing the effectiveness of his advice.[23]

It is thus possible to distinguish between two broader civilian factions of foreign policy makers: those who supported the Kaiser's 'personal rule' and those opposed to it. While Bülow and his close friend Philipp von Eulenburg, the Kaiser's long-time favourite, prominently represented the former tendency, Holstein was the most fervent exponent of the latter. Contrary to the absolutist ambitions that drove the first group, Holstein was aware that the time of aristocratic rule in Europe was coming to an end and that attempts at imposing a narrowly defined class government would further discredit aristocracy and encourage social revolution.[24]

Even after the counsellor resigned in 1906 the many opponents of 'personal rule' to be found among the diplomats of the Wilhelmstrasse, such as Kiderlen-Wächter, Jagow and Stumm continued to play an important role. When the dangerous consequences of Wilhelm's autocratic regime became more widely apparent, these elements would regain some influence over foreign policy making.

As Mommsen suggests, in the beginning Bülow was not so much concerned about the acquisition of colonial territories but rather wished Germany to participate "as a great power among great powers" in all questions of global relevance.[25] The flipside of Weltpolitik was

[22] Rich, 1965, p. 484
[23] Ibid, p. 848
[24] Ibid, p. 842
[25] Mommsen, 1993, p. 149

the construction of the battlefleet, which Bülow undertook to champion domestically and attempted to give a low-key profile to internationally. To bring it alive Wilhelm appointed Alfred von Tirpitz as state secretary of the imperial naval office. Supported by the Chancellor, the admiral and with him the navy would soon rise to a dominant position in the conduct of international affairs.

Jan Rüger shows that beyond its political and strategic dimension the navy also served as a cultural symbol. The public staging of the navy during ship launches or naval parades represented "maritime theatre" and as such they were events of entertainment and consumption. Even when it came to decisions about the naval hardware, the German aim of contesting British hegemony in the North Sea did not lack a theatrical element: The objective of deterrence, which prevailed over that of actual war fighting capability, meant that naval planners on both sides sacrificed operational advantages in order to create what was called "a bold front".[26] Emperor Wilhelm II, whom a senior German diplomat once characterised as having a dramatic but not a political instinct, was certainly drawn to this "theatre of power and identity" (Rüger) which the display of his fleet afforded him. To the dismay of his chief naval architect, he particularly relished in showing it off to his British relatives on occasions like the Kiel regatta.

Once fleet building was well under way, with Germany and Britain already locked in the naval arms race, the Chancellor lost control over the course of Germany's England policy. As Epkenhans points out, by 1908 Bülow realised that the financial strain and the tensions arising from Germany's overwhelming military and naval strength could seriously damage his foreign policy goals. His attempts at getting Tirpitz either to declare that the navy would soon be strong enough to resist a pre-emptive strike by the Royal Navy or to give in to a

[26] Rüger, J.: *The Great Naval Game. Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge 2007; pp. 198-205

naval agreement with Britain were rebutted with the credo that only constant pressure would result in British concessions to Germany.[27] Apparently, the naval secretary had the support of the Emperor, who at that time regarded bids for slowing down naval construction as a declaration of war.[28]

Berghahn, who stresses the domestic motives for German fleet building, which he suggests was directed "against parliament and England" alike, also shows how Germany, after Britain launched the *Dreadnought* in 1906, faced two options: either to abandon her naval ambitions or to openly engage in an arms race. Tirpitz chose the radicalisation of his plans. By working the ruthless agitation of the Navy League without regard for the foreseeable international consequences, he managed to bring forward the naval bill that the Imperial Naval Office had drafted for 1908. In order to keep up the momentum thus gained by the German navy, he also needed to make sure that until the submission of a new bill in a few years' time no diplomatic understanding between England and Germany would be reached that included the limitation of armaments.[29]

Building on Berghahn, Wilhelm Deist analyses how Tirpitz shaped the naval propaganda of the Naval Press Office (Nachrichtenbureau) into a powerful instrument to mobilize public opinion in favour of the fleet. While fomenting a "moderate Anglophobia" – which soon would become virulent and uncontrollable – the press office disguised its anti-democratic agenda with parliament-friendly tactics. Tirpitz's domestic objective of attaining an extra-constitutional status for the navy which would deprive parliament of its budgetary control

[27] Epkenhans, M., 2007, p. 120
[28] Lambi, I.: *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862-1914.* Boston 1984 p. 295
[29] Berghahn, V.R.; Der Tirpitz-Plan. Genesis und Verfall einer innenpolitischen Krisenstrategie unter Wilhelm II. 1971, pp. 588

over naval planning exemplifies the wish to strengthen the domestic status quo that favoured the traditional elites.

As Deist points out, the ability of the Naval Press Office to manipulate public opinion hinged on the importance given to naval policy by monarch and government. It therefore declined when Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg managed to gain control over naval policy and to change the priorities of foreign affairs.[30]

Manipulation of the press also featured in the power struggle that accompanied Bethmann-Hollweg's attempt to break naval control over the direction of policy making. The rivalry between navy and Foreign Office escalated when Tirpitz after the Agadir Crisis used his press contacts to launch articles suggesting the imminent threat of a British attack, thus exploiting the heated anti-British sentiment to muster public support for a further naval bill which was opposed by the Chancellor, Foreign Office and even some high-ranking navy officials. The Foreign Office tried to counter this campaign by influencing the London correspondents of German papers to report optimistically on the possibility of an Anglo-German entente. Kiderlen-Wächter, Secretary of State after 1909, even went so far as to inform the press agencies about this interdepartmental conflict, which ended with a reprimand of the Naval Press Office by the Chancellor.[31]

It would take the new Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg three years to limit naval expansion to dimensions compatible with his goal of improving Anglo-German relations. Lambi and Fischer show how Bethmann capitalised on opposition within the navy against the speed of expansion[32] and concerns in the army about the relative decline of German land forces

[30] Deist, Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda: Das Nachrichtenbureau des Reichsmarineamtes 1897-1914. Stuttgart 1976, pp. 33o
[31] Geppert, D.; *Pressekriege. Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen 1896-1912*. München 2007, pp. 289-94
[32] Lambi, pp. 363

compared to those of France and Russia.[33] The Chancellor thus mustered support for resisting the scale of yet another naval bill, which only got approval after being substantially reduced.

The primacy of the navy began to decline, according to Fischer, in 1912 when the Emperor at his New Year's reception for the commanding generals demanded a refocus of German attention towards continental Europe and announced the reallocation of the bulk of financial resources to the army.[34]

The shift of budgetary priority towards the army coincided with what David Stevenson calls "the great acceleration" when the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 led to a heightened military readiness of the European powers. At the outset of the crisis German diplomacy succeeded in maintaining a policy of de-escalation and managed to ensure a low-key response of the army to Russian trial mobilizations and French efforts to secure the country's eastern border.[35] The ambiguity of military measures as well as international responses would however erode the "civilian-military unanimity" (Stevenson) as the conflict continued.

In reaction to British warnings that in the event of a European war Britain would come in to prevent Germany from overthrowing France, the Emperor invited the military leadership to an audience in December 1912 - the civilian leadership being excluded. During the meeting which Bethmann later termed the "war council" Helmuth von Moltke (the army's chief of the general staff, argued for war and the sooner the better.[36] Under no illusions about British resolve, Moltke had published a memorandum in November 1912, demanding additional troops explicitly with a view to Britain joining France and Russia in a continental war.[37]

---

[33] Fischer, 1969, pp. 169
[34] Ibid, p. 178
[35] Stevenson, D.: *Armaments and the coming of war: Europe, 1904-1914*. Oxford 1996 p. 248
[36] Fischer, 1969, p. 233; see also Mombauer, A.: *A Reluctant Military Leader? Helmuth von Moltke and the July Crisis of 1914*, War in History , November 1999, Vol. 6, No. 4 (November 1999), pp. 419

[37] Mommsen, 1993, p. 269

Being confident of winning[38], the army leadership encouraged conflict and thus became an influential factor in German foreign policy.

This observation coincides with Hewitson's analysis which attributes the policy of brinkmanship that civilian foreign policy makers conducted between 1911 and 1914 to their need to pursue a middle course between the anti-war sentiments expressed by the majority of German public opinion and the pro-war pressures of the army.[39]

It is therefore possible to distinguish four groups of policy makers that influenced German foreign policy between 1897 and 1914: civil servants opposed to the Emperor's interference in foreign affairs, civilian supporters of 'personal rule', leading officials of the army and the leadership of the navy. As demonstrated above, these factions competed against and co-operated with each other for control over Germany's external relations. The pattern of interdepartmental rivalry appears to indicate that the centre of gravity of policymaking shifted over time from the opponents of 'personal rule' over its supporters to the navy and finally to the army, which exerted a strong influence on German diplomacy during the last few years of peace.

A major policy variable, and probably the most vehemently contested one, was Germany's relations with Great Britain. Commercial rivalry, imperial competition and ideological factors like Social-Darwinism and Prussian disdain for parliamentarianism are all developments that encouraged a deterioration of Anglo-German relations after 1890.[40] While structural forces may have limited the options available to foreign policy makers, to ask why a particular course was chosen over its alternatives begs the question of the personal preferences of

[38] Ibid, p. 297
[39] Hewitson, pp. 225
[40] See Seligman, M.: *Germany from Reich to Republic, 1871-1918*. London 2000, pp. 133

decision makers.[41] The discussion so far has identified departmental allegiances and the rival outlooks of some German policymakers as reflected in the historiography. But effectiveness of policy making also depended on the actions and perceptions of their British counterparts. The following section outlines the historiographical debate on how British foreign policy makers perceived international relations in general and German foreign policy in particular.

Lord Salisbury, who conducted foreign affairs at the outset of the period under consideration, pursued a policy of strict non-involvement in continental affairs during times of peace. As Grenville points out, the prime minister opposed any attempts at formally committing the country to Germany or the Triple Alliance as a whole, which on a few occasions were undertaken by several members of his cabinet, including Lansdowne who in 1901 assumed charge of the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, the younger generation of policy-makers was prepared to end "splendid isolation" in order to find relief for the relative decline of British power by seeking some narrowly defined defensive agreements.[42]

The German desire to become a first-rate naval power – a centre-piece of Weltpolitik – did not immediately cause concern. At the outset, Britain was far from perceiving the German fleet as a threat. As Langer points out, the German navy in the mid 1890's was comfortably outsized by those of Russia and France and was also slightly smaller than Italy's.[43] However, there were growing concerns about the possibility of a continental alliance, highlighted by the cooperation of Russia, France and Germany against Japan in 1895, which raised doubts about the sufficiency of the two-power standard by which Britain defined its naval supremacy.

However, the anti-British rhetoric deemed necessary to get successive naval bills through the Reichstag, and the character of the actual fleet that was being built with its emphasis on large

[41] Kennedy, 1982, pp. 153
[42] Grenville, p. 436
[43] Langer, p. 429

battle ships with a short range, left little room for doubt about the power it was targeted at. Robert Massie argues that from the autumn of 1902 Admiral John Fisher, who would become First Sea Lord of the Admiralty in 1904, began to view Germany as Britain's most likely opponent. On that account he redistributed the British fleet in order to concentrate its clout against the potential enemy.[44]

Kennedy shows how the reallocation of naval power was part of a wider process as British politicians concerned with the perceived overstretch of their country's military resources gradually readjusted the strategic focus to Europe. By the mid 1890s Britain began to withdraw its vessels from areas where naval predominance had become untenable because newly industrialising nations such as the US and Japan were building their own fleets. Finally, the ententes with France and Russia (in 1904 and 1907 respectively) allowed a concentration of naval attention on Britain's home-waters and enabled Britain to more than match the German challenge with a naval expansion of its own.

In terms of general strategy however, the navy was soon to assume a subsidiary role to the army, despite continuous financial attention to the former received in the light of the naval arms race and repeated naval scares. Foreign-policymakers asserted their assessment that the real German menace was a continental dominance which would have to be opposed by reinforcing the French army with an expeditionary corps in case Germany invaded France.[45]

Dominik Geppert stresses the role of a small but influential part of the British press which together with some diplomats managed to establish a negative image of Germany in public opinion, thus facilitating a thorough reorientation of British imperial and foreign policies once they were deemed to be unsustainable due to strategic overstretch. Accordingly it was

[44] Massie, R. K.; Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War. London 2007, p. 462
[45] Kennedy, P.M.; The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery. London 1976, p. 205-237

not so much disturbed relations with Germany or the perceived threat that made agitation easy, but German economic vitality, military power, political volatility and diplomatic crudeness.[46]

Similarly, Keith Wilson dismisses the notion that the ententes with France and Russia were primarily directed against Germany. Rather than being aimed at protecting Europe from German hegemony, they were designed to protect the British Empire from its colonial rivals France and Russia, whereas the German menace served as a convenient cover-up for British weakness.[47]

While the original motive of both ententes may well have been the settling of colonial differences and therefore the consolidation of overseas possessions, the staff talks between the British and French armies which set in after 1906 indicate that the thrust of co-operation by then was aimed against suspected German ambitions.

Andreas Rose also dismisses the interpretation that Britain's rapprochement with its arch-rivals France and Russia was primarily in reaction to German naval policies and diplomatic crudeness. Rather than displaying a continuity of policy maxims for Europe, there was a distinctive break, Rose argues, between the conservative foreign policies of Salisbury, Balfour and Lansdowne which focussed on preserving continental stability, and the policy conducted after 1905 by the liberal imperialists who controlled the Foreign Office, headed by Grey. The experienced policy makers of the Conservative Cabinet remained unfazed by German sabre-rattling because they had grown used to it over the decades and were aware not only of Germany's structural and geopolitical weaknesses but also of its domestic and fiscal troubles. Following this argument, Britain negotiated the *entente cordiale* to reduce frictions

[46] Geppert, pp.421
[47] Wilson, p. 120

at the periphery rather than to make an adjustment to the European equilibrium. It was under the Liberal government, however, that the entente became the tenet of British continental policy, which was soon to be complemented with the far-reaching Anglo-Russian settlement. The motive, according to Rose, was ideological: the liberal imperialists were strongly influenced by ideas of Social Darwinism *en vogue* in the circles they shared with leading intellectuals and journalists. They believed in a future tri-partition of the world and assumed that in the coming struggle for existence it was advisable to lean on the Russian empire and France, as the most dangerous enemies, in order to defeat the most likely contender for the third place behind the USA and Russia. The widely admired potential and efficiency of the young German state meant that natural selection would eventually pit it against Britain. Hence, preventing a Russo-German alliance was vital for standing a chance in the anticipated fight. Not Germany's strength, Rose argues, but its weakness was therefore the reason why Britain abandoned its tacit support of the Central Powers. Meanwhile, the overstated German menace served as a welcome bench mark for mobilizing British society and reforming the body politic.[48]

Niall Ferguson refers to the fear of German continental hegemony when he diagnoses a "Napoleon neurosis" inherent in the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey, which aimed at preserving the entente with France while avoiding a rapprochement with Germany. Accordingly, failing to support France would drive her into the arms of Germany and result in a continental coalition against Britain. It was such reasoning and the related military commitments, so Ferguson argues, that actually brought war with Germany closer.[49]

[48] Rose, A.: *Zwischen Empire und Kontinent. Britische Außenpolitik vor dem ersten Weltkrieg*; München 2011; pp. 576-582

[49] Ferguson, N.; The Pity of War. London 1998, p. 73

Matthew Seligman rejects Ferguson's interpretation that the alleged German designs on continental domination were just conjured up by some Germanophobes in the Foreign Office and army. Rather, such assessments were based on detailed intelligence. After 1906 all British naval and military attachés to Berlin unanimously agreed that Germany's armament efforts were aggressive in design and that a German offensive was most likely to occur between 1913 and 1915. The reports of these "harbingers of the German menace" (Seligman) circulated widely among members of the government and armed forces where they presumably found broad attention.[50]

Zara Steiner attributes Grey's distrust of Germany partly to the influence of a new generation of diplomats who succeeded to senior positions and who the relatively inexperienced Foreign Secretary had to rely on. Hardinge, Mallet, Nicholson, Tyrell and Crowe all shared "hostile views of German intentions" (Steiner) and would stress Britain's interest in upholding the balance of power in Europe, promote stronger ties with France and Russia, and exaggerate the inherent threats of a better understanding with Germany.[51]

Nevertheless, as Steiner points out, it was Grey who made the policy, and not the officials whose proposals he considered before taking his own decisions. Accounting for the sensibilities of the Liberal party, he pursued a middle course that avoided too deep an involvement in Europe.[52] Or, as A. J. P. Taylor puts it, Grey's policy was guided on the one hand by encouraging France and Russia to preserve their independence and on the other by keeping his hands sufficiently free in order to maintain unity among the Liberals.[53]

[50] Seligman, 2006, pp. 261
[51] Steiner, Z. S.; Britain and the Origins of the First World War. Basingstoke 2002, p. 199
[52] Ibid, p. 201
[53] Taylor, A. J. P. *The struggle for mastery in Europe, 1848-1918,* Oxford 1954, p. 437

Thomas Otte analyses the organizational reforms at the heart of a transformation which the British Foreign Office underwent in the years between 1900 and 1907. The service was professionalized and communication became more efficient, which allowed for more outspoken advice to reach the Foreign Secretary. At the same time, a new generation of diplomats whose outlooks differed from that of their predecessors ascended to more prominent roles. Otte shows that, like their German counterparts, British diplomats were no strangers to royal favouritism. The privileged access which particularly Charles Hardinge, the Assistant Undersecretary of State, enjoyed to King Edward VII, enabled the former to shape decisions on the assignment of key diplomatic posts. He thereby managed to advance the careers of officials such as Francis Bertie and Louis Mallet who shared his strategic vision of removing frictions with France and Russia on the territorial peripheries, which these nations had in common with Britain. Their goal was to overcome the leverage that Germany had been able to employ in order to pressure Britain on colonial issues and matters of national security, a practice they resented as blackmail. Hardinge thus acted as the "catalyst" of the rapprochement with France and eventually Russia, which came to be regarded as the "new pivot" of British foreign policy.[54]

Presumably it was Grey's tendency of moderation that prevailed over his Foreign Office staff after the Agadir Crisis, when Britain and Germany set out to find common ground on issues as diverse as the Baghdad Railway, Portugal's colonies, and the Balkans where the London ambassadors' conference saw Anglo-German co-operation leading the way towards a viable agreement among the other participants.

Schöllgen suggests that the strategy of reducing tensions on the periphery and thereby instituting a more general rapprochement between both countries reaches back to the time of

[54] Otte, T. G.; *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865 – 1914,* Cambridge 2011 pp. 240-313

Grey's predecessor Salisbury. Accordingly, the complex international situations in East Asia and the Balkans doomed any German and British attempts to negotiate an alliance between 1898 and 1902. British concerns about an implicit or explicit commitment to ailing Austro-Hungary corresponded with German fears that siding with England over China would worsen relations with Russia and refocus Russian attention on Europe. By focussing instead on areas where an agreement was deemed within reach, the Anglo-German treaties on Portuguese possessions in Africa, on Samoa and the Yangtze were early examples of that cooperation on peripheral issues which was resumed after 1911.[55]

Kiessling stresses the ambivalent nature of the overall climate of detente in the years before the war. While there was a genuine wish of Bethmann Hollweg and Grey to bring bilateral relations back on track after 1911, efforts of individual powers to improve relations with a member of the other camp were viewed with suspicion by the partners on both sides. The reason was that contemporaries regarded the systems of alliances and ententes as being in flux and thus open to change, rather than perceiving them as solid ideological blocs. Moreover, policy makers played on this presumably unstable character for tactical purposes by encouraging rumours about alleged rapprochements. Thus, while at least in some cases intended to de-escalate tensions, attempts at detente paradoxically added to the nervousness among the powers and might have actually increased the risk of conflict.[56]

Thus, in addition to the restrictions posed by the international system, German decision-makers found their policy options further conditioned by the perceptions and assumptions of their British counterparts. It is necessary to bear these factors in mind when analyzing how

[55] Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht*. München 1984, p. 422

[56] Kiessling, F.; Unfought Wars: The Effect of Detente before World War I; in: An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914. H.S. Afflerbach, David Stevenson; New York, Oxford 2007, pp. 189-192

the struggle for control over Germany's external policies impacted on Anglo-German relations. Moreover, the different actors participating in the formulation of foreign policy had varying ranks in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Their opportunities to make their voices heard therefore differed widely in a setting that Cecil describes as governed by obedience and the dependence on superior dignitaries.[57] Even if there was a greater degree of independence after Bismarck left, as discussed above, his legacy of regarding a diplomat's role as "implemental" rather than "consultative" (Cecil) had shaped the careers of those who prepared or made the decision at the time this dissertation is concerned with. More often than not, divergent opinions came veiled as professional advice; opposition to a particular course taken in Berlin found its expression in the frequency of cables that drew attention to the negative consequences this policy or action was producing since its implementation.

That these expressions of dissent often seem to have been irrelevant to the actual policies adopted does not mean that they remained inconsequential in regard to the way in which the decision was reached at or how it would be implemented. The erratic character ascribed to German foreign policy by observers and students of this period is owed to a large extent to the discord prevailing within the Wilhelmstrasse, as this research will show.

For a whole century Anglo-German relations before the first World War have attracted scholarly attention on a scale unprecedented in other fields of history. Accordingly rich is the available secondary literature, a miniscule segment of which has been discussed above. Equally overwhelming is the availability of primary sources. The first point of reference when looking at diplomatic history in this period is the massive collection of German diplomatic documents published in the 1920s.[58] Its over fifty volumes contain a wealth of

[57] Cecil, pp. 320

[58] Lepsius, J., A. *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, et al.; Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914 : Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*. (Berlin, 1922)

correspondence from the archives of the Foreign Ministry and have formed a mainstay of this work. Similarly important has been the official British document collection on the origins of the war.[59] The 1920s and 1930s also saw the publication of a wave of personal accounts in the form of memoirs, diaries and collections of personal documents. They provide interesting insights on many aspects discussed in the thesis and have been duly considered where they could do so. Another published collection of documents which was very important for this research is that of the counsellor Friedrich von Holstein published by Norman Rich in the 1960s.

The unpublished archival materials included here have been mainly drawn from the top secret 'England' files at the political archive of the German Foreign Ministry. I have also incorporated material from the federal archives in Berlin and Freiburg as well as Foreign Office and Cabinet Office files from the National Archives in Kew.

The research presented here is divided into four chapters:

The first chapter covers the years 1898-1901. At its outset, the new German Foreign Secretary, who had come into office in the previous autumn, was faced with British soundings for closer relations with Germany. When he firmly shut down this and a subsequent attempt to bring about a détente between both countries, he encountered the opposition of his diplomats, who questioned the wisdom of alienating Britain.

[59] G. P. Gooch, et al.; *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*. Great Britain. Foreign Office., (London, 1927)

The second chapter covers the years 1902-1904. Diplomats and officials at the Foreign Ministry resented the anti-British course initiated by Bülow. In the hope to produce a change, some attempted to discredit his policy with the Emperor. Aware of the consequences this might have for the latter's interference in foreign affairs, others supported their superior who had become Chancellor the year before. Meanwhile Anglo-German relations grew considerably cooler in the wake of a common intervention in Venezuela.

The third chapter covers the years 1904-1906. Afraid of a British naval strike the Emperor extended his interference in foreign affairs by submitting a stream of policy initiatives. This increased the burden of his overworked officials even further. At the same time, he directly opposed a policy favoured by Bülow and the majority of his diplomats. When he saw an opportunity to reverse the course imposed on him, the Chancellor seized the chance to regain control - with devastating consequences for Germany's international standing.

The last chapter covers the years 1906-1909. With personal rule firmly established at the heart of foreign policy making and bilateral relations in the doldrums, the Chancellor refrained from resuming control over foreign affairs. Individual careers and a parliamentary majority fell victim to his efforts to regain imperial trust. At the end of his tenure, relations with Britain were dominated by the naval rivalry, whereas its conduct was shared with the Head of the Naval Office. Meanwhile, Bülow managed to successfully establish for posterity the deceptive image of having been a force of moderation during his last year in office.

Chapter I

From Foreign Secretary to Chancellor – who directed *Englandpolitik* during Bülow's early years in office, 1898-1901?

This chapter analyses how the German government reacted to several initiatives by British Cabinet members to seek an alliance between both countries. It contrasts the individual perceptions of German policy makers and diplomats involved in the talks and internal debates, and traces their divisions over the interpretation of Anglo-German relations. This includes demonstrating how colonial negotiations, which coincided with alliance talks, accentuated the differences in the attitude of foreign-policy-makers towards Britain. The chapter will discuss how Bernhard von Bülow, the Secretary of State for foreign affairs, prevailed in driving both countries further apart, and will consider his possible motives. It sets out with informal alliance talks in 1898, which were followed by Anglo-German negotiations over Portuguese possessions in Africa. In 1899, negotiations over Samoa dominated bilateral relations. Towards the end of that year, during a visit of the German Emperor to Britain, a second attempt was made to encourage an alliance between both countries. After a blunt refusal by the Foreign Secretary, who would become Chancellor in the following year, it would take until 1901 for the discussions to resurface. From the correspondence and memoirs consulted emerges a picture of discontent among German

policy makers that starts with dissenting remarks on individual instructions and reaches up to open disagreement over the course of *Englandpolitik* towards the end of the period.

British approaches on co-operation in Asia

"England's first soundings of alliance"[60] resulted from concern over political developments in China. The defeat of China at the hands of Japan in 1895, recent expansion by Russia, and the German annexation of Kiau Chow provoked British fears that the policy of an open door in China was endangered and might soon give way to a division of Chinese territory into exclusive spheres of influence. Events in the Far East thus provided a stimulus for British foreign policy makers to rethink their time-honoured principle of 'splendid isolation' and supplement it with regional agreements that addressed specific concerns.[61]

During a dinner party hosted by the banker Alfred de Rothschild, a number of Cabinet members, among them the Duke of Devonshire and Joseph Chamberlain, discussed the situation in East Asia and its impact on European trade. It was then, that the initiative was born to seek a dialogue with Germany. The ministers asked Baron Eckardstein, First Secretary of the German Embassy, who was present that evening, to arrange a private meeting between the German Ambassador, Count Hatzfeldt, and Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary.[62] Hatzfeldt welcomed the idea and agreed to a meeting[63], expecting a chance to address German grievances on territorial issues in Asia and Africa. On 24 March

[60] The editors of the official collection of the German diplomatic correspondence thus named the chapter on the negotiations over a possible Anglo-German rapprochement in 1898. (Englands erste Allianzfühler) See: *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, Berlin, 1924, GP XIVi, p. 191

[61] T. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905*; Oxford 2007

[62] Eckardstein, H.: Lebenserinnerungen und Politische Denkwürdigkeiten, vol. I, Leipzig 1920, pp. 292

[63] Ibid, p. 293

1898 he cabled to Berlin for instructions, and suggested pointing out that with regard to China, neutrality was all that Germany could offer Britain.[64]

It is doubtful whether the idea of an alliance would have been pursued any further, had the ambassador stated this intention from the outset; after all, securing support in East Asia was the main motivation for the British advances. However, Bernhard von Bülow, the German Foreign Secretary, in his response instructed Hatzfeldt to refrain from declaring that in principle Germany would remain neutral in China.[65] He must have been aware that the Chinese Question loomed large in the minds of the British government. In Parliament and in the press it faced severe criticism for allowing Russia to occupy Port Arthur. It is therefore conceivable that Bülow wanted Britain to come forward with ideas on co-operation - probably not so much out of genuine interest in a bilateral treaty, but rather to see what was on offer and to hold out the prospect of an alliance. Thereby he might have hoped to make the British government more malleable when it came to negotiating colonial concessions.

In their first meeting, Chamberlain proposed to the German Ambassador a defensive treaty with Germany "tantamount to Britain joining the Triple Alliance". In exchange he demanded German support to contain Russia in East Asia and to check French ambitions in West Africa.[66] Bülow's response in the face of such far-reaching suggestions reads as being remarkably detached and does not give the impression that the Foreign Secretary would welcome any closer relations with Britain. His main objection, albeit valid, was a procedural one, namely that any treaty not ratified by the British parliament would only bind the government, but not the country. Britain thus could extricate itself from any treaty obligations

[64] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 24 March 1898; GP XIVi. 3779, pp. 193

[65] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 25 March 1898; GP XIVi, 3780, pp. 194

[66] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 29 March 1898; GP XIVi, 3782, pp. 196-99

by forcing the government to resign. He then vented his general mistrust, claiming that it would be in line with the habitual spirit of Britain's policy of leaving its allies in the lurch.[67]

Such a reaction did not bode well for Chamberlain's subsequent attempts to dispel the Foreign Secretary's suspicions. Bülow met his assurance that a treaty would be sanctioned by Parliament with yet another obstacle, which he considered insurmountable for the time being: To sanction an alliance in the British parliament involved the risk that it might be rejected - particularly given the widespread anti-German sentiment. For Germany, such an outcome would immediately result in deteriorating relations with Russia. Hence, Bülow argued[68], before both countries could consider binding themselves, his Ambassador ought to suggest confidence-building measures which might pave the way to a wider understanding in the future.[69]

Any agreement with a bias against Russia would indeed have run counter to Germany's strategic interest in seeing its neighbour engaged in the Far East and its attention diverted from Germany's eastern border. The Emperor illustrated this concern in a marginal comment on one of Hatzfeldt's reports: "Chamberlain must not forget that in East Prussia I have one Prussian army corps facing 3 Russian armies and 9 cavalry divisions close to the border, which no Chinese Wall separates me from and no English battleship can keep away from me."[70] However, when Hatzfeldt reported to Prince Hohenlohe, the German Chancellor, his impression that, if talks were resumed in the future, Salisbury, the British Prime Minister,

[67] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 30 March 1898; GP XIVi, 3783, pp. 199-202

[68] What is striking about Bülow's correspondence during the whole episode of the 1898 alliance talks is the constant tone of patronising sarcasm with which he analysed Chamberlain's suggestions - evoking the impression of commenting on the ideas of a political bungler.

[69] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 3 April 1898; GP XIVi, 3785, pp. 204-207

[70] Hatzfeldt to Bülow, 7 April 1898; GP XIVi, 3789, p. 216; Schlussbemerkung des Kaisers

would favour an agreement which aimed primarily at the preservation of peace,[71] Bülow rejected even this idea as a basis for an alliance. In a letter to the Emperor, he wrote: "Even a general agreement with England which did not possess an explicitly aggressive character would in the present international situation have a bias against Russia and would thus have the potential to reduce the safety of Germany's eastern border, or indeed (…) the safety of our borders in the East and West."[72]

Holstein, in view of hostile public opinion in Britain, admitted that he too had not trusted the British advances when he first heard about them: "Chamberlain […] told our Ambassador […] quite candidly his opinion that England and Germany should co-operate as allies. The discrepancy between Chamberlain's remarks and the abuse in the English periodicals etc. was so considerable that even I wondered for a time whether Chamberlain honestly meant what he said or whether he was only wanting to trick us into some act of co-operation which could then be exploited before the world, particularly in St Petersburg. And so an attitude of reserve was adopted towards Chamberlain's proposals."[73]

As the talks went on, however, Holstein seems to have become increasingly convinced of Chamberlain's sincere intentions, albeit agreeing with Salisbury that the time for an alliance "ha[d] not yet come".[74] Two dispatches, both sent to the German Ambassador on 3 June 1898, when talks were coming to an inconclusive end, illustrated the different outlooks of Bülow and his counsellor. While the former emphasized the free hand that he wished to preserve for Germany-- *"Our wish would be to improve our relations with England as far as*

[71] Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 3 Juni 1898; GP XIVi, 3801, pp. 241-247

[72] Bülow to Wilhelm, 5 June 1898; GP XIVi, 3802, pp. 248

[73] *Holstein Papers***,** HP I, p.181, footnote 3

[74] Holstein to Hatzfeldt, 31 May 1898, HP IV, 656, pp. 81

possible, certainly not to worsen them, but maintaining the independence enjoyed hitherto on both sides."[75]-- Holstein stressed the prospect of a future treaty: *"Lord Salisbury's view that alliances should be conducted not for the future but to answer existing needs is shared here. That is why we do not want to ally ourselves with England immediately; but we will try to avoid everything which could hinder the possibility of such an alliance at a later time."*[76]

Hatzfeldt, like his old friend Holstein, had been initially suspicious of Chamberlain's proposals and the lack of diplomatic decorum with which the Colonial Secretary had presented them. In subsequent conversations the Ambassador had become convinced, however, that the British government desired an alliance. The more moderate suggestion by Arthur Balfour – the Prime Minister's deputy in foreign affairs - of a gradual path towards an alliance, had particularly found the diplomat's favour. The British and German governments could prepare public opinion in both countries for a broader rapprochement, so ran the idea, through a conciliatory approach to minor questions.

In a summary on his meetings of late March and early April, the Ambassador concluded on 7 April 1898: "I believe that I can regard it as a fact that all members of the cabinet had knowledge of the statements and proposals Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain made to me, and that they agree with the intended purpose. […] By way of rumours I gather that Sir William Harcourt and Lord Rosebery [opposition leaders, MH)] have spoken in the sense that they would not raise objections, in case the government sought an agreement with Germany"[77]

[75] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 3 June 1898, HP IV, 659, p. 85

[76] Holstein to Hatzfeldt, 3 June 1898, HP IV, 660, p. 85

[77] Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 7 April 1998 ; GP XIVi, 3788, pp. 209-212. (last paragraph)

The reluctance of the German government to respond favourably to the British wooing did not yet discourage the declared champion of an agreement. On 13 May, Chamberlain during a speech at Birmingham pointed to the danger of a conflict with Russia over China and declared that Britain needed to join forces with other powers in order to be prepared for such a challenge, a statement which was widely regarded as expressing a wish to join the Triple Alliance.[78] Commenting on the speech in a cable to Holstein on 14 May 1898, Hatzfeldt warned: "According to my impression, they have not entirely given up hope on us yet. If that should be the case, we must not expect or demand any concessions or favours here for some time."[79]

Hatzfeldt's concern that a golden opportunity might be lost can also explain why he agreed to Eckardstein's plan to visit the Kaiser in order to win imperial support for an Anglo-German alliance. The mission was encouraged by Alfred de Rothschild and Chamberlain when the latter's proposals of an alliance did not meet with the expected enthusiasm on the German side. [80]

Hermann von Eckardstein, due to his marriage to an English heiress, enjoyed access to leading circles of both British and German society. On 9 April he dined with the Kaiser in Homburg. The Baron claimed that during their meeting he managed to convince the monarch that the British initiative had the backing of the whole Cabinet.[81] Nonetheless, on the day after Eckardstein's visit, the Emperor sent a telegram to Bülow which dismissed an alliance that, according to the monarch, would not account for Germany's concerns in Europe.[82]

[78] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 17 May 1998, HP IV, 653, p. 78

[79] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 14 May 1998 ; GP XIVi, 3795, p. 229

[80] Eckardstein, I, pp. 292

[81] Ibid., pp. 294

[82] Wilhelm to Foreign Ministry 10 April 1998 ; GP XIVi, 3790, p. 217 ; marginal comments by Bülow

Hatzfeldt presumably referred to this communication when he complained to Eckardstein shortly after the latter's return that it was futile to continue negotiations since Berlin and particularly the Emperor had changed their mind and were now against an agreement with England.[83]

That the Emperor's dispatch was drafted by the diplomat Count Metternich, who Bülow had delegated to represent the Foreign Office at court, gives reason to speculate whether the content might have been inspired by others. Hatzfeldt was aware of this possibility when he warned Eckardstein before his journey, that the Anglophobes of Wilhelm's entourage might try to distort his representations.[84] Holstein also seems to have suspected that scaremongers had been at work on the Emperor's mind. In a letter he confided to Hatzfeldt: "The Kaiser has been afraid for some time that the English might suddenly attack us one day; Tirpitz shares this fear, and in his case I understand it, for this fear is the most effective argument in favour of either giving up our colonies *or* increasing our fleet." The counsellor then shared some reflections which the Emperor had written down: "I am only imperfectly aware of the causes of the excitement which the Kaiser suddenly demonstrated yesterday […]. In the course of the day [he] wrote several short memoranda. I quote the following short sentence from one: 'At the beginning of the next century we would have a battle fleet which […] could represent a real danger to England's fleet. Hence the intention either to force us into an alliance or to destroy us before we have become strong, like Holland in times past.'"[85] Whereas this early manifestation of what Steinberg has called the Copenhagen Complex may well have been inspired by Wilhelm's entourage, Holstein also told the Ambassador of his hunch that the Emperor's mother worked in the opposite direction and attempted to influence her son in

[83] Eckardstein, I, p. 296

[84] Eckardstein, I, p. 295

[85] Holstein to Hatzfeldt, 31 May 1898, HP IV, 656, pp. 81

favour of an alliance with Britain.[86] His notion is corroborated by two letters between Wilhelm and his mother, Kaiserin Friedrich, who was also the daughter of Queen Victoria. While a preceding letter is missing, it is clear from Wilhelm's reply that she must have had learnt of the alliance soundings under way in London and had tried to present an agreement between both powers in the best of lights. In a very detailed letter, her son drew on geopolitical arguments and on his past experiences with the British government to reject her bid, but then concluded on a more ambiguous note: "Should Government wish to get out of 'splendid isolation', promote the idea of a 'rapprochement' to me and the formation of an Alliance, then let the British Premier speak out openly and manly and officially as it is 'd'usage' among Great Powers, and I will with pleasure listen and consider. But he can never expect me to 'slip in by the back door' like a thief at night whom one does not like to own before one's richer friends."[87] Judging by this ending, critics of the initiative may have appealed to the Emperor's highly developed susceptibility to symbolic gestures and slights. Any public approach by heads of government required preparatory work in the background and the complex constellation in the British Cabinet necessitated careful manoeuvring by the British advocates of negotiations, as testified in numerous cables from the German embassy. These details apparently escaped Wilhelm's high-minded view of bilateral transactions – or they were conveniently suppressed.

In her reply, the Empress in turn, expressed her hope that the prevailing distrust on both sides would prove to be but "passing shadows" and that it would not be long before talks could begin in earnest. "I wish with all my heart that the idea floating in people's minds of an

[86] Ibid.

[87] Wilhelm to Empress Friedrich, 1 June 1898, HP IV, 657, pp. 82-84; original in English

Alliance may take *shape* and *form* and be brought forward in an official and decided way; […] till then naturally there is no other course than to watch events and avoid so good an idea being nipped in the bud; I trust nothing may happen on either side of the water to prevent its maturing."[88]

The German government, however, apparently lacked the will to let the talks rise beyond the stage of mere soundings. This attitude did not find the undivided approval of policy makers and diplomats. Rather, it was the choice which the Foreign Secretary - and probably the Emperor - favoured in the face of representations at all levels about the desirability of negotiating an agreement. Bülow himself best summarised his own position when he commented on a cable in which the Kaiser stressed the importance of a friendly disposed Britain as a trump against Russia: "The reverse applies too! The calmer our relations with Russia, the more will England care for and pamper us."; "we must keep ourselves between them, being the fulcrum of the scales, not the restless back and forward swinging pendulum."[89]

The collection of official correspondence on the alliance talks of 1898 does not include any contributions by Holstein - except for a few marginal comments. His papers also contain comparatively little. This indicates that Holstein, perhaps surprisingly, was only randomly involved in the discussions. Bülow seems to confirm this interpretation. In his memoirs, he implies that he was guided on the matter by the "thoughtfulness and sound judgement" of Oswald von Richthofen, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Holstein's contribution, on

[88] Empress Friedrich to Wilhelm, 3 June 1998, HP IV, 661, pp. 85; original in English

[89] Wilhelm to Foreign Ministry, 10 April 1898; GP XIVi, 3790, pp. 217, footnotes 5 & 6

the other hand, he dismissed as "morbid" and "wrong-headed" – yet without going into details about the nature of their differences.[90]

Richthofen's prominent role also furnishes another possible explanation for the minor part played by Holstein. In a letter to Bülow on 2 October 1898, he complained about the "political beginner" Richthofen, who had deputized for the Foreign Secretary during his long absence in the summer.[91] Holstein suspected Richthofen of being inspired by his arch-enemy Herbert von Bismarck[92], the son of the first German Chancellor. Bismarck Junior had resigned from his post as Foreign Secretary on his father's fall in 1890 but was still regarded as exercising influence on some members of the diplomatic service. Holstein therefore probably deemed it best to stay aloof and allow any complications he might have hoped for, to run their course. Bülow's - and presumably Richthofen's - conduct of Anglo-German alliance talks in 1898 indeed resemble Herbert Bismarck's advice for the Foreign Secretary of always keeping a free hand in relations with Russia and Britain.[93]

Anglo-German agreement on Portuguese colonial possessions

The summer of 1898 saw not only the inconclusive end of Anglo-German alliance talks but also the somewhat more successful negotiations between both countries on the Portuguese colonies in Africa and Timor. Portugal had been on the verge of bankruptcy for some time and the intention of the British government to pledge Portuguese possessions as security for a new loan had alarmed the Germans. Always keen to increase Germany's scarce colonial

[90] Bülow, Memoirs, vol. I, p. 504

[91] Holstein to Bülow, 2 October 1898, HP IV, 670, p. 96

[92] Ibid, p. 96

[93] Bülow, Memoirs vol. I, p. 212

possessions, the German government saw a chance to expand its territories in Southwest and East Africa, where Portugal held neighbouring Angola and Mozambique respectively. Britain at first refused to negotiate any concessions, on the ground that the envisaged loan to Portugal would be a bilateral affair of a purely financial nature. When Germany threatened to encourage France to claim its share,[94] the British government gave in. Yet another contender would have narrowed even further any territorial spoils from a future Portuguese default.

The bargaining position of Germany was favourable as the British government had determined to secure control over Delagoa Bay and the railway line to Transvaal which were both deemed of decisive strategic importance in any future war with the Boer republics, the prospect of which had become by 1898 all but certain. Salisbury, therefore, was prepared to pay a high territorial price for securing access to these possessions. And Germany was also determined to ask for a high price. As Ambassador Hatzfeldt pointed out to Salisbury on 24 June 1898, leaving Delagoa Bay and its hinterland to Britain meant abandoning the Boers to their fate. Given long-standing German sympathies for the Boers, it would make a very embarrassing impression, if Germany could not point at least to some sizeable advantages from such a deal.[95]

Directed from Berlin by Richthofen, the negotiations at times became quite acrimonious in tone, and the German Ambassador on several occasions threatened to withdraw after some tactical manoeuvres by Salisbury. Balfour on one occasion complained to Hatzfeldt that Britain never heard anything from Germany but threats of unpleasantness if some demand or another was not complied with; there were never any friendly remarks regarding England,

[94] Bülow to Hatzfeldt 17 June 1898 ; GP XIVi, 3812, p. 266

[95] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 24 June 1898 ; GP XIVi, 3819, p. 277

either with respect to China or elsewhere.[96] In response to the Ambassador's report, which also related some new objections that Salisbury had raised to details previously agreed upon, Richthofen again suggested threatening to include France in the negotiations.[97]

Both countries finally concluded a treaty on 30 August 1898, which entitled Germany to the customs receipts of the northern parts of Mozambique and Angola in the event of a Portuguese default on a future Anglo-German loan. The corresponding securities for Britain would derive from the customs receipts of the southern areas of both colonies. In addition, Britain also secured control over Delagoa Bay and the railway line to the Transvaal, and Germany a future claim on Portuguese Timor. In a secret convention Great Britain and Germany agreed jointly to oppose the intervention of any third power in these Portuguese possessions.[98]

It was this secret convention which apparently gave the German supporters of an Anglo-German agreement hope that it could form the foundation of a wider alliance. Towards the end of the year, Holstein, in a private telegram to Hatzfeldt, regretted not without sarcasm: "As the State Secretary gathered from the conversation (…) the Kaiser does not at present think of expanding the South African agreement into a possible alliance – two against two. His Majesty sees clearly the advantages to us of abandoning our position as spectator as late as possible."[99] That Holstein, by the "two" who desired an alliance, must have meant himself and the Ambassador becomes clear in Hatzfeldt's reply on 22 December 1898: "Lord Salisbury too has not yet reached the stage of thinking that he requires our help; moreover he

[96] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 18 August 1898 ; GP XIVi, 3853, pp. 320

[97] Richthofen to Hatzfeldt, 19 August 1898 ; GP XIVi, 3854, pp. 321

[98] Text of treaties, 30 August 1898, GP XIVi, 3872, pp. 347-55

[99] Holstein to Hatzfeldt, 22 December 1898, HP IV, 673, p. 101

regards any complications in the near future as out of the question. In my opinion we must wait quietly until these arise."[100]

Given the prospect of a significant increase in colonial territory, it is remarkable that Bülow did not take a greater interest in the negotiations. Instead, he entrusted the inexperienced Richthofen with their conduct and went on a long holiday. This suggests that any difficulties, magnified by Richthofen's demonstrated irritability, would not be entirely unwelcome. After Bülow had steered Germany clear of an alliance only a few weeks earlier, the soft line that both countries intended to adopt as a recipe for achieving a rapprochement by little steps held the risk that the initiative for wider talks might soon resurge. If his principal interest was keeping the free hand, it was probably an expedient tactic to undermine the mutual goodwill without taking the blame. Holstein might have suspected as much when he reproached Bülow for not taking on the responsibility for his policies and allowing Richthofen to replace the Foreign Secretary during his long absence.[101]

Protracted negotiations on the future of Samoa

On 15 March 1899, American and British warships bombarded the Samoan island Upolu. The United States, Great Britain and Germany shared supervision of Samoa. After the king of the island died, a controversy arose among the representatives of the three powers over a possible successor. The candidate recognized by the majority of the natives, as well as by the three consuls, did not find the approval of the American chief justice. Since the latter had the

[100] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 22 December 1898, HP IV, p. 101, footnote 4

[101] Holstein to Bülow, 2 October 1898, HP IV, 670, pp. 96-98

ultimate decision on that issue, he declared for the dead king's son instead. What followed was a period of civil war that culminated in the shelling of Upolu and its capital Apia.

Long before this incident, in September 1898, the German Ambassador had begun to bring up the question of Samoa in discussions with the British government. The rules governing the shared possession were deemed unsatisfying for all parties and he suggested to Balfour that a solution would further contribute to creating a lasting favourable impression between both countries.[102] At first he made no progress as Salisbury objected that a weakening of the British position in Samoa, or indeed British withdrawal, would be resisted by Australia; an argument which the Prime Minister would repeat during later stages of the negotiations.[103]

This initial procrastination – imagined or real – may account for Bülow's suspicion that the shelling, which accidentally damaged the German consulate, had been instigated by Britain in an attempt to set the US against Germany and drive the latter out of Samoa. In a telegram to the Emperor on 1 April 1899 he concluded that the Samoan incident was yet another proof that an overseas policy required a sufficiently large naval power. The duty of the moment, Bülow maintained, was to "most emphatically" spell this out in the German press.[104]

Britain and Germany needed to either find a new modus vivendi for Samoa, if they wished to uphold the joint supervision over the islands, or else to accommodate each other's territorial aspirations in the South Pacific through suitable objects of compensation. One difficulty of the ensuing negotiations was that both options were pursued in parallel. The question whether the commissioners, dispatched to find a settlement for the conflict, ought to take decisions unanimously or by majority vote was important to the Germans, who feared an Anglo-Saxon

[102] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 2 September 1898, GP XIVii, 4032, pp. 570

[103] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 8 February 1899, GP XIVii, 4040, p. 576

[104] Bülow to Foreign Ministry, 1 April 1899, GP XIVii, 4053, pp. 590-592.

plot to sideline their commissioner[105]; it even led Bülow to consider breaking off diplomatic relations if Britain would not agree to the principle of unanimity[106]. But the answer became irrelevant whenever the negotiations turned to the issue of whether Germany ought to take control over the whole of Samoa and compensate Britain with possessions in other archipelagos, or whether Germany should renounce its share in exchange for territorial gains in Africa[107].

There was plenty of friction about the size of the territorial pieces, which each side puzzled over as a possible price for taking all of Samoa, leaving Samoa, or keeping parts of it. And there was also public opinion, which in Germany took a particular fancy to the South Pacific. As Eckardstein observed, most Germans had little idea whether Samoa was the name of a fish, a bird or a girl. "The less they knew about it the louder they demanded of the government that this thing Samoa must become German and stay German for all eternity."[108]

As the negotiators could not agree on the territorial question, decision by an impartial arbitrator was considered for some time, until the British government objected to this solution. It was unclear, so ran Salisbury's objection, which criteria the arbitrator would base the ruling on and whether these criteria might not unduly favour one country over the other.[109] Even a decision by lot was considered and indeed temporarily preferred by Salisbury as a face-saving alternative to risking concessions at the negotiating table which the Australian administration might deem too high.[110] The parties finally settled for asking the

[105] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry 25 March 1899; GP XIVii, 4049, pp. 585-587

[106] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 12 April 1899; GP XIVii, 4062, p. 602

[107] The question of which voting principle to adopt only mattered if Germany shared supervision of Samoa.

[108] Eckardstein, Lebenserinnerungen vol. II, p. 41

[109] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 13 September 1899; GP XIVii, 4084, p. 631

[110] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 8 September 1899; GP XIVii, 4082, p. 628

good services of the King of Sweden to pose as arbitrator and publicly announce what solutions the negotiators would come up with, thereby avoiding any blame from public opinion.

While the procedural cosmetics were thus settled, the general discord escalated. On 22 May 1899, the German Emperor in a letter to his grandmother, Queen Victoria, complained about Salisbury's treatment of Germany in the Samoan question which, he claimed, "was utterly at variance with the manners which regulate the relations between Great Powers according to European rules of civility." The Kaiser referred to a German proposal which accordingly had been left unanswered, and to Britain's failure to express regret about the shelling of the German consulate. He then went on to blame the attitude of the British government for the distrust and coolness between both peoples.[111] Victoria in her reply backed Salisbury and reproached her grandson for the tone he used to her about the Prime Minister. The Queen attached a memorandum in which Salisbury refuted the Emperor's allegations.[112]

The relationship between Salisbury and Hatzfeldt had become so disturbed in summer 1899 that the German Ambassador asked Eckardstein to use his good rapport with Chamberlain in order to find a way of resuming negotiations.[113] Hatzfeldt expected the Colonial Secretary to be more inclined towards a compensation deal and hoped he would influence the Prime Minister accordingly.[114] Berlin desired a swift solution. As a matter of utmost urgency Bülow pushed for a satisfactory agreement before the Kaiser's visit to Britain, which was scheduled for late autumn,[115] although Hatzfeldt complained to Holstein about this regrettable

[111] Wilhelm to Queen Victoria, 22 May 1899; GP XIVii, 4074, pp. 615-619

[112] Queen Victoria to Wilhelm, 12 June 1899, PA AA R5769; GP XIVii, 4076, pp. 620-623

[113] Eckardstein, II, pp. 14-16

[114] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 31 August 1899, HP IV, 705, p. 152, footnote 2

[115] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 29 August 1899; GP XIVii, 4081, pp. 627

impatience. Any interview between Salisbury and Bülow, who would accompany Wilhelm on his visit, might, according to the Ambassador, have facilitated a favourable outcome. As far as settling for compensation was concerned, the more impatience Germany showed, the less it would be offered.[116]

Eckardstein managed to get negotiations going again. In early October he was able to present a draft agreement in which Chamberlain proposed Germany's withdrawal from Samoa in exchange for the Volta delta in West Africa and several of the English Solomon and Savage islands.[117] Hatzfeldt enthusiastically cabled Holstein that he had held such valuable concessions barely possible and expressed his hope that the German public could be educated to accept these almost inestimable advantages in place of the purely sentimental value of Samoa.[118] The German Foreign Office, apparently sharing the ambassador's enthusiasm, called a meeting of the Colonial Council and summoned Eckardstein to attend.

Meanwhile, Bülow asked the State Secretary of the Imperial Navy Office, Alfred von Tirpitz, for an opinion on renouncing the Samoan islands. In his reply Tirpitz dismissed the English Solomon Islands and the Volta Delta as insufficient compensation and reiterated that exclusive control over the whole of Samoa would be most desirable from a national, strategic and economic point of view.[119] Holstein, when he learnt about it, reportedly called Tirpitz's statement "a boastful document of the highest degree, whose oozing of gory tears, is calculated for the psyche of the Kaiser."[120] To the dismay of the colonial department the Emperor indeed withdrew his support for the British proposal after Tirpitz had submitted a

[116] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 31 August 1899, HP IV, 705, p. 152

[117] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Office, 10 October 1899; GP XIVii, 4106, pp. 658-660

[118] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 12 October 1899, HP XIVii, 713, pp. 161

[119] Tirpitz to Bülow, 11 October 1899; GP XIVii, 4107, pp. 660-662

[120] Eckardstein, II, p. 39

petition that had been demanded of him. Eckardstein was sent to bring the Naval Secretary round but abandoned his attempt as futile after having received a lecture on the future exigencies of German foreign policy.[121]

When the Colonial Council assembled on 16 October, the draft treaty was accepted by majority vote. Nevertheless, Bülow chose to reject it. Eckardstein attributed the Foreign Secretary's veto to the Kaiser's change of heart, and to the mood of public opinion which in its overwhelming majority would have been against a cession of Samoa.[122] Moreover, the Baron suspected that Bülow might have acted with a view to his chances of succeeding Chancellor Hohenlohe. The question of the Chancellor's succession was deemed imminent and would indeed be decided the following summer. In order not to lose ground against his competitors for the position, Herbert von Bismarck and Tirpitz, the Foreign Secretary might well have chosen in this case to preserve the favour of the monarch.[123]

After the German government informed the British Colonial Secretary that it would not renounce Samoa, negotiations continued on the basis of an alternative draft that stipulated a British withdrawal from the archipelago against German renunciation of claims on Tonga and the German Solomon islands. Disagreement over details gave rise to yet another few weeks of haggling and on 8 November 1899 a treaty was signed between Great Britain and Germany that was deemed by all involved as a second-best outcome in comparison to the generous offers of the earlier proposal. But Samoa was going to be German.

The Foreign Secretary's apparent fear of risking personal advantages in pursuit of the national interest would remain a defining feature of the Bülow era. It would also play an

[121] Ibid, II, p. 40

[122] Ibid, II, p. 41

[123] Ibid, II, pp. 41

important role in the gradual shift of control over foreign-policy-making to Tirpitz and the navy. If Bülow during the Samoan negotiations had really wished to push through what according to his own admission he recognised as the more advantageous option for Germany[124], he could, as an able lawyer, have found ways and procedures to minimize the impact of Tirpitz' objections. This had been an opportunity to demonstrate political stature by overriding opposition to Chamberlain's proposal. That he requested the Naval Secretary's opinion long before the meeting of the Council[125] gives the impression that he expected a negative reply. By making sure the statement reached the Emperor in time to change his mind, Bülow, with the backing of the monarch, was able to declare that Germany would keep Samoa – the course which he might indeed have preferred all along.

A private letter by Hatzfeldt on 5 November 1899 indicates, that even during the final stages of the negotiations the German government must have considered calling off the Emperor's visit to England, scheduled for 20 – 28 November, in retaliation for British intransigence over some details of the treaty. The Ambassador warned Holstein that a cancellation would not only mean the failure of the Samoa negotiation, but would also be "regarded by public opinion as a deliberate show of lack of consideration and as an insult, and it would also serve as a direct notice of the ending of our friendly relations."[126] The official correspondence on the Samoan negotiations ends on 1 November 1899 with a report by Hatzfeldt which does not contain clues to any major obstacles at that stage. Eckardstein claimed that the Prince of Wales objected to a member of the Emperor's entourage[127], and that the ensuing controversy

[124] Tirpitz to Bülow, 11 October 1899; GP XIVii, 4109, p.663

[125] Bülow wrote to Tirpitz on 10 October 1899; see GP XIVii, 4107, footnote*, p. 660

[126] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 5 November 1899, HP IV, 716, pp. 164

[127] The person in question was Admiral von Senden, Head of the Naval Cabinet, who had caused Prince Edward major embarrassment when he had reported to the Kaiser some unfavourable remarks that Edward had made in private about His Majesty; see Eckardstein, II, pp. 79-81.

had jeopardized the visit at the last minute. The editors of the official German correspondence, on the other hand, reject this account as exaggerated and maintain that the visit of the Emperor at that moment was only put in doubt by Britain's delay in bringing the Samoan Question to a satisfactory conclusion.[128]

It is remarkable, however, that even less than a week before the beginning of the visit, Hatzfeldt confidentially alerted Holstein to the setback which the recently improved mood towards Germany had suffered once more in All-Highest circles. Both the Queen and the Prince of Wales felt piqued that they had been left without any news or response to their questions about the details of the visit, the Ambassador reported. The Prince of Wales was annoyed that all his proposals for the visit had been rejected[129] and was particularly irritated that he had not yet received assurances that a "certain Admiral" would not be coming. Hatzfeldt was also concerned about a remark by Chamberlain, who had described as 'not motivated by anything' the ongoing hostility in the German press after all wishes with regard to Samoa had been satisfied, and claimed that under these circumstances nothing further could be done with Germany. For the sake of better bilateral relations, the Ambassador pleaded for treating the wishes of the hosts concerning the details of the visit with more care. He then appealed: "This is also in our interest because the Russians and French will show themselves the more cooperative to us, the more intimate they infer our relations with England to be."[130] Judging from these words, the German ambassador was under no illusions that improving Anglo-German relations was an exercise in window dressing. The further content of the cable reveals, that he had assimilated the new line apparently given out by

[128] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 15 November 1899, GP XV, 4396, p. 410, footnote*

[129] The Prince had desired a visit to Cambridge University and also proposed to visit the Duke of Devonshire. Both suggestions were turned down by the Kaiser.

[130] Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 15 November 1899, PA AA R5769

Berlin: "You know that I am far away from advocating any far reaching political agreement with England, but rather hold the view that for the time being we ought to stay on good terms with both, England as well as the Franco-Russian group, without committing ourselves for the future to any side. I have no concern that in doing so we could sit ourselves between two chairs, because, whatever may come, both sides will badly need us."[131]

The Emperor's visit to England

Wilhelm II landed at Portsmouth on 20 November 1899. His visit was highly valued by British politicians as a demonstration of friendship at a time when Britain felt isolated over hostile European reactions to the Boer War. which had begun in October. German public opinion was no different in that respect. As a consequence, the visit was given a strictly private character in order not to arouse criticism at home; the Emperor carefully avoided participating in any public event. *The Times* therefore stressed on the day of his arrival "that the friendship of Germany for this country is the friendship of the German government rather than of the German people." The editorial also emphasized the benefits of avoiding any continental entanglements and expressed the hope that Germany's colonial agreements with Britain would never be widened into a general alliance.[132]

Bülow, who accompanied the Emperor to Windsor, expressed views on Anglo-German cooperation which were quite similar to those of the newspaper's editors. During his meetings with Balfour and Chamberlain, the latter developed the notion of a comprehensive understanding between Germany, Great Britain and America. In contrast, the Foreign

[131] Ibid.

[132] The Times, 20. 11. 1898

Secretary, according to his own account, stressed his country's good relations with Russia, which would limit the scope of any general alliance. He also pointed to Britain's traditional reluctance to conclude formal alliances. Since any positive measures would therefore only create difficulties for both countries, the purpose of German foreign policy was to remove any misunderstanding and frictions by making special agreements on a case by case basis.[133] In the further course of his sojourn, Bülow became aware that Chamberlain's idea had already gained some traction: "The Prince of Wales and all daughters of the Queen indulged in the assurance, that an association between Germany, England and America would be in the interest of all three participants and would provide the best guarantee for world peace."[134]

Meanwhile, Holstein, who had remained in Berlin, must have feared that his superior might throw too much cold water and could thereby discourage the British attempts to seek a broader understanding with Germany.[135] In a missing letter, Holstein seems to have cautioned Bülow about any steps which might be directed against Britain. On 28 November Bülow replied from Sheerness to his counsellor's apparent remonstrance: "With all due modesty, I was nevertheless astonished that you believed me capable of inaugurating an irresponsible and aggressive anti-English policy as soon as we are a little stronger at sea than we are today.[…] My remark […] meant only that right now we should pursue a doubly cautious policy towards England, for on the one hand our press is constantly antagonising and

[133] Bülow, I, p. 313-315

[134] Bülow, Record of visit, 24 November 1899, PA AA R5769

[135] In Summer 1899 Holstein was at the point of renouncing his position at the Foreign Office. He disagreed with the planned German assent to a permanent court of international arbitration as an outcome of the first Peace Conference at The Hague. The conference was a Russian initiative and German agreement to the court of arbitration was deemed necessary in order not to offend Russia. Holstein blamed Bülow for his "political seasickness" and observed that he easily yielded wherever Russia was concerned. (Holstein to Bülow, 24 June 1899, HP, IV, 689, pp. 130) Behind such a Russophile attitude Holstein suspected the influence of his political enemy Herbert von Bismarck. Bülow managed to convince the counsellor to stay on, after the Kaiser rejected his letter of resignation and gave Holstein a signed photograph as proof of his confidence.

challenging England, whereas, on the other hand, we are not even strong enough at sea to deal with England defensively, and would be at England's mercy like butter under a knife."[136]

The rampant Anglophobia of the German press had also been a subject of the Foreign Secretary's interviews with British politicians and with the Queen, who expressed her preoccupation and warned him that her subjects might eventually lose their patience if they were insulted too much. In the summary of his political conversations, Bülow observed that the general public opinion in England was much less anti-German than the mood in Germany was anti-English. The most dangerous Englishmen[137] for Germany were therefore those who knew from their own experience the acuteness and depth of the German aversion against Britain, he reasoned, and concluded that, if the English public became aware of the prevailing sentiment in Germany, it would completely transform their perceptions of Anglo-German relations.[138]

Chamberlain's fresh attempt

The imperial visit was widely regarded as a success. It improved Wilhelm's relationship with his English relatives, which had suffered in the past, and it represented a friendly gesture to Britain which public opinion welcomed as an expression of the cordial relations between both powers.[139] Despite the reserve that the German Foreign Secretary claims to have expressed about Chamberlain's insinuations of a general agreement, the Colonial Secretary apparently

[136] Bülow to Holstein, 28 November 1899, HP IV, 720, pp. 167

[137] Bülow identified the dangerous Englishmen he had in mind as Valentine Chirol, the editor of *The Times* and George Saunders , the newspaper's Berlin correspondent.

[138] Bülow, Record of visit, 24 November 1899, PA AA R5769; GP XV, 4398, pp. 413-420

[139] Eckardstein to Hatzfeldt, 30 November 1899, GP XV, 4400, pp. 421

was inspired by his meeting with Bülow to publicly announce his vision. During a speech at Leicester on 30 November 1899 he advocated a "natural alliance" between Britain and Germany.

In a letter to Eckardstein on the next day, he explained: "Count v. Bülow whose acquaintance I was delighted to make […] greatly impressed me. He expressed a wish that I might be able to say something as to the mutual interests which bound the United States to a triple understanding with Germany as well as Great Britain. Hence my speech yesterday which I hope will be not unsatisfactory to him."[140]

But Chamberlain hoped in vain. His advances were far from being welcome. In December 1899 the German government intended to bring the second Naval Bill through the Reichstag. Naval expansion, its advocates argued, was vital to protect German trade, which would otherwise be at the mercy of Germany's greatest competitor, England. A powerful fleet would provide the means to defend German overseas interests against British envy of commercial success. The prospect of peaceful co-operation between both countries was therefore difficult to square with the bugbear that was required for political purposes.

Eckardstein, aware that the colonial secretary's speech might not go down well with Bülow, advised Holstein on 1 December to use restraint in any response: "Though Chamberlain's speech was perhaps a trifle too sanguine and may have been a bit awkward for Count Bülow and German diplomacy, at least for the moment I believe all the same that Chamberlain should be kept in a good frame of mind - even if cautiously – for the future." The Baron stressed the Colonial Secretary's possible usefulness in future negotiations, given that he was the most powerful person in the British Cabinet and had the support of the great masses.[141]

[140] Eckardstein to Holstein, 2 December 1899, HP IV, 721, pp. 168-70, footnote 1.

[141] Eckardstein to Holstein, 1 December 1899, HP IV, 721, p.169

Hatzfeldt reported to the German Chancellor Hohenlohe that Chamberlain, in speaking of an alliance, either had the backing of Salisbury or was confident that the majority of his cabinet colleagues shared his wishes and would influence the Prime Minister accordingly. Like Eckardstein, the Ambassador was convinced that keeping the Colonial Secretary's goodwill would bring advantages: "It can be only useful for us […] if Mr. Chamberlain, without any commitment from our side, holds on to the hope that we will eventually allow ourselves to give in to his requests regarding an alliance or at least an intimate agreement. As long as he holds on to this hope, he will deal cooperatively with any colonial questions that may yet emerge and – as in the Samoa negotiations – will bring his influence to bear for us in the Cabinet and particularly on Lord Salisbury."[142] On the margin of this dispatch the Emperor scribbled his agreement with Hatzfeldt's view.[143]

Holstein on the other hand remembered the Secretary of State expecting Chamberlain's advances. "On his return Bülow told me what Chamberlain had said, without passing any criticism of it. He just said we could probably expect concrete proposals from England soon because Chamberlain was powerful enough to impose his view on his ministerial colleagues. Bülow had obviously left Chamberlain under the impression that the idea of an Anglo-German rapprochement was well received by Germany."[144]

Despite the warnings of his diplomats and his apparent role in encouraging the Colonial Secretary to come forward, Bülow on 11 December delivered a speech in the Reichstag in which he clearly, and to Holstein's observation scornfully, rejected an Anglo-German partnership. While not directly mentioning Chamberlain's offer, he reiterated that Germany's

[142] Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 2 December 1899, PA AA R5769; GP XV, 4401, pp. 425

[143] Ibid. p. 426 footnote 1.

[144] HP I, p. 182, footnote 1

security rested on the Triple Alliance and good relations with Russia,, and stressed that the country needed a fleet that allowed it to resist an attack by any other power.[145] Holstein was surprised by this clear rejection and recalled that Bülow had avoided seeing him for a few days before the speech.[146]

Meanwhile, Chamberlain was deeply hurt. To prevent the resentment from spreading, as Hatzfeldt put it, he instructed Eckardstein to convey Bülow's assurances to Chamberlain about the benign intentions of his speech. If necessary, the Baron was even to travel to Birmingham where the Colonial Secretary had his home. Germany, according to the highly confidential communication, would never engage in any activity or Continental grouping designed to embarrass Britain. Accordingly, the speech had become necessary because political opponents continuously insinuated that the German government would sacrifice the country's interests in secret treaties with England. Chamberlain therefore ought to ignore the tendentious and wrong interpretations of Bülow's speech by the Franco-Russian press.[147]

Eckardstein described the British reactions to the speech in a letter to Holstein: "I have had to face for a few days the assaults of newspaper proprietors, Cabinet Ministers, the Rothschilds as well as of the Royal family. I calmed down all of them, even Chamberlain, who momentarily tended to see in the speech a cold douche for himself."[148] The Colonial Secretary was still sore however, when he sent Eckardstein his greetings for the new year. He doubted the further prospects of an Anglo-German understanding and regretted that: "Everything was going so well, and even Lord Salisbury had become quite favourable and in

[145] Penzler, pp. 88-94

[146] HP I, p. 182, footnote 2

[147] Eckardstein, II, pp. 126

[148] Eckardstein to Holstein, 21 December 1899, HP IV, 723, pp. 171-174.

entire agreement with us as to the future developments of Anglo-German relations. But alas it was not to be."[149]

This episode demonstrates once again that the Foreign Secretary, who would become Chancellor in the following year, was not willing to consider the possibility of an alliance seriously. He even went as far as to exploit Chamberlain's good faith by a demonstration of Germany's independence in foreign affairs. Bülow might have hoped with his speech to stamp out the discussion of an alliance once and for all. The more so, as he was aware of Chamberlain's power over the masses and had recognized the polarizing effect that arousing British public opinion against Germany must create. Despite his repeated claims to the contrary, the anti-British direction of his policy was obvious. On the other hand, some of his diplomats, most prominently those at the London Embassy, preferred a course that might bring the two countries into closer relations. Even if they recognized that a full-blown alliance would not materialize in the immediate future, they believed in the genuine wish of at least parts of the British Cabinet to come to an understanding with Germany. And they were willing to listen and discuss. Hatzfeldt's assessment that Chamberlain probably had the backing of the Prime Minister was confirmed by Chamberlain's new year's letter to Eckardstein. Holstein, who had not expected Bülow to publicly dismiss the idea of an alliance with Great Britain, became suspicious of his intentions. Naval expansion and the need for a powerful rival to justify it in parliament has already been mentioned as a domestic reason to avoid closer ties with Britain. The discontent among diplomats with the State Secretary's conduct of Anglo-German relations may point to yet another domestic motive for his inflexible approach. In accordance with their profession the officials at the foreign ministry and at the embassy in London were used to keeping an open mind when it came to bilateral

[149] Eckardstein, Engl. edition, p. 151

proposals which might prove advantageous to their country. Bülow's actions, which do not sit well with his own credentials as a career diplomat, may indicate that he wanted to shut down once and for all any prospects of a rapprochement with Britain. His future success as Chancellor would depend on ensuring Germany's naval expansion. Nipping any soundings for closer co-operation in the bud now and scorching the soil in which they could grow, would make it easier to deliver this objective. He knew that as long as diplomats talked to diplomats there was always a chance for new initiatives. Acting now and thereby allowing both countries to drift further apart, reduced the probability that any promising impulses might result from such dialogue in the near future and enabled him to focus his energies on the new role. Following this rationale, the intransigence with which Bülow discouraged any attempts of *rapprochement* resulted from his fear of independent minded foreign office staff who could undermine his objective of delivering naval expansion. If there was no realistic chance for an alliance left, his diplomats would have to fall into line and his project - and hence position - was safe.

Abortive alliance talks and the controversy over Bülow's course

A year after Bülow's speech in the Reichstag had buried the hopes for an Anglo-German rapprochement, which some German diplomats might have fostered, the German Ambassador on 18 January 1901 reported a new British initiative.[150] Eckardstein had just returned from a visit to Chatsworth, the residence of the Duke of Devonshire. During a political conversation with the Baron, Chamberlain and the host had declared that the time of "splendid isolation" was over, and that some other cabinet members advocated Britain's joining the Dual

[150] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 18 January 1901; GP XVII, 4979, pp. 14-16

Alliance. The Duke and the Colonial Secretary, on the other hand, claimed to prefer an alliance with Germany or the Triple Alliance. Nevertheless, if the German option turned out not to be feasible, they were also prepared to consider the heavy sacrifices which an alliance with France and Russia would entail in terms of concessions in Morocco, Persia and China.[151]

Hatzfeld, in a follow-up to his first report, claimed himself vindicated in his long- standing assumption that Germany had only to wait until England would feel a need for support. While it might still be too early for an alliance, the Ambassador argued, there was a good chance that Britain would become increasingly dependent upon Germany as its relations with other powers further cooled.[152]

Bülow's reluctance to welcome this new attempt initiating potentially far- reaching talks between both countries is evident from his reply which opened: "Completely agree that we wait and leave England the initiative"[153]. The Foreign Secretary then pointed to a recent incident of Anglo-Portuguese fraternization during the visit of a British navy squadron in Lisbon, which he interpreted as a symptom for Britain's disavowing the Southern African treaty with Germany. He also recalled German frustration over the lengthy Samoan negotiations and asked the Ambassador to remind his British conversation partners of these new causes for mistrusting Britain, if they brought up the desirability of an Anglo-German understanding.[154]

The death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901 disrupted the pursuit of the alliance question on an official level. Meanwhile, the Kaiser had travelled to his grandmother's deathbed. He

[151] Eckardstein, II, p. 236

[152] Hatzfeldt to Foreign Ministry, 18 January 1901; GP XVII, 4980, pp. 16

[153] Hatzfeldt, although probably agreeing that England ought to make the first step, had not explicitly mentioned this in his cable.

[154] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 20 January 1901; GP XVII, 4981, pp. 17

was also going to meet Salisbury and Lansdowne, who had taken over the Foreign Office from the Prime Minister the previous year. The chances were that the subject would be raised in their conversation. The Emperor wrote to Bülow on 20 January that Eckardstein had informed him about Chamberlain's new initiative and triumphantly closed his cable with the observation that "they" were coming round as expected.[155]

It is remarkable how Bülow in his reply bent the Emperor's words to suit his argument. He wrote that His Majesty was "completely right in the perception that the English must approach us." He suggested neither discouraging the English nor allowing them to tie down Germany too early, as British difficulties would increase in the coming months and hence so would the price that Germany could charge.[156] Apart from the obvious intent of preventing the Kaiser from getting excited and starting alliance talks on his own account, this cable provides a good illustration of the skills that earned Bülow the nickname "the eel" among his colleagues of the diplomatic service.

Holstein shared the view that it was too early to agree to an alliance on terms that would be acceptable to Germany. In dispatches to Eckardstein and Hatzfeldt he dismissed the possibility of a British agreement with France and Russia and reasoned that Britain needed to feel the pinch of its certain predicament before it would appreciate Germany's support.[157] But the counsellor apparently hoped that this pinch was nigh. On 17 March he impatiently wrote to Eckardstein that it was quite typical of the British government not say a word about any

[155] Wilhelm to Bülow, 20 January 1901; GP XVII, 4982, p. 19

[156] Bülow to Wilhelm, 21 January 1901; GP XVII, 4983, pp. 20

[157] Holstein to Eckardstein, 21 January 1901; GP XVII, 4985, pp. 22

alliance now. He nevertheless prohibited the Baron from mentioning an alliance on his own initiative.[158]

Only two days later, Eckardstein reported back that a British approach had been made. Lansdowne during a lunch had raised the question of a long-term defensive arrangement between Britain and Germany.[159] What ensued over the following two months has been analysed extensively in numerous accounts. A brief outline will therefore suffice. It seems beyond doubt that Eckardstein tried, against his instructions, to get alliance negotiations going and that it was he who suggested to Lansdowne that his government was interested in a defensive alliance against France and Russia. The Baron must have believed that he could fool both parties into an understanding by insinuating to each side how dearly the other desired an agreement. The absence of the ailing German Ambassador prevented Eckardstein's bluff from being called. His strategy only failed when Hatzfeldt, in late May, returned to London in order to conduct the negotiations himself. Neither the German nor the British Foreign Office fully realized the extent to which they had been duped. Eckardstein, whose role was not revealed, even acted as *chargé d'affaires* for some time after Hatzfeldt, presumably at the Baron's instigation, lost his position as Ambassador over his illness and the alleged complications he had brought into the negotiations.[160]

While the British approach therefore was not genuine, the reaction in Berlin was. Bülow on 20 March drafted his response. The Chancellor pointed out that a defensive treaty would be limited to the preservation of existing territories and would not extend to the acquisition of new possessions. He stressed that even such an arrangement would have a significant impact

[158] Eckardstein, II, p.279

[159] Eckardstein to Holstein, 19 March 1901; GP XVII, 4994, pp. 41

[160] For a brief account see Langer, pp. 727-735, for a more comprehensive analysis Rich, pp. 611-662.

on Germany's partners in the Triple Alliance, which as a consequence might be drawn into a conflict with a third power. Hence, before Germany could commit itself to a defensive arrangement it would have to seek the agreement of its allies. As the German Foreign Office would therefore not be able to give a definite answer, Bülow suggested that Britain approached Austria-Hungary instead.[161]

This time Bülow met open resistance from the Foreign Office. In an internal note counsellor Klehmet pointed out that a defensive alliance with Britain would find broad acceptance. Despite the opposition of some chauvinist fanatics, there was widespread support, Klehmet argued, for an alliance that aimed at preserving current possessions rather than acquiring new ones. Before any further colonial acquisitions were made, the existing territories ought to be developed economically.[162] Moreover, Klehmet questioned the decision to refer England to Austria when it wanted an alliance with Germany; it would be Germany's business to come to terms with Austria.[163]

Holstein depicted Bülow's intransigence in his memoirs: "I pointed out that Germany's entering upon an alliance with England would not be an act of disloyalty towards Austria and Italy because judging by the world situation, the aims of the Anglo-German alliance would presumably never prejudice Austrian or Italian interests. It was no use. One had the impression that Bülow seized on every obstacle standing in the way of the alliance."[164]

[161] Bülow to Hatzfeldt, 20 March 1901; GP XVII, 4996, pp. 44. The British government would resort to the same tactic six years later when it threw a spanner into negotiations on the Baghdad railway, which the Emperor had attempted to reanimate during a visit to Britain in 1907. Rather than to proceed on a bilateral basis, Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, demanded that Britain's entente partners France and Russia would be included in the talks. See chapter 4.

[162] In a marginal note Bülow rejected this point as not being acceptable to public opinion; see Klehmet, Memorandum, 20 March 1901, GP XVII, 4995, p. 43-45, footnote 4

[163] Klehmet, Memorandum, 20 March 1901; GP XVII, 4995, pp. 43

[164] HP I, pp. 182

The line of the Chancellor was adopted nonetheless, and instructions were sent to Eckardstein accordingly. The Baron, however, chose to avoid any complications and did not pass on the German demand that a defensive alliance should include the Triple Alliance as a whole. It was only when Hatzfeldt met Lansdowne on 23 May that the British side became fully aware of this condition[165] and subsequently Britain avoided taking up the thread again.

The German documents on the alliance talks stretch into early August. They include some internal memoranda which show the extent to which Bülow's position prevailed by then. Even Holstein, who according to his own account had opposed the Chancellor's demand for an inclusion of Austria-Hungary and Italy, now provided a detailed analysis of why any arrangement with Britain must extend to Germany's alliance partners as well.[166] Eckardstein's report on 29 July of his conversation with Sir Frank Lascelles, the British ambassador to Berlin, made it clear that an alliance on the German terms could not be had.[167]

In December 1901 the new German Ambassador, Count Paul Metternich, had a meeting with Lansdowne in which the latter raised the alliance issue. He pointed out that public opinion would be against such new and onerous obligations, and that "from a parliamentary point of view it was undoubtedly a stiff fence to ride at." Metternich, while agreeing that times were not favourable to pursue this question, objected that the opportunity might never return and hinted at a possible German rapprochement with Russia. He rejected Lansdowne's suggestions of more limited agreements between both countries and maintained that it was a question of "the whole or none."[168]

---

[165] Rich, p. 653

[166] Holstein, Memorandum, 14 June 1901; GP XVII, 5019, p. 83-88

[167] Eckardstein to Holstein, 29 June 1901; GP XVII, 5021, pp. 90-92

[168] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 19 December 1901; PRO CAB 37/59/141

A draft dispatch by Lansdowne, briefing Lascelles on 19 December 1901 about this conversation, contains a marginal comment by Chamberlain which may serve as a prelude for the years to come: "This means that the British government has no further intention of concluding any arrangements with Germany which would prevent or impede the development of good relations with Russia and if possible with France."[169]

Conclusion

During the period discussed in this chapter, Bülow conducted Germany's policy towards Great Britain according to the principle of maintaining a free hand. He consistently pursued this course even when repeatedly faced with the opportunity of negotiating an agreement that might have brought both countries into a close alliance. Bülow firmly rejected all initiatives by British politicians to take up discussions, and did not stop short even at publicly deriding their efforts at initiating an understanding. He was aware that the British initiative had the backing of the Cabinet and could also count on a majority in parliament. From his own observations, which he had made when he accompanied the Emperor on a visit to England, he knew also that members of the Royal Family supported the idea of a far-reaching arrangement with Germany. On the other hand, he had recognized that by ridiculing the foremost champion of an Anglo-German alliance, who was widely popular with the electorate, he might create a backlash of British public opinion, which would forestall any further negotiations. And this was probably why he chose the policy he did. Closer relations with Britain were not compatible with the massive naval expansion which Germany would

[169] Ibid.

undergo during his Chancellorship. Any moves in the direction of a bilateral understanding would complicate his task of pushing the necessary laws through the Reichstag. By eliminating the remaining prospects of a rapprochement, he made sure that his diplomats could not undermine the course to which he was committed. It is therefore possible to interpret the choices taken as the outcome of a struggle among policy makers to define British policy, in which the new Chancellor had kept the upper hand.

He thereby acted in opposition to some of the leading members of his foreign-policy staff. Their disagreement with his conduct of Anglo-German relations is evident from the documents consulted. While criticism of his course was generally masked as professional advice, discontent became more pronounced and outspoken towards the end of the period when it culminated in an open debate at the Foreign Ministry about Bülow's demand to include the Triple Alliance partners in possible negotiations on a defensive alliance with Britain. That his critics at the Foreign Ministry apparently adjusted their reasoning to his course may be a manifestation of their professionalism. Whether they agreed with the direction of 'Englandpolitik' or whether the split over the appropriate policy widened, will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter II

Consolidation of 'Personal Rule' and Challenges to Bülow's Control over Foreign Affairs, 1902-1904.

The chapter focuses on the growing gulf between the German Chancellor and his foreign office staff. It investigates how diplomats who were uneasy about the course of Bülow's British policy, challenged his control over foreign affairs. This includes an analysis of the ways in which individual members of the foreign office attempted to exploit the Chancellor's weakening position with the Emperor.

The indignation of German public opinion at Britain's conduct of the Boer War stands at the beginning of the period covered here. The skirmishes between the national presses in both countries escalated when Chamberlain delivered a speech which was deemed by German observers to insult the Prussian army. Bülow's public rejoinder cemented the antagonism that would accompany bilateral relations for years to come. Its political fall-out materialized throughout the year 1902 and exacerbated the discontent of German diplomats. The failing attempts at Anglo-German cooperation on the international periphery during the following year demonstrated to both sides that a rapprochement was out of the question for the time being. The announcement of the Anglo-French entente in 1904 was followed by a power struggle at the Wilhelmstrasse for control over foreign-policy-making.

Chamberlain's Edinburgh speech and its repercussions

The unease with which German diplomats regarded their Chancellor's barely concealed opposition to closer ties with Britain was articulated during a farewell address in Hamburg by the ambassador Count Paul Metternich. Shortly after his appointment as German ambassador to London, he had criticised the attacks on England that were prevalent in Germany at the time, as a "policy of adolescence". Holstein, on remembering this incident in his diary, also recalled that Metternich in an earlier conversation with him had predicted: "As long as Bülow is around, there'll never be a rapprochement with England."[170]

The count's remark on the immature nature of German attitudes towards England came at a time when Anglophobia in Germany was rampant. With the war in South Africa reaching its final stages, the imminent defeat of the Boers provoked a wave of sympathy across continental Europe for their plight. Like their counterparts in other parts of the continent, German newspapers denounced the mistreatment of Boer civilians at the hands of the British army. The British papers dismissed these accusations, and countered them by demonstrating to their readers how German soldiers during the Franco-Prussian War did not act any more humanely. In order to underpin the argument with historical evidence, *The Times* quoted extensively from German army orders from 1870/71.

These press skirmishes escalated on 25 October 1901 when Joseph Chamberlain echoed the public mood in Britain during a speech in Edinburgh: "I think, that the time has come – is coming – when measures of greater severity may be necessary and if that time comes we can find precedents for anything we may do in the action of those nations who now criticise our

[170] Diary entry, 11 January 1902, HP IV, 792 pp.244-246

"barbarity" and "cruelty" but whose examples in Poland, in the Caucasus, in Armenia, in Tonking, in Bosnia, in the Franco-German war we have never even approached. (Cheers)"[171]

While the European correspondents of British papers reported several angry reactions to the Colonial Secretary's statement in the continental press in the following days, the uproar of public opinion was nowhere louder and more widespread than in Germany. Local rallies of citizens and professional groups decried the supposed insult which the German army had suffered by its achievements being compared to the atrocities believed to be committed by British troops in South Africa. In response to this outburst, *The Times* published a series of articles on the extent of Anglophobia prevailing in Germany.

The German ambassador grew concerned about the impact which the reports from Germany were having on public opinion in Britain. In a letter he warned Bülow: "The German protest meetings with their immoderate accusations of every kind against England's conduct of the war have aroused great bitterness in all circles here, including those in which Chamberlain's statement was regarded as uncalled for." Metternich then went on to caution the Chancellor about the consequences of a public rejoinder to the Colonial Secretary's remarks: "If you should be forced to contradict Chamberlain's latest statements in the Reichstag, thereby implicitly making an accusation against English methods of war, you will make him into a personal enemy and also an opponent of German policy and this he will probably remain." Official and unofficial circles, according to Metternich, would then no longer regard the German Chancellor as a friend of England.[172]

Bülow was aware of Metternich's warnings when he decided to take the first step towards escalating the matter into a question of official bilateral relations: on 21 November he

[171] The Times, 26.10.1901

[172] Metternich to Bülow, 19 November 1901, HP IV, 785, p.236-37

instructed the German ambassador to stress in his interview with the British Foreign Secretary the tactlessness and clumsiness of Chamberlain's speech, which had re-fuelled the anti-English sentiment in Germany.[173] In a further instruction to Metternich a few days later, he reiterated that the "undisputable provocation" had come from the British side, and had complicated the attempts of the German government to maintain a friendly position towards England.[174]

Lansdowne, according to his own account of the German ambassador's representations, pointed out to Metternich that the misconstruction of the Colonial Secretary's speech in Germany derived from the point of departure of public opinion that the British army was guilty of cruelty. This, however, was not the case, and therefore Chamberlain had not accused the German army of having committed worse atrocities, but merely stressed that even the resort to more severe measures in South Africa would still be "in accordance with the practice of civilised nations." The Foreign Secretary thus rejected the ambassador's demand for a written note or public statement from Chamberlain, that no offence was intended: "I replied that it seemed to me impossible for Mr. Chamberlain to adopt such a course without putting himself in the position of offering an apology for a speech which, in our opinion, did not call for one."[175]

A week later, Metternich in vain renewed his efforts to extract such a written declaration from the British government, which, as he explained, the German Chancellor could refer to when interrogated on the issue in the Reichstag.[176] That Bülow might be induced to repudiate

[173] GP XVII, 5073, p. 194, footnote*

[174] Bülow to Metternich, 26 November 1901, GP XVII, pp 195-97, 5074

[175] Lansdowne to Buchanan, 26 November 1901, BD I, 326, p.263-64

[176] Lansdowne to Buchanan, 3 December 1901, BD I, 328, pp. 265-66

Chamberlain's language during the next session of the German parliament was also the impression of George Buchanan, the British chargé d'affaires in Berlin.[177] A leading article in *The Times*, on the other hand, welcomed the prospect of an interpellation in the Reichstag as "an opportunity of defining the attitude of the German government towards this agitation", and expressed confidence that the Chancellor would counteract the anti-English campaign which was harming bilateral relations. The leader closed by warning that otherwise Germany's English policy might come to be seen in Britain as driven by hostile public opinion rather than "the wise and friendly statesmanship of German rulers."[178]

Bülow's rejoinder and the public reactions

The interpellation did not come until the new year, however, and after two months had passed since Chamberlain's offence, it seemed increasingly unlikely that the matter would further occupy the diplomats of both countries. Nonetheless, when the conservative parliamentarian and leading member of the Pan-German League Count Udo Stollberg-Wernigerode challenged Bülow in the Reichstag on 8 January about the protests against Chamberlain, the German Chancellor knew exactly what would be coming: far from letting the matter rest, Bülow himself had arranged for the question and even its wording during a meeting with Stollberg on 1 January.[179] During the ensuing speech, Bülow rejected Chamberlain's remarks as an attempt to distort "the heroic character and moral foundations of our struggle for national unity." He then suggested that the German army was far above being affected by

[177] Buchanan to Lansdowne, 20 November 1901, BD I, 325, pp. 262-63

[178] The Times, 20.11.1901

[179] Report by Conrad 31.12.01, BA Berlin R43/14.

such insinuations, and ended by quoting Frederick the Great: "Leave the man alone, and don't excite yourselves, he is biting granite."

Some days before his "Granite Speech", the officials at the Wilhelmstrasse, had become aware of Bülow's intentions and - concerned about the likely impact across the Channel – tried at least to moderate the tone of the response. Otto Hammann, head of the foreign office's press department,warned Bülow that a sharp statement could be interpreted in Britain as leniency towards exaggerated public emotions and that such a rejoinder at least ought to be supplemented by very strong words against the excesses of Anglophobia.[180] In his diary Holstein marvelled over the motives for the speech, which he regarded as the Chancellor's greatest mistake, and blamed his anti-British predisposition: "I don't know, what caused Bülow to let fly against all the advice he had received from Richthofen, Hammann, Fischer and myself. Perhaps he thought that by doing so, a rapprochement with England would be rendered impossible for the time being."[181]

That the Chancellor's speech might drive both countries further apart was a concern shared by Valentine Chirol, editor of *The Times* and a longtime acquaintance of Holstein. In a letter to the counsellor on 12 January he predicted that these statements "have certainly destroyed for the present the hopes and rendered futile the endeavors of those who looked to a narrowing rather than a broadening of the estrangement between the two countries."[182] Reactions in Britain appeared to underpin Chirol's assessment: in a dispatch to the Chancellor, Metternich compared the unanimity with which the British public took the side of

[180] Note by Hammann 05.01.02, Nachl. Hammann, BA Berlin, N2106/ Nr. 7,

[181] Diary entry, 11 January 1902, HP IV, 792, p. 244

[182] Chirol to Holstein, 12 January 1902, HP IV, 793, p. 246

its Colonial Secretary with the reactions after the Jameson Raid in 1896.[183] Holstein drew the same parallel when he called the speech a "Krueger telegram on a small scale." The counsellor by then assumed that domestic reasons, namely the quest for popularity had tempted Bülow to deliver his remarks. [184]

Winzen's research has suggested that by delivering his speech, Bülow seized an opportunity to improve his relations with conservative parliamentarians who had been alienated by a projected tariff reform.[185] The Tariff Bill attempted to strike a compromise between industry's call for low bread prices and thus low wages, and agrarian demand for protection against cheap imports of wheat and rye from Russia. Its first reading in the Reichstag one month earlier had shown that a majority would reject the bill, mainly because agrarians deemed the intended tariffs too low. Despite the widespread acclaim among parliamentarians for Bülow's insult to Chamberlain, it is unlikely however, that this single performance by the Chancellor might have turned the tide. After all, it would still take until the end of the year for the bill to pass the Reichstag.[186]

Consequences of the Granite Speech for Anglo-German relations

Holstein suspected that Bülow was going to pay a high price for his pursuit of domestic popularity; particularly, if the Kaiser came to feel the repercussions of the rejoinder in the

[183] Metternich to Bülow, Ber. Nr. 17, 17.1.1902, London Embassy files G/11)

[184] Diary entry, 14 January 1902, HP IV, 794, p. 247

[185] Winzen, pp. 380-381

[186] The bill which cemented the so-called "marriage of iron and rye" was approved on 14.12.1902

form of the ceasing of family visits from England.[187] These fears were indeed well founded, and would not take long to materialize.

On the occasion of his birthday, on 27th January, Wilhelm looked forward to the visit of his cousin George, the Prince of Wales. King Edward had suggested this visit during the Christmas correspondence between both monarchs and the Kaiser had warmly welcomed the idea.

Annoyed by the news about Bülow's speech , Edward at first proposed to his Foreign Secretary to shorten the visit in order to demonstrate his displeasure with the behaviour of the German Chancellor.[188] On 15th January however, he wrote to his nephew cancelling the visit altogether: "I must confess that since reading the violent speeches which have been made quite recently in the Reichstag against England, and especially against my Colonial Minister and my Army, which show such a strong feeling of animosity against my country, I think that under the circumstances it would be better for him [George] not to go where he is liable to be insulted or be treated by the public in a manner which I feel sure no one would regret more than yourself." He then went on to complain how the German press had distorted the meaning of Chamberlain's remarks and how despite repeated assurances which his Foreign Secretary had given to the German ambassador, Bülow had refrained from explaining to the Reichstag that the Colonial Secretary had not intended to insult the German army. The King also expressed his regret that the German government neither checked nor discouraged the insults heaped on his own army by the German public.[189]

[187] Diary entry, 14 Januar 1902, HP IV, 794, p. 247

[188] Lee, S.: King Edward VII, vol.2, p. 137

[189] Ibid., pp. 138-139

Observing that preparations for the visit of the Prince of Wales seemed to continue unabated, the British ambassador, Sir Frank Lascelles, approached Wilhelm on 22nd January during a memorial service at the English church in Berlin on the anniversary of the death of Queen Victoria. When confronted with a copy of Edward's letter the Emperor claimed that he had never received it, and getting considerably irritated observed that the abandonment of the prince's visit at this stage would be publicly regarded as a personal offence to him. In his agitation he even went so far as to threaten to recall Metternich, at which Lascelles hinted that the withdrawal of the German ambassador would most likely also result in the end of his own mission to Berlin.[190] The ambassador reminded the Kaiser that he had repeatedly warned him, as well as Bülow and Oswald von Richthofen, the Secretary of State for foreign affairs, about the acute irritation which the violent abuse during the Boer War had produced in England, and that he had told the Wilhelmstrasse officials to brace themselves for a sharp retort from England to Bülow's distinctly unfriendly speech.

Lascelles cabled a first summary of this conversation to London. Lansdowne replied that the King would allow the visit of the Prince of Wales if the Emperor wrote a letter asking for the visit not to be abandoned and assuring the King that no regrettable incidents would attend it.[191] Wilhelm wrote a letter in such terms on the same day and read it to the ambassador. Its content was deemed satisfactory and the Prince departed for Berlin. While the royal visit thus went ahead as originally scheduled, reportedly in an amiable atmosphere and without any further events that could have marred the encounter of the two cousins, the political fallout of the Granite speech would gradually become perceptible.

[190] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 22 January 1902, BD, Vol. I, No. 335 & 24 January 1902, 336, pp. 270-271

[191] Lansdowne to Lascelles, 22 January 1902, BD, Vol. I, No.334, p. 269

When Eckardstein met Chamberlain during a royal reception in early February, he observed a lively conversation between the Colonial Secretary and the French ambassador Paul Cambon. In his memoirs the baron claimed that on this occasion he overheard the two men mentioning Morocco and Egypt. Eckardstein also managed to speak to Chamberlain at the reception and described how the latter vented his anger at his treatment by the German Chancellor and press. In revoking the "cold shower" he had received when Bülow had publicly rejected his alliance proposal in 1899, Chamberlain complained that the Chancellor had once again embarrassed him in the Reichstag. He had now had enough, he said, and there could no longer be any question of an Anglo-German rapprochement.[192]

In September 1902 Eckardstein visited the Colonial Secretary at his country home near Birmingham. During their conversation after dinner, Chamberlain reiterated his reluctance to engage in further negotiations. Dealing with Berlin was a "bad job", he declared, because the key figures in Germany did not know what they wanted and could not be relied upon. At least as long as Bülow was at the helm, he would not even lift his little finger to bring about an understanding with Germany.[193]

The political damage was thus done. Bülow had acted against the advice of his diplomats who, aware of his Anglophobe inclinations, had repeatedly warned him of the dire consequences of publicly rebuffing the British Colonial Secretary. The Chancellor chose to seek the praise of the Pan-Germans and thus gave the *coup de grace* to any remaining hopes for an Anglo-German rapprochement.

[192] Eckardstein, vol. 2, p. 377

[193] Eckardstein, vol. 2, p. 397; see also: Eckardstein to Bülow, 14 September 1902, PA AA R5772, where E. omits Chamberlain's direct reference to Bülow, but leaves no doubt that the British Colonial Secretary had turned against Germany and would hardly change his mind again any time soon.

Looking back at its repercussions, Holstein in his memoirs observed that there was no single problem other than Bülow's speech which had caused the final breaking off of alliance negotiations: "For this to happen, it was necessary to bring out the heavy artillery as Bülow did when he openly insulted England's leading statesman in the Reichstag, an action almost without precedent in the history of the Great Powers except in time of war;"[194]

While Holstein alleged once more that Bülow's suspicions of England had predisposed him to deliver his brusque rebuff, he did not think the Chancellor capable of acting on his own initiative and thereby endangering his position – a step, according to Holstein, quite foreign to Bülow's nature. Rather, it must have been the Kaiser, who wished to exploit Britain's weakened international position resulting from the Boer War and who had therefore inspired Bülow to intimidate England. The idea, reasoned the counsellor, that England could be bullied to make her more docile was a characteristic feature of Wilhelm's thought processes.[195]

That Bülow did not aspire to better relations with England has become abundantly clear; that the Kaiser, however, would support measures which could directly lead to deteriorating relations with Britain is a more problematic allegation, as there is abundant proof of Wilhelm's admiration for his mother's home country and his desire to please his English relatives. Holstein himself was apparently in doubt about who had been in the driving seat during this episode. When he described it to his cousin Ida von Stuelpnagel towards the end of 1902 he blamed Bülow for having attempted for years to move the Kaiser into an anti-English direction.[196] In any case, given the Kaiser's tendency to "invariably saddle […] other

[194] Memoirs, HP I, p. 187

[195] Memoirs, HP I, 185-187

[196] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, [day missing] November 1902, Rogge: *Lebensbekenntnis.* p. 214

people with anything that has turned out badly or even begun to look dubious," Holstein expected that Bülow would eventually have to take the blame for the deteriorating bilateral relations.[197]

Holstein decides to take up the reins

From Holstein's perspective, a weakening of the Chancellor was not such a bad thing per se: if he wished to counteract what he perceived as Bülow's mistakes, the latter's fear for his political survival might make him more accessible to the counsellor's suggestions. Bülow's fall, on the other hand, had to be prevented at all costs since this would have threatened Holstein's own position. A change at the top might also bring one of his numerous enemies into office - a return of Herbert von Bismarck presumably being the option which the counsellor dreaded most.

Thus, if Holstein wished to exploit Bülow's weakness, he not only needed to keep the latter's worries alive but at the same time had to ensure his political success. This was also crucial in order to preserve the Chancellor's favour with the monarch. Holstein was concerned, however, that Wilhelm's influence on foreign-policy-making could undermine any successful outcomes, while Bülow lacked the assertiveness to limit the Emperor's interference: "In some ways I feel sorry for Bülow. He is not a strong character, and up till now has achieved everything by amiability and his cleverness in taking people in. But this is by itself not enough in the face of H.M.'s constantly growing awareness of his position as ruler. From time to time H.M. disregards the Chancellor, perhaps in order to demonstrate who is master [...] I do believe that he has on occasion dissuaded the Kaiser from doing something, but has

[197] Memoirs, HP I p. 184

never directly opposed H.M."[198] Thus, to strengthen Bülow against the Kaiser and constantly warn against imperial interference with the work of German diplomats would become another dimension of the counsellor's chosen task.

The first occasion for Holstein to take the conduct of policy into his own hands, was the negotiations with Italy on the renewal of the Triple Alliance. Prinetti, the Italian Foreign Secretary, had made the renewal of the alliance conditional on the prior settlement of German-Italian trade negotiations and requested that the treaty should not contain any inimical features directed against France.[199] Holstein correctly assumed that the French ambassador to Italy had inspired these demands and therefore insisted that they must be turned down at all costs. He worried however that Bülow would lack the firmness and persistence to reject the Italian demands and for that reason asked that the negotiations be dealt with by the official in charge of Near Eastern affairs - counsellor Klehmet, his confidant.[200]

Holstein had no doubt that in reality it was he who held the reins. Satisfied with his success, he looked back in November 1902: "The Triple Alliance was renewed without alteration.[201] That I managed to force through, but there was nearly a break between Bülow and myself. He [...] wanted to accept some 'harmless' alterations in the treaty to please Prinetti. I opposed this to the utmost and finally achieved my object after a great deal of annoyance." Holstein's motive, as he pointed out, was symbolic rather than strategic, because he regarded the

[198] Diary entry, 11 January 1902, HP IV, 792, p. 245-46

[199] By this demand, Italy intended to honour its newly found friendship with France and to preserve its prospects for floating a massive loan on the French stock exchange. See Afflerbach, pp. 445-464

[200] Diary entry, 11 January 1902, HP IV, 792, p. 246. Being unsure whether the Chancellor would stay firm, Holstein reasoned that it was preferable not to be directly involved in the execution of a policy he could not agree with and thereby to avoid a row.

[201] On 28 June 1902

renewal of the treaty of little practical value: "At best, the Triple Alliance is not worth much; but if we had allowed it to be altered – to please the French – we would have been disgraced before the whole world."[202]

Holstein also claimed credit for saving Bülow from dealing yet another blow to Anglo-German relations. After the war in South Africa had ended on 31st May 1902 with the peace of Vereeniging and the Boer republics' total defeat, a delegation of three Boer Generals travelled to England where the London public welcomed them enthusiastically. King Edward received the representatives of his new subjects on 17 August – reportedly with much tact and courtesy.[203] However, the principal object of their journey, to negotiate an increase in the relief for the Boer population stipulated in the peace treaty, met with refusal on the part of the British government. In order to raise financial support for the reconstruction of their economy the generals hence set out to tour Europe. But their appeals which criticised the harshness of English peace terms changed the perception of them back in England and raised doubts about their loyalty.[204]

It was this last but crucial detail which Richthofen omitted when he suggested to Bülow that the Emperor receive the generals during their planned visit to Berlin in October. While it was hardly advisable to obstruct their fund-raising efforts, given the views of public opinion, it was nevertheless possible to prevent their visit from being exploited with anti-English demonstrations by the pro-Boer groups. The Boers ought to make their appearance in their

[202] Diary entry, 7 November 1902, HP IV, 811, pp. 268-269; The official document collection indicates that Bülow throughout his communications stayed on message. GP XVIII, vol. 2, pp. 499 – 611. Holstein's documents confirm that the counsellor followed the negotiations from a distance and continued to warn the Chancellor not to give in to Italian demands; e.g.: Diary entry, 15 January 1902, HP IV, 795, p. 247; Memorandum by Holstein, 9 February 1902, HP IV, 798, pp. 251; Holstein to Bülow, 26 February 1902, HP IV, pp. 254.

[203] Lee, vol.2, p. 147

[204] Eckardstein to Bülow, 4 October 1902, GP XVII, 5101, p. 230

official capacity as Generals and British subjects. As such, they should report to the British embassy and to official German representatives where they could be informed about the behaviour expected of them. These measures for giving the generals' visit a harmless character would be even more effective, Richthofen argued, if the Emperor could be prevailed upon to receive them as military men.[205]

On proposing this scheme to the Emperor, Bülow pointed out the difference between the present visit and the journey of Paul Krueger in 1900 when the Boer president had come to Europe in order to drum up support for the war, and the Kaiser, with a view to Anglo-German relations, had refused to meet him. The humanitarian character of the generals' intentions and their positive reception in England meant, Bülow assured, that an audience would not cause any offence in that country and moreover would be highly popular throughout Europe and America.[206] Wilhelm agreed to receive them and demanded they be announced by the British ambassador.

When the news broke on 30 September that the Boer generals would meet the Kaiser during their approaching visit to Berlin, the British press reacted with concern. Such an audience, numerous papers predicted, would necessarily encourage constant rebellion among the Boer population of South Africa.[207] Eckardstein who was in close touch with leading British journalists reported to an incredulous Richthofen that several editors visited him that day to seek confirmation of the news, and all warned that - if true - it would trigger yet another wave of anti-German sentiment.[208] On the following day, Eckardstein received a letter from the

[205] Richthofen to Bülow, 15 September 1902, GP XVII, 5092, pp.218-219

[206] Bülow to Wilhelm, 17 September 1902, GP XVII, 5093, pp. 219-220

[207] Eckardstein to AA, 30 September 1902, GP XVII, 5096, p. 226

[208] Ibid.

alarmed director of *The Times*, Moberley-Bell. Providing yet another example of a contemporary observer comparing the mood of British public opinion to that prevailing after the Krueger telegram, Bell urged the baron to use all the influence at his disposal either to prevent this audience or else to stop the Kaiser's planned visit to England in the autumn. He stated that he had never experienced such a degree of indignation across all social classes and warned of the disastrous consequences and even disturbances, in case both the audience and Wilhelm's visit should go ahead.[209]

Concerned about the potential repercussions of the audience, Wilhelm cabled Bülow that he would only receive the generals if King Edward raised no objections and they were attended by Lascelles.[210] The Chancellor now began to worry about the "highly negative impression" which the government would create if it cancelled the meeting due to British objections. He attributed the Kaiser's vacillation to the influence of Tirpitz who had just spent some days as the Emperor's guest at his hunting lodge in Rominten. The admiral must have imparted his fears of a negative impact on German interests overseas and on the construction of the fleet, in Bülow's opinion.[211]

Meanwhile, Eckardstein continued his warnings about the devastating effect that the reception would produce on bilateral relations. Wilhelm's marginal comment on the baron's despatch of 4 October 1902 reveals that it was indeed his concern for the fleet which had convinced him to desist from the audience: "Under these circumstances the audience will not happen, because I am the only one still able to contain the English. Otherwise they will attack

[209] Eckardstein, engl.; p. 236-237

[210] Bülow to AA, 3 October 1902, GP XVII, 5098, p. 227-228

[211] Ibid.

ahead of time (!) and my fleet is not ready. It is better the Engl. government objects and we conform to it!"[212]

When the Kaiser's instruction to cancel the reception reached the foreign office, Holstein, upon returning from his holidays, had already found a way out of the dilemma and had disinvited the Boers. As he described it to his cousin, the generals suddenly made their meeting with the Kaiser conditional on a prior invitation. "I made use of this and virtually forced Richthofen to send a telegram [...] stating that since the Boers are belatedly dissatisfied with the conditions agreed for the audience, the idea is now a dead issue once and for all; there can be no question of a reception any longer." As the affair had been dealt with before the Emperor's cable arrived, Bülow got off cheaply, according to Holstein: "Else he would have had to ask himself if he could have stayed on after that. When I met him a couple of days later Bülow thanked me profusely for having bailed him out."[213]

In both instances during which he intervened, Holstein suspected his usual bête noire Herbert von Bismarck of having used his contacts, Oswald von Richthofen the secretary of state and Karl von Wedel the German ambassador in Rome, to try to mislead Bülow and to eliminate the counsellor himself if possible.[214] He also blamed the younger Bismarck for having duped Bülow into replying to Chamberlain as he did. By fomenting the agitation against Britain in the newspapers under his control Bismarck had lured the Chancellor on to his harsh rejoinder, according to Holstein, while at the same time befriending the British ambassador and arousing his suspicions. Thereby, Holstein concluded, Bismarck had managed to sow British

[212] Eckardstein to Bülow, 4 October 1902, GP XVII, 5101, p. 231, marginal comment by Wilhelm II. at the head of the document

[213] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, [end of] November 1902, Rogge: *Lebensbek.,* pp. 214-216

[214] Diary entry, 7 November 1902, HP IV, 811, pp. 268 & Rogge: Lebensbekenntnis. p. 215

mistrust against the alleged war-mongering of Kaiser and Chancellor, eventually discrediting the latter and driving a wedge between the two.[215]

The experience of the Granite Speech appears to have provided the catalyst for Holstein's decision to actively manage Bülow's steps in foreign affairs - a role which he was well used to playing under the previous Chancellors Caprivi and Hohenlohe. His loss of faith in the soundness of Bülow's political judgement spawned his resolve to intervene wherever necessary and thereby to secure his own survival in office.

Undermining Bülow

In order to preserve Bülow's trust, Holstein had to steer clear of the discontented faction among the Wilhelmstrasse officials and dispel his former association with them. Referring to the difference between Metternich and the Chancellor, he observed that Bülow "at all times is uncritically suspicious of everybody". As he confided to his diary, he was afraid of Bülow's wrath and hence closed his door to Metternich and Eckardstein in order to deflect any suspicions that it was he who had inspired the ambassador's statement on Germany's policy vis-a-vis Britain being adolescent. "In his youth [Bülow] read but didn't digest Macchiavelli; the teachings of this professor of intrigue often lead him astray and lessen his reliability in his relations with others. Because of this peculiar trait of his I have received nobody from London in the last few months [...]. If some crisis between London and Berlin should be brewing I shall stay out of it."[216]

[215] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, [end of] November 1902, Rogge: *Lebensbekenntnis.* pp. 214-216

[216] Diary entry, 11. January 1902, HP IV, 792, p. 244-45

The counsellor even appears to have devised some kind of division of labour to keep Bülow malleable: he left it to the diplomats in London to nurture the Chancellor's worries about his political future with reports on the anti-German mood in Britain, while portraying himself as the loyal advisor who dismissed as exaggerated any suggestions that Bülow was to blame for the deteriorating Anglo-German relations – not however without duly rubbing them in first.

Shortly after the speech, Metternich in a private letter to the Chancellor laconically observed that the one good outcome of his rejoinder was that the indignation in Britain had now reached its highest degree, and that it could not get worse.[217] When visiting Berlin in February of 1902 Eckardstein told Prince Lichnowsky – the foreign office's expert on Anglo-German affairs – there was little hope that bilateral relations would improve any time soon; the more so, because, according to the baron, Chamberlain would be the most likely candidate to succeed Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister and was highly esteemed by King Edward and the Prince of Wales.[218] During an interview with Bülow, the baron read to him a letter which Alfred de Rothschild had taken pains to write in German. In it the banker expressed his concern that the present 'refroidissement' between both countries might grow and become durable. In order to dispel the small cloud that was currently looming, the German Chancellor in Rothschild's opinion just needed to intimate his wish to remain on a good footing with England directly to the British government.[219] Eckardstein also dined with the Emperor during his sojourn and on that occasion reported to his sovereign for over an hour on the prevailing mood in England. The baron also mentioned the abortive alliance talks

[217] Metternich to Bülow, 15 January 1902, PA AA 5772; also: GP XVII, 5075, Footnote*, p. 198

[218] Memorandum by Lichnowsky, 23 February 1902, PA AA 5772; also: GP XVII, 5075, Footnote*, p. 199

[219] Eckardstein, vol. 2, p. 380-383

of the previous year, of which Wilhelm declared he had no knowledge; Eckardstein later claimed therefore to have provoked a row between the Kaiser and Bülow on the next day.[220]

Meanwhile, the ambassador in London regularly reported on his conversations with leading figures of the establishment and drew a similarly bleak picture. Even individuals with a friendly disposition towards Germany, such as Lord Cromer, told him that England had begun to reckon with German enmity.[221] Parliamentary debates, in stark contrast to the past, had become spiteful and unfriendly in tone against Germany, according to Metternich.[222] Commenting on the implications of Salisbury's withdrawal from office in June 1902, the ambassador welcomed Balfour as the new Prime Minister, from whom he anticipated clearer statements than his predecessor; Metternich, however, did not believe the change would make a significant difference to bilateral relations: "Because the political mood against Germany will remain unfavourable for a long time, it is too early to expect the settling of pending questions to become any easier."[223]

Although Wilhelm demonstrated indifference to this forecast when he scribbled on the margins of the dispatch '*tout vient à qui sait attendre*', the frequency of Metternich's admonitions may well suggest that they were calculated to be read and assimilated by the Emperor. Holstein certainly entertained this suspicion. In an attempt to reassure the Chancellor while at the same time playing on his fear, he warned Bülow: "In my opinion – and I am not the only one to hold it – the efforts now being made to represent England as irreconcilable [...] are aimed against you. Hammann told me repeatedly in the last few weeks

[220] Eckardstein, vol. 2, pp. 383-384

[221] Metternich to Bülow, 9 July 1902, GP XVII, 5088, p. 214

[222] Ibid.

[223] Metternich to Bülow, 17 Juli 1902, GP XVII, 5089, p. 214-16.

and again an hour before his departure that this campaign was in the main directed against you. [...] Those who originated these warnings don't believe them themselves; it is all designed to work on the excitable nature of the Kaiser."[224]

Eckardstein's cables from London seemed to confirm Ambassador Metternich's gloomy assessments. In September he reported a conversation with Count Mensdorff, the chargé d'affaires at Austria-Hungary's Embassy in London. The Austrian diplomat expressed his concern about the ill-feeling and even hatred against Germany which he observed in British government circles as well as in public opinion and which was assuming 'more acute forms every day'. Mensdorff assured Eckardstein of Austria's support but also warned him that, if the Anglo-German differences remained irreconcilable and led to bilateral embroilments, his country would need to consider a modification of its foreign policy. Mensdorff also mentioned that he knew himself to be in agreement with the Austrian foreign minister on this.[225] A few days later Eckardstein, who acted as *chargé d'affaires* at the German embassy at the time, warned that a rise of the Liberals in Britain would not be welcome from a German perspective, because a Liberal government would almost certainly have an anti-German edge. All their leading politicians, including Sir Edward Grey, the most likely candidate for the post of Foreign Secretary, had expressed themselves not only privately but publicly against Germany and for a rapprochement with Russia - even on the basis of large concessions, the diplomat observed. Despite the present disgruntlement with Chamberlain,

[224] Holstein to Bülow, 29 July 1902, HP IV, 803, pp. 257-260

[225] Eckardstein to Bülow, 14 September 1902, PA AA R5772; That Mensdorff mentioned the Austrian foreign minister, Agenor Goluchowski, who had negotiated the Austro-Russian agreement of 1897, left little doubt of the course such a re-orientation of Austrian foreign policy would take, if initiated.

finding common ground on emerging issues and differences with a Conservative government would still prove easier, he argued, than if faced with a Liberal cabinet.[226]

Holstein noted that the bad news from Britain started showing its effect on the Kaiser after the audience of the Boer generals had been luckily averted. When Wilhelm returned from his hunting trip he did not come and see Bülow as usual. Only when the latter requested an audience after a week had passed, did the Emperor receive the Chancellor. During their meeting the Kaiser vented his misgivings about his image in the semi-official press and about the conduct of affairs in general.[227] However, shortly thereafter the Kaiser quashed press rumours about a Chancellor crisis by demonstratively visiting the Bülows together with the empress.[228] Holstein observed that Bülow nonetheless felt insecure. He worried that the Chancellor might betray this in his dealings with the Kaiser and with Britain.[229] "Bülow has lost his nerve. He has only now realized how completely he has failed to persuade the Kaiser to take an anti-English line, and he has finally seen what he has done with his Chamberlain speech. For the first time he seems to fear that he is becoming estranged from the Kaiser."[230]

A test case for Bülow would be Wilhelm's visit to England to celebrate the sixty-first birthday of King Edward VII, on 9 November 1902. "It now remains to be seen, what sort of results the Kaiser's visit to England will show. Bülow boasted mightily of H.M.'s affection of him, but he is nervous for he feels that he is regarded, sometimes even specifically described, in England as the main obstacle to a German-English rapprochement. At the same time he remains convinced that he is creating a secure place for himself in the hearts of the German

[226] Eckardstein to Bülow, 17 September 1902, PA AA R5772;

[227] Diary entry, 7 November 1902, HP IV, 811, pp. 268-271

[228] Holstein to Ida Stuelpnagel, [day missing] November 1902; in: Rogge, Lebensbek., pp. 214-216

[229] Ibid, p. 216

[230] Diary entry, 11 November 1902, HP IV, 812, pp. 271-272

people if he is painted as an enemy of England. Richthofen and Hammann today disillusioned him on that score in my presence. They told him that, apart from the Pan-Germans who counted for little, the German people were now deeply concerned lest the tension with England should grow even further [...]. I do not believe that Bülow was convinced."[231] Holstein, nevertheless, doubted that the Emperor would dismiss him, and foresaw the dire consequences for policy-making which Bülow's weakness would entail. "[T]he Kaiser finds him convenient because of his tractability. But Bülow's influence in foreign affairs will be still further circumscribed."[232]

If the counsellor's assessment was correct, the faction in the German foreign ministry that blamed the Chancellor for deteriorating relations with Britain and allegedly wished for his removal, had succeeded in eroding the Emperor's trust in his abilities. This success came at a cost, however, which the 'conspirators' had probably not intended: By illustrating to His Majesty the adverse consequences of Bülow's British policy and making the former thus the arbiter in their quest for a greater say in foreign affairs, they had not reckoned with Wilhelm's excitability. It probably never crossed his mind to draw on the expertise of his diplomats in order to attempt a more balanced policy approach. Instead he saw the opportunity to make further inroads in international politics himself. When Holstein predicted that the Chancellor would face more limits in his future conduct of foreign affairs, he thus foresaw more interventions by the Emperor, while the responsible advisors at the Wilhelmstrasse would be further weakened.

The visit to Sandringham took place in a cordial atmosphere and without irritations. The Kaiser had the opportunity to talk to leading statesmen and artists, and almost daily indulged

[231] Diary entry, 7 November 1902, HP IV, 811, pp. 268-271

[232] Ibid.

in hunting excursions. Only on one occasion did Wilhelm rouse his uncle's anger: when he attempted to lecture him on the advantages of potato spirit over petrol as fuel for his motor car – complete with samples he had sent for from Germany. In the words of Edward's biographer, "The King was not a little impatient at his nephew's officiousness and rather resented the Imperial object-lesson."[233] In this light it sounds plausible that King Edward after seeing Wilhelm off reportedly exclaimed "Thank God, he has gone!"[234]

Convinced of his own success in charming his hosts, the Kaiser, nonetheless, wrote to Bülow: "My reception here was hearty and affectionate as ever. The population met me in a warm and considerate manner so that I personally am quite satisfied. But I believe that they make here a distinction between 'the Kaiser' and 'the German Government', the latter of which they would wish to the devil".[235] Such words were hardly suitable to dispel the Chancellor's fears for the monarch's favour. In the same cable the Emperor also reported his impressions of Chamberlain, whom he met during his visit. The Colonial Secretary felt deeply offended by the Chancellor, Wilhelm observed, and out of this personal pique interpreted all German policies and actions. Being England's leading and all-powerful politician, he directly or indirectly influenced the testy attitude of the British press, according to Wilhelm, and the Cabinet, which was aware that all classes of the public stood behind Chamberlain, would "hardly do anything important without him and never anything against him." To overcome such "politically unedifying' impressions required "tactfulness and patience – even in the Foreign Ministry", the Emperor instructed Bülow. He recommended avoiding anything that could cause frictions and disputes with Britain and reining in the German press.[236] The

[233] Lee, vol. 2, p. 152

[234] Eckardstein, vol. 2, p. 415

[235] Wilhelm to Bülow, 12 November 1902, PA AA R5772; GP XVII, 5031, pp. 115-117

[236] Ibid

comment directed at the Wilhelmstrasse to stay tactful and patient could indicate that the Emperor believed – or was led to believe – that Bülow had been ill-advised by his diplomats when he delivered the 'granite speech'. If that was the case, it would not be the first time – nor indeed the last – that the Chancellor had saddled others with the blame for his actions.

The year 1902 marked a watershed in Anglo-German relations. At its outset, the German Chancellor delivered a speech against the British Colonial Secretary that would galvanize anti-German sentiment in Britain, which had been growing as a result of Pan-German recriminations during the Boer War. Alarmed at the Anglophobe overtones of Bülow's policy, officials at the Wilhelmstrasse and particularly the German diplomats in London warned the Chancellor and started flooding the foreign office with reports which illustrated the deteriorating bilateral relations. As the consequences of his course became apparent, the Kaiser's support for Bülow began to wane. Friedrich von Holstein, who by this time regarded the Chancellor at best as an inveterate Anglophobe, became afraid that a change in the status quo in the Foreign Office could threaten his own job. Well versed in conducting German foreign policy during the Chancellorships of Caprivi and Hohenlohe, the counsellor devised a strategy to guide Bülow's policy and steer him clear of any pitfalls capable of bringing about his fall. At the same time, he had to protect policy-making from the encroachments of the Emperor, who could be only kept at bay if Holstein strengthened the Chancellor's position. In order to secure his trust, Holstein had to distance himself from the growing number of officials who had become disaffected with Bülow's British policy. Nevertheless, he shared their concern for the future of Anglo-German relations.

Attempts at bilateral co-operation

The Emperor's reasonable advice to avoid frictions and differences with Britain and thereby to return to a calmer and more cooperative attitude between both nations, was going to be put to a test shortly afterwards – and failed spectacularly. While German policy makers did their best to act in unison and managed to do so on this occasion, the episode will show that pulling on the same rope was no longer enough for Germany's diplomats to repair the damage that had already been done to bilateral relations.

Wilhelm's visit to England coincided with the conclusion of an agreement between both countries to take common action against Venezuela. The South American country had recently emerged from a period of civil war. Its new President, Cipriano Castro, had repeatedly refused to compensate British and German subjects for damages to their property suffered during the turmoil and rejected resuming payment of Venezuela's foreign debt. A joint naval campaign had been envisaged for some time and was deemed sanctioned by international law. However, any show of force by European powers in the Western Hemisphere also needed to take into account the views of the United States, which jealously watched over its unilaterally proclaimed prerogatives in what it regarded as its backyard. When Bülow first suggested a naval blockade early in 1902, Wilhelm vetoed it because it would have cast a shadow over his brother Heinrich's visit to the US in the spring, which was expressly calculated to improve German-American relations.[237]

Conscious of this imperial tribute to the Monroe Doctrine, Holstein in January 1902 had doubted whether the Chancellor would finally prevail over the Emperor in pushing the Venezuela question. He suspected that the Kaiser's yielding in the face of possible

[237] Bülow to Wilhelm, 20 January 1902, GP XVII, 5106, pp. 241-243, comment of Wilhelm II at head of document & Footnote*

international complications was due to the influence of Tirpitz, "who has no stomach for a fight".[238] The sources do not provide evidence that Holstein participated in further discussions of the subject. Bülow nonetheless did not let the matter rest and in September 1902, when the weather for a greater naval enterprise in the Caribbean started to become favourable once more, he brought it up with the Kaiser again.[239]

Once a mutual agreement was reached to apply coercive measures, official co-operation worked smoothly in the beginning. The British and German envoys to Caracas delivered a common ultimatum and when this had passed unanswered, the British Foreign Office and the German Embassy in London coordinated the naval blockade which was soon to be joined by an Italian detachment. The German diplomatic correspondence during this episode reveals how carefully the German government avoided any demands that could have divided the common position and how anxious they were to accommodate any remaining differences. On a report by Metternich which pointed out that the legal interpretation of the blockade differed in both countries, Bülow commented: "No stumbling over juridical threads, no discord with England in Venezuela because of formalities and dogmatism".[240] And when the British Foreign Secretary demanded a belligerent blockade of Venezuelan ports instead of the pacific blockade preferred by the German government, the Chancellor urged the Emperor to authorise this measure, observing that it was "essential to bring it home to the English in the course of the further action that we go hand in hand with them, without reservations."[241]

[238] Diary entry, 11 January 1902, HP IV, 792, p. 245

[239] Bülow to Wilhelm, 1 September 1902, GP XVII, 5107, p. 244-245

[240] Metternich to AA, 9 December 1902, GP XVII, 5119, p. 258

[241] Bülow to Wilhelm, 12 December 1902, GP XVII, 5120, p. 258

At the same time, there was a strong desire on both sides to make the other appear to be taking the lead in the eyes of the Americans, whose government had grudgingly accepted the right of the European powers to take action against Venezuela, provided there were no territorial aspirations. The more ships the English sent the better, according to the Emperor, as German activities would thus recede into the background in contrast with the role played by the English.[242] And Chamberlain observed: "I should leave Germany to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. Joint action with any European power anywhere, has not been brilliantly successful in the past [...] and would not be popular, with Germany, at this moment."[243]

The concerns about American susceptibilities were well founded as particularly the German government was soon to learn; and Chamberlain's assessment of public opinion would also demonstrate its accuracy when the British government faced mounting criticism in the press for making common cause with the Germans. A detailed account of American pressure on the allies, which eventually resulted in their abandoning the blockade, or an analysis of the divisive role played by the British press would exceed the focus of this study and has been attempted elsewhere.[244] It suffices to establish that by the time the countries found a face-saving way out of the campaign, their liaison had reached breaking point. Although the governments could declare at least a moderately successful outcome[245], working together on the international periphery and thereby improving bilateral relations was no longer a viable option.

[242] Ibid., p. 260

[243] FO 80/80/458

[244] See R. Fiebig-von Hase in: Dülfer et al. (eds.) Vermiedene Kriege. Deeskalation von Konflikten der Großmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg (1856-1914); 1997. M. Hood, Gunboat Diplomacy, 1983.

[245] Venezuela agreed to the payment of indemnities for their subjects, and preferential satisfaction was accorded to those claims of the intervening powers which, along with claims by other countries, were transferred for arbitrage to the courts at The Hague.

The lesson which the English government drew from this adventure was that cooperation with Germany entailed risks better to be avoided in the future. Towards the end of the episode in February 1903 the British Ambassador to the US warned: "our good relations with this country will be seriously impaired if this Alliance with Germany continues much longer."[246]; and Sir Edward Grey, the future Foreign Secretary, summed it up in a private letter when he wrote: "Close relations with Germany mean for us worse relations with the rest of the world, especially with the United States, France and Russia."[247]

The German government, on the other hand, had learned that the greatest obstacle to a rapprochement with Britain was now public opinion and the hostile British press. As if this realisation needed further illustration, the participation of British investors in the German-led Baghdad railway project came under attack from the press and foundered to the dismay of some London bankers when Westminster withdrew its support in April 1903. "The English participation fell victim solely to the anti-German agitation in the press and the resulting pressure of public opinion", Bülow informed Wilhelm.[248]

Francis's research suggests however, that the driving force against a British commitment to the Baghdad railway was not the press but Joseph Chamberlain. According to this interpretation, the press campaign just created the convenient atmosphere which prevented a rational assessment of the arrangement and thus allowed the Colonial Secretary's opposition to succeed.[249] As a motive, the study stresses Chamberlain's campaign for imperial preference, for which he would soon give up his cabinet seat. It may be correct, as Kennedy

[246] BD2, 199, p. 172

[247] BL, Eng. Let. d 316, Grey to Newbolt, 5. 1. 1903; quoted in Kennedy (1980), p. 259.

[248] Bülow to Wilhelm, 26 April 1903, GP XVII, 5263, pp. 441

[249] Francis, R.:*The British Withdrawal from the Bagdad Railway Project in April 1903*, THJ 16 (1973) p.168 see also: Schöllgen, G.: Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht, pp. 169

claims, that tariff reform and Germanophobia have gone hand in hand from the outset[250] - but given Chamberlain's earlier advocacy of an Anglo-German rapprochement, the personal dimension of this change of heart ought to be taken into account as well.

While this episode does not reveal any insights into the factional rivalries among German foreign policy makers, it is nonetheless instructive because it shows that, given a unifying objective, they were still capable of acting together in order to pursue it. Closed ranks and a willingness to accommodate Britain's wishes in the common enterprise were not sufficient, however, to initiate a new period of bilateral cooperation. That it had quite the opposite effect may explain why such a coordinated effort by all German diplomats involved would be rarely attempted in the future.

The Entente Cordiale and the ensuing power struggle at the Wilhelmstrasse

While further Anglo-German cooperation on international questions was thus unlikely anytime soon, the continuous efforts of the French government to seek a settlement with Britain of all their colonial disputes had alarmed Hermann von Eckardstein. On 10 May 1903, he drafted a memorandum warning the German Chancellor that an entente between Britain and France was becoming more likely after King Edward's recent official visit to Paris, where he had been amiably received. An Anglo-French entente would only be the first step, according to Eckardstein, in a more ambitious French plan for improving England's relations with Russia and eventually forging an alliance between the three powers. He argued that French *haute finance* supported this scheme as a means of sharing the risk of further loans to

[250] See Kennedy, p. 263

Russia and diminishing the prospect of an Anglo-Russian war, which would be ruinous to French investors.[251]

Bülow, as well as the German ambassadors to St. Petersburg, Paris and London to whom he forwarded Eckardstein's memorandum for comment, admitted the probability of a comprehensive Anglo-French colonial settlement. An Anglo-Russian rapprochement, on the other hand, they rejected as unlikely. The conflicts of interest of these two powers in the Middle-East and East Asia were too pronounced for them to find common ground. Moreover, the Anglo-Japanese alliance which had been concluded in the previous year rather heightened the chances that Britain and Russia would come to blows over China.[252] Bülow even appears to have looked forward to an Anglo-French entente, because in contrast to Eckardstein's predictions he expected it to alienate Russia from its ally France and drive her into the arms of Germany and Austria.[253] German attempts to lure Russia into an alliance once the entente cordiale came into being during the following year, demonstrate that this view was gaining currency in the Wilhelmstrasse.

When the *entente cordiale* was announced in spring 1904, Holstein attributed it to the incessant anti-English agitation during the Boer war. He blamed Bülow for not having stood up in parliament against the exaggerated Anglophobia and not condemning the disgraceful caricatures in the satirical papers. Although Holstein did not expect an attack by France and Britain, he was concerned that Germany was no longer capable of making the territorial acquisitions overseas which so many people – though not the counsellor himself – demanded. "Against England and France", Holstein lamented, "there can be no overseas policy. We

[251] Eckardstein to Bülow, 10 May 1903, GP XVII, 5369, pp. 567-570

[252] See dispatches 13 May 1903 – 2 June 1903, GP XVII, 5370, 5371, 5372, 5373, 5375, 5376, pp. 570-585 & pp. 588-594

[253] Bülow to AA, 3 April 1903, GP XVIII, vol. 2, 5911, pp. 839-840

could have gone together with England and could today enjoy the position that France now has, i.e. to be good friends with England and Russia at the same time."[254]

Holstein not only blamed Bülow for preferring to "swim with the current rather than against"; he also warned the Chancellor that the foreign office was discrediting itself in the eyes of the Kaiser and was thus losing influence on the actual formulation of policy. What he called the sloppiness of some Wilhelmstrasse officials he saw personified in Oswald von Richthofen. In a letter to the Chancellor he therefore complained about the Foreign Secretary's irregular work patterns. As a consequence, according to Holstein, documents destined for the Emperor were being delayed, leading to embarrassing situations for the diplomats in whose presence and that of bystanders Wilhelm had vividly complained about "those swine of the Wilhelmstrasse" who had made him work for a couple of hours on the day of his departure for a cruise in the Mediterranean. On the occasion of Richthofen's decision to attend the Kiel regatta, his "individualism", according to the counsellor, directly compromised German foreign policy. Given that King Edward visited Kiel without leading politicians (see chapter 3), the announcement in the press that the German Foreign Secretary was attending the royal visit would be seen by the whole world as a sign that Germany wished "to push through something or other"; and this at a time when a detached attitude towards Anglo-German relations was indicated and indeed had been determined in discussions with the Chancellor. To prevent further damage to policy-making Holstein therefore demanded that Richthofen should either be brought back into line or be replaced.[255]

[254] Holstein, Lebensbek. p. 231

[255] Holstein to Bülow, 25 June 1904, HP IV, 828, pp. 289-291

But Bülow himself was also responsible for the bad reputation of the foreign office, as Holstein confided to Otto Hammann - presumably in the hope that the latter would pass the counsellor's grievances on: "what happened to all the memoranda prepared by myself and my colleagues on pending political problems? Only rarely and in exceptional cases was one of them sent as a direct report to the Kaiser [...] No wonder therefore that the Kaiser gradually got used to the idea of regarding this unproductive Foreign Ministry with its present staff as an ossified structure, which the Chancellor is stupidly dragging along with him like a ball and chain."[256]

Responding to his suggestion to remove Richthofen, the Chancellor warned Holstein on 29 June that this would encourage the Kaiser to seek a thorough shake-up of the foreign ministry.[257] In response to this barely concealed threat not to rock the boat lest he might endanger his own job, Holstein immediately requested his retirement.[258] In a letter to Hammann dating from 11 July, the counsellor reflected on his resignation: "The prestige of Germany has diminished due to reasons which I do not wish to detail here, whereas our enemies and rivals are about to encircle us. Difficult situations are thus to be expected, and I would prefer not to assume my part of the moral responsibility which is shared by every member of staff. Therefore I say farewell."[259]

Upon learning of Holstein's resignation, his friend Prince Hugo von Radolin, the German ambassador to France, sought a conversation with the Kaiser. On 13 August, he informed him of the counsellor's intentions. Wilhelm professed that he thought Holstein had retired a long

[256] Holstein to Hammann, 6 July 1904, HP IV, 836, pp. 295-296

[257] Bülow to Holstein, 29 June 1904, HP IV, 829, pp. 291-292

[258] Holstein to Bülow, 1 July 1904, HP IV, 830, p. 292

[259] Hammann, Bilder, p. 33

time ago and claimed not to have heard his name for the past six years. His statement seems to confirm Holstein's allegation that Bülow tried to exclude the expertise of the Wilhelmstrasse officials from his discussions with the Kaiser. When asked for the motives of the counsellor's desire to leave, Radolin replied that the former saw himself sidelined in confidential matters and therefore no longer felt trusted as he had been before; and Heinrich von Tschirschky, who had joined the conversation, specified that Holstein probably sensed that Bülow no longer regarded his advice as essential.[260] The Emperor, although pointing out to Radolin and Tschirschky that it was ultimately up to the Chancellor to decide whom to keep or to let go, announced he would write to Bülow and ask him not to accept the resignation. Ten days later, Holstein received a communication in which Bülow rowed back, claiming that it was all a misunderstanding and neither he nor His Majesty would wish to see him go.[261]

During the following months Holstein was recovering from a cataract operation. His correspondence with Bülow during this period reveals lively discussions over the terms of his return to the foreign office. As Holstein pointed out: "My official position is an abnormal one. It is undefined, unrecognized, and therefore difficult to defend. Yet I am absolutely determined not to allow myself to be brought down in my old age to the official level of young men […] as has been attempted with noticeable effort particularly since this spring."[262] In another communication he demanded: "R[ichthofen] must be kept in order, for he lacks the feeling for the essential consideration in official matters as well as a sense of duty." Judging by Bülow's letters, the Chancellor applied a considerable degree of arm-twisting to make Richthofen accept that Holstein would be granted full powers of signature for outgoing

[260] HP IV; 840, Footnote 2, pp. 298

[261] Bülow to Holstein, 23 August 1904, HP IV, 849, pp. 301-302

[262] Holstein to Bülow, 5 September 1904, HP IV, 854, p. 305-306

political documents. The Foreign Secretary, who saw this step as a diminution of his own status, threatened to resign and only after lengthy negotiations agreed to stay on and co-operate with the counsellor *bona fide*.[263]

Rogge has suggested, that by having had his case brought before the Emperor Holstein sought to gain direct influence over the Kaiser. Accordingly, he thereby attempted to ally himself to Wilhelm and Bülow in order to jointly control foreign policy. The obstacle to such a "triumvirate", so the argument goes, was the Foreign Secretary, and hence he had to be removed.[264] The only time that Holstein actually spoke with the Kaiser was indeed shortly after he had victoriously come out of this conflict, when he reluctantly accepted an invitation to court. This audience was, however, arranged by Bülow in order to appease Holstein and was meant as a gesture to demonstrate imperial appreciation for his work. Therefore, it was never repeated. Moreover, Holstein had always been a fierce opponent of Wilhelm's interference in foreign-policy-making. This he would remain even after his eventual retirement in 1906 when he would begin a campaign against 'personal rule'. Against this background such a sudden and short-lived change of heart seems hardly plausible.

Nor was Holstein's ultimate goal the removal of Richthofen. In his letter to Bülow he had suggested solving the deficiencies in the foreign office by a change *either* "in modo" *or* "in persona".[265] During the weeks immediately following his resignation he repeatedly complained to his correspondents that the Chancellor's response did not address the "objective problem" at all. Instead of taking Richthofen to task and pointing out the

[263] Bülow to Holstein, [day missing] October 1904, HP IV, 859, pp. 308-309 & HP IV, 861, p. 310

[264] Rogge, pp. XL-XLI

[265] Holstein to Bülow, 25 June 1904, HP IV, 828, p. 289-291

shortcomings in the Ministry, Bülow had censured Holstein for his complaint and insinuated that he could go if he did not want to work with the Foreign Secretary.[266]

From Radolin's conversation with the Emperor and the latter's professed ignorance of Holstein's ongoing contribution to policy making, it becomes apparent that the Chancellor was not particularly interested in an independent and efficient bureaucracy at the Wilhelmstrasse. Rather, he seems to have preferred a subservient foreign office whose advice was mediated by himself, thus enhancing his own position with the Kaiser. That Bülow, as a professional diplomat, would not delegate policy making to the foreign ministry but rather circumscribe its influence was also the impression of Hugo Count Lerchenfeld, the Bavarian envoy to Prussia, when he reported his assessment of the newly appointed Chancellor.[267]

Holstein, on the other hand, wanted to restore the place of the foreign office at the heart of foreign -policy-making. He wished to convince the Kaiser of its effectiveness, not in order to include him in the formulation of policy but rather to stop him from interfering. Keeping a check on the Kaiser thus was one side of his project - guiding Bülow's conduct of international affairs, as shown before, was the other.

Meanwhile, a group of disaffected officials at the Wilhelmstrasse sought to achieve Holstein's aim of enhancing the status of the foreign ministry by working against Bülow, whom they blamed for the deteriorating relations with Britain. A weakening - or even change - in the political leadership, from that standpoint, could result in a renewed appreciation of their own advice and thus institute a shift towards a more conciliatory British policy. To achieve their goal, the diplomats attempted to bring the Chancellor's policies into disrepute with the Emperor. For this strategy to succeed, however, required two conditions to hold true:

[266] See Holstein to Marie von Bülow, 5 July 1904 & Holstein to Hammann, 6 July 1904, HP IV, 835 & 836, pp. 294-296

[267] BayGehStA, Gesandschaft, 1071, Report, 20 Oktober 1900; in: Berghahn, Der Tirpitzplan, p. 391

firstly, that Bülow's anti-British policies were not inspired by Wilhelm himself, and secondly, that a weakened Chancellor would automatically increase their own political weight. As it were, the first assumption was at best doubtful, the second was demonstrably false.

The Kaiser was certainly not an Anglophobe; he rather cherished many fond memories of visits to his mother's homeland. His maritime enthusiasm meant that he also shared the admiration for the British Navy which, according to Berghahn, was widespread among German naval officers and combined with an inferiority complex that nourished their desire to emancipate Germany's naval policy from Britain's "humiliating tutelage".[268] But it may have been the Emperor's foremost goal to break Britain's global power in favour of Germany that motivated his pursuit of a powerful fleet.[269] Instrumental for the latter was its architect Alfred von Tirpitz, while Bülow organised the support in parliament and conducted foreign affairs accordingly. "From my first day of office to my last, I supported Tirpitz personally and politically." the Chancellor claimed in his memoirs.[270]

In terms of foreign policy making, the project required that Germany steer clear of an alliance with Britain, which, given the latter's naval pre-eminence, would have lessened the rationale for a strong fleet.[271] At the same time, any material commitments with other powers were to be avoided. This was important for two opposite reasons: on the one hand, to avoid a conflict with Britain that might entail a pre-emptive strike on the fledgling fleet[272] but on the other to prevent a lessening of the perceived British threat, which would have made it harder to

[268] Berghahn, p. 177

[269] Ibid, p. 415

[270] Bülow, Memoirs 1897-1903, p. 108

[271] Berghahn, p. 383

[272] Steinberg, p. 30

muster parliamentary support for further expansion.[273] Wilhelm condoned these 'axioms' of German foreign policy that Tirpitz had laid down as prerequisites of naval expansion.[274] The Chancellor therefore knew he was in accordance with the wishes of the Emperor when he steered a course of diplomatic 'abstinence' (Berghahn) which could be interpreted as anti-British. That he attempted to mobilize domestic enthusiasm for the fleet by occasionally lashing out against Britain or its leaders, as in the 'granite speech', may have run counter to the goal of smooth and friendly bilateral relations, but it did not make the Chancellor's position untenable in the eyes of his imperial master. On the contrary, rather than doubting the wisdom of the person in charge of Germany's foreign policy and seeking to involve a greater number of responsible advisors in its conduct as a result, Wilhelm seems to have regarded the British hostility towards his government as a chance to enhance his own image in Britain. During a Mediterranean cruise in spring 1904, the Emperor outlined his role in Anglo-German relations, as he saw it, at a reception of the German expatriate community in Italy.

Apparently impressed by a new mole that had been built for the British navy at Gibraltar and which, Wilhelm claimed, had cost more than the construction of the Kiel Canal, he praised how it had been constructed as a matter of course and without any fuss. He then deplored the unreasonable demeanour of the German press which had tarnished the relationship with Britain and declared that "[he] alone constituted the chain that still connects us with England. Not only did the English venerate him as a kinsman of their royal family but even more so as a patron of the entire state of seafarers of the world. This demanded, however, that he be the lord over a mighty fleet. Given that he alone was capable of cultivating good relations with

[273] Berghahn, p. 386

[274] Ibid, pp. 414

England, his task […] ought to be facilitated by an accelerated aggrandisement of the fleet. This alone would give him the necessary prestige in England."[275]

The grandiloquence apart, the Emperor's speech clearly indicates that he regarded his own contribution to Germany's British policy as crucial and any future improvements in bilateral relations as a function of growing German naval prowess. In his view, there was no place for a prominent role for the foreign ministry.

Conclusion

Bülow's speech in January 1902 removed the last doubts about his Anglophobe inclinations and transformed the most prominent British supporter of an Anglo-German rapprochement into a formidable opponent. But the Chancellor's British policy also faced growing opposition from his own bureaucracy. Numerous German diplomats came to see Bülow as the main obstacle to a better understanding with Britain. By bombarding the foreign office with illustrations of the speech's devastating impact on bilateral relations, they attempted to undermine his position with the Kaiser.

Holstein shared the concerns of those who regarded Bülow's policy as misguided, and suspected that either the Kaiser or Herbert von Bismarck were inspiring his anti-English stance. On the other hand Holstein saw an opportunity to safeguard his own job by supporting Bülow and thus preventing a change in the head of government. He decided to guide the Chancellor's foreign policy in order to strengthen his position with the Emperor.

[275] Rosen to Richthofen, excerpt, 31 March 1904, PA AA R5773

During the following years Germany suffered several diplomatic setbacks in its relations with England which culminated in the conclusion of the entente cordiale in spring 1904. Holstein ascribed the misfortunes of German diplomacy to a lack of rigour among the leadership of the foreign office. The counsellor feared that the resulting loss of reputation would encourage the Emperor to intensify his interference in foreign affairs. Moreover, he suspected that Bülow's practice of excluding his diplomats' expertise from his consultations with the Kaiser was further eroding the influence of the foreign office. In order to reinvigorate the role of the Wilhelmstrasse, Holstein staked his career and managed to gain control over the foreign office in all but name. The ends to which he would put his considerable powers will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter III

England *ante portas* – The War Scare and the Struggle of the Wilhelmstrasse to recover the Initiative in Foreign Affairs.

This chapter covers the period 1904 – 1906, when German diplomats regarded a war with Great Britain as a distinct possibility for the first time. It starts with the numerous warning signs policy makers received through reports from London that German naval expansion was further eroding any public sympathies for Germany that might have been left. The public demand to 'Copenhagen' her fleet – to extinguish it before it could pose a substantial threat to the British Navy – played on the fears that had plagued German naval planners since its inception. The war scare of 1904 coincided with increasing attempts by the Emperor and his entourage to control foreign policy making. This placed an additional burden on the German diplomats and on some occasions contravened the explicit choices favoured by the officials of the foreign ministry. Partly in order to regain the initiative and assert their independence from Wilhelm's interference, his responsible advisors seized on what they regarded as a brilliant opportunity to sabotage the Anglo-French *entente* and plunged Germany into its first serious confrontation with Britain and France combined. Their wish to score a point not only internationally but also at home, against the encroachments from outside the ministry, induced them to disregard warnings from the Embassy in London about the strong British resolve to support France. Instead of a carefully calibrated strategy that weighed objectives and likely reactions, the chosen policy had thus the appearance of having been winged to capitalize on the Emperor's sudden desire to see Tangier. Far from domestically regaining policy makers a free hand in the

conduct of foreign affairs – let alone, winning them a diplomatic victory - the First Moroccan Crisis further weakened the German foreign office against the Kaiser's 'personal rule'.

Naval Scares

While the German diplomats were trying to come to terms with the major realignment of the international system represented by the *entente cordiale*, the progress of the German naval build-up was receiving growing attention from British policy makers and public opinion alike. With his brainchild deep in the "danger zone" - the German fleet was still considered too weak to inflict significant damage on an attacking Royal Navy - Alfred von Tirpitz attended the reception of King Edward VII at the Kiel regatta in June 1904 with apprehension: "During his (Edward VII's) inspection of our ships", the Admiral remembered, "he exchanged meaningful looks and words with Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty."[276] And while Metternich reported in early July on the great success which the English court regarded the monarch's visit to Germany to have been,[277] on 12 July he summarized the coolness with which the British press had greeted a visit of the German fleet to Plymouth, following an invitation which Edward VII had issued at Kiel. "In all accomplishments of our fleet, most papers see only a menace for England." Metternich complained. "At the same time, quite a few voices express openly that the conspicuously frequent visits of German ships in British waters could have no other underlying intention but to gather valuable clues about the installations of the British navy and English coastal fortifications. The sight of the German fleet in Plymouth reminds Great Britain that it must be sufficiently armed in order to uphold its dominion of the seas by all means."[278] A German plot to invade Britain featured also in Erskine Childer's spy thriller

[276] Tirpitz, My Memories, p. 200 – Tirpitz had advised against the Emperor's wish to assemble the entire German fleet at Kiel, but Wilhelm's inclination to impress his English relatives had prevailed. Bülow, Denkwürdigkeiten, vol.2, p. 24
[277] Metternich to Bülow, 9 July 1904, PA AA R5773; also: GP XIX, vol. 1, 6041, pp. 190-194
[278] Richthofen, undated Memorandum, GP XIX, vol. 1, 6042, footnote +, p. 194-195

'The Riddle of the Sands' which had been published the year before and might have inspired some of the more agitated newspaper commentary on this occasion.

Nevertheless, the assessment of the Royal Navy pointed also to Germany's growing fleet as the most likely challenger to its status as the mistress of the seas. Given the character of Germany's High Seas Fleet, which consisted mainly of battleships with a shorter operating range than cruisers, naval observers concluded that it was designed to project German power in the North Sea and was thus directed against Britain. Admiral Sir John Fisher who became First Sea Lord in November 1904, faced little opposition therefore when he decreed a major redistribution of the Fleet as one of his first acts in office. A redeployment of four of Britain's most modern battleships from the Mediterranean to the newly created Home Fleet would help to deal with the perceived threat.[279] This measure came in addition to the announcement in the year before that Britain would build a new naval base at the Firth of Forth on the east coast of Scotland, right across the North Sea from the big German naval bases.[280]

These measures caused grave concern in Berlin, which grew into outright panic after 17. November 1904 when *Vanity Fair* published an article entitled: 'A Navy Without Excuse'. Starting from the premise that Germany built its ships for the sole purpose of aggression against Britain, the journal advocated a pre-emptive strike against the German fleet. The article reminded its readers of a historical precedent in 1807 during the Napoleonic wars, when the British navy forced Denmark to surrender its fleet by bombarding Copenhagen. Thereby Great Britain prevented the Danish fleet from falling into the hands of France. "Day and night

[279] Marder, A.: The Anatomy of British Sea Power. A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era 1880-1905; pp. 456-67; Marder argues that it was not so much naval rivalry, however, which was to blame for British mistrust of Germany between 1900 and 1905. Rather it was the suspicious methods and aims of German foreign policy which caused the nation to be regarded as a mischief maker. Ibid, p. 476. See also Friedberg, A.: *The Weary Titan*. Princeton 1988, who argues that between 1895-1905 British naval supremacy slipped from Britain's grasp because it came under pressure in Europe as well as the western hemisphere. As a consequence, in 1901 the Admiralty concluded that it would have to modify its thinking about naval balance, and therefore started a process of readjustment; p. 152.
[280] Ibid, p. 466

Germany is preparing for war against England. (...) If the German fleet were destroyed, the peace of Europe would last for two generations, for England and France, or England and the United States, or all three, would guarantee the freedom of the seas and prevent the construction of more navies which are dangerous weapons in the hands of ambitious powers with growing populations and no colonies.“[281] Articles with the same tendency appeared in the *Army and Navy Gazette* and the *Sun*.

That some officers of the navy held very similar views was an observation made by Captain Coerper, the German naval attaché in London. A British lady who was well connected in naval circles told Coerper that Britain ought to make war on Germany soon, because in a few years' time the German navy would be probably too strong and Britain might then lose too many of her ships. When the naval attaché reported this conversation with its implicit assessment of Tirpitz's concept of the *Risikoflotte* to Berlin, the Emperor scribbled on the margins of the cable: "Unheard of, outrageous effrontery! These are the two years we would have needed to get ready."[282] Referring to Coerper's report and the belligerent articles in the British press, Wilhelm expressed his worries about the likelihood of an "attack with overwhelming superiority" in a letter to the Chancellor on 23 November. Always fond of historical analogies, he stated that the present situation increasingly resembled the one before the Seven Years' War – when Prussia faced a coalition of three great powers.[283]

A week later Admiral Büchsel, Chief of Staff of the navy, visited Oswald von Richthofen in the Wilhelmstrasse. The Admiral informed the foreign secretary that he had orders from the Emperor to prepare for the possibility of an English attack next spring, without attracting attention. For this purpose, he proposed the withdrawal of several cruisers from their stations

[281] *Vanity Fair*, 'A Navy Without Excuse' 17 November 1904, GP XIX, vol. 2, 6149, Attachement pp. 354-356; On the demands for and Germany's fear of a 'Copenhagening' of its fleet, see: Marder, A.; pp. 497. see also Steinberg, J.: *The Copenhagen Complex*. Journal of Contemporary History, July 1966, pp. 23-46
[282] Coerper to Tirpitz, 18 November 1904, PA AA 5773; for marginalia see also: GP XIX, vol. 2, 6149, pp. 353-354
[283] Wilhelm to Bülow, 23 November 1904, GP XIX, vol. 1, 6126, pp. 316-317

overseas and inquired whether the foreign office had any political objections.[284] On the record of this conversation, Bülow noted that he had no objections. He requested Richthofen, however, to consult Tirpitz on whether he would expect Britain to become suspicious of these measures and whether as a result she might relocate yet more vessels to the North or Baltic Sea.[285]

Whereas Tirpitz approved some of the proposed withdrawals, he objected particularly to the return of the heavy cruiser *Hertha*, lest this might provoke British countermeasures. The head of the Naval Office promised that he would try to calm His Majesty and to delay any decisions. He announced that he intended to influence the Emperor "through various channels". He would convince Baron Senden, the head of the Naval Cabinet, that the training of crews in home waters was of limited benefit, and he had already agreed with Büchsel that he would be consulted if an "all highest decision" in this matter was sought. Tirpitz also assured the foreign office, that he would consult the Chancellor before any decisions were made.[286]

Holstein concluded from this communication that the admiral also feared a British reaction. The counsellor added that while not doing so before, he now believed "in the possibility of a war with England, in which the attack would come from the English side." He therefore suggested scrutinizing every move for its potential to increase tensions.[287] Holstein's advice was almost certainly motivated by his concern about the likely impact of a Russo-German defensive alliance, which the Emperor and Bülow had dreamt up in the previous months in order to counter French efforts to arrange an Anglo-Russian rapprochement.

The selling point of a combination with Russia was the risk that Germany incurred by allowing German coaling vessels to supply Russian warships on their way to engage the Japanese fleet

[284] Note by Richthofen, 30 November 1904, PA AA R5773; also: GP XIX, vol. 2, 6150; pp. 356-357
[285] Note by Holstein, 4 December 1904, PA AA R5773

[286] Klehmet, Memorandum 4 December 1904, PA AA R5773; also: GP XIX, vol. 2, 6152; pp. 357-358
[287] Holstein, Memorandum 5 December 1904, PA AA R5773; also: GP XIX, vol. 2, 6153, pp. 358-359

in East Asia. The shelling of English fishing boats by the Russian Baltic fleet off the Dogger Bank on 21 October 1904 not only heightened tensions between Russia and England, but also triggered an unexpected backlash against Germany in the British press. The papers claimed that as a result of alleged German warnings about Japanese sabotage activity against the Russian fleet, its command was so nervous that it mistook the innocent English vessels for Japanese torpedo boats and opened fire. The German government denied that it had warned Russia. Nonetheless, the observation that a confrontation between Britain and France's ally Russia would weaken the fledgling *entente cordiale* and therefore benefit Germany, gave room to allegations about sinister German intent. That a German shipping company supplied the (British) coal for the Russian fleet and thereby helped the enemy of Britain's ally Japan was regarded as further proof of Germany's ill will.[288]

In the correspondence with his Russian cousin, the German Emperor used the Dogger Bank incident to illustrate Germany's loyalty in the face of a threat of war and of Germany's declared neutrality. The details of this episode of 'Willy-Nicky' diplomacy and its eventual failure do not fall within the scope of this study. But it is sufficient to be aware that by early December 1904 the efforts to talk the Tsar into an alliance with Germany had reached the stage where both sovereigns debated the terms of a previously exchanged draft treaty.

Notoriously sceptical about a rapprochement with the eastern neighbour, Holstein worried about the likely repercussions for Anglo-German relations. He therefore suggested that the German Ambassador be summoned to Berlin in order to determine whether there was a danger of a war with England, and whether the projected Russo-German alliance could aggravate such a threat.[289] Bülow agreed with Holstein's advice to call Metternich over and make the decision

[288] See Cecil, L.: *Coal for the Fleet that had to Die*, The American Historical Review, Jul., 1964, Vol. 69, No. 4 pp. 990-1005 for an account of the coaling arrangement between a German shipping line and Russia.
[289] Bülow to Holstein, 13 December 1904, HP IV, 867, Holstein to Bülow, 14 December 1904, 868, Bülow to Holstein 15 December 1904, 869, pp.316-319

on any treaty with Russia conditional on a favourable prognosis for relations with England. "For one thing is certain: while agreement with Russia safeguarding the peace and raising our position in the world would be a great success for our foreign policy [...], a bond with Russia which would in contrast to this draw England's hostility upon us, would certainly be condemned unanimously by the whole nation [...]."[290] From his response it will be clear that Holstein expected the German ambassador to dismiss an alliance as too dangerous: fearing Bülow's propensity to yield to the wishes of the Emperor he exhorted the Chancellor to stay firm in his decisions. "Neither Richthofen nor Metternich nor I could take the responsibility before the Kaiser, the people, or world history, even if we wanted to. It is a good thing that you should listen to us, but the decision is yours alone."[291]

When he arrived in Berlin, Metternich denied that war with England was imminent, despite a pronounced anti-German sentiment he had been able to observe particularly among the younger generation, and notwithstanding some parliamentarians, of both Conservative and Liberal affiliations, who advocated in private a pre-emptive strike against Germany. "England does not want a war", the ambassador declared, "with anyone. It wants peace and seeks recovery from the financial consequences of the Boer war." He warned, however, that a serious danger of war with England would arise if anti-English sentiment was mobilized for the further expansion of the German fleet. Such "chauvinistic agitation" could jeopardize the peace, as it was doubtful that the English nation would put up with this for a second time.[292]

A defensive alliance with Russia, which would have an edge against Britain, was also likely to heighten bilateral tensions, predicted Metternich. While England would probably not go to war immediately, such an alliance would certainly cement the foundation of enmity. If it came to a

[290] Bülow to Holstein, 13 December 1904, HP IV, 867, p. 316
[291] Holstein to Bülow, 15 December 1904, HP IV, 870, p. 319
[292] Metternich, Memorandum 18 December 1904, GP XIX, vol. 1, 6140, pp. 332-340

conflict, however, Germany and not Russia would be the principal focus of British actions, because war against Germany would be more popular among Britons than war against Russia; there would be a strong temptation to settle the trade rivalry with Germany and her growing naval power once and for all; and from a tactical point of view, Germany would be the most vulnerable object of an attack. Moreover, going together with Russia would unnecessarily expose Germany and make her vulnerable to British reprisals in support of Japan. The prospective ally, on the other hand, was weakened by the war in East Asia and thus unable to assist Germany in the event of a confrontation with England.[293]

This clear concern against an alliance with Russia was shared by Tirpitz. In a discussion with Bülow and Richthofen back in late October the admiral had dismissed the military usefulness of Russian assistance, both on land and at sea.[294] Hence, on 21 December the Chancellor instructed the German ambassador in St. Petersburg to refrain from further negotiations for the time being.[295] The episode illustrates the time and effort that German diplomats had to dedicate to responding to the foreign policy ideas of their imperial master. It also demonstrates that the responsible advisors still maintained the heft of decision making and on this occasion managed to fend off the Emperor's initiative.

Two other members of the London embassy, the military attaché Count Schulenburg and the third secretary of the embassy Count Eulenburg, who came to Berlin in mid-December 1904, also provided their assessment of Anglo-German relations. Both men agreed with the ambassador that a British aggression was unlikely at present, but they also highlighted the prevailing anti-German sentiment which, according to Schulenburg, had gained prominence as a result of Bülow's speech against Chamberlain in 1902. That the military attaché took the

[293] Ibid.
[294] Nachlass Tirpitz, BA-MA N253/21/43
[295] Bülow to Alvensleben, 21 December 1904, GP XIX, vol. 1, 6143, pp. 342

opportunity to emphasize once more the disastrous effect of the "Granite Speech" for bilateral relations, indicates that he too anticipated further frictions if the lobbying for more ships meant evoking resentments against Britain. Both diplomats blamed the widespread Germanophobia in Britain on Germany's growing fleet; but unlike Metternich they advocated a Russo-German alliance as a deterrent against future British aggression.[296]

Thus, all three men with first-hand knowledge of the mood in Britain attributed the poor state of bilateral relations to German naval policy. Metternich reiterated this view in a meeting with Bülow, Richthofen and Tirpitz on 21 December 1904. The ambassador warned that an incident comparable to the one on the Dogger Bank would lead to a British attack; and a strong naval amendment was likely to provoke the same result. In his succinct notes on the deliberations Tirpitz described the ensuing dispute. "He (Metternich) requested further explanations. I eluded the question and said I had no doubts that we could not stand still with the fleet but had to progress as innocuously as possible. Metternich claimed the explanatory statement of the Second Naval Law had excited the English so much because it declared we would want to strip Britain of her naval supremacy. I showed that this was an utter distortion of the explanatory statement. [...] I demonstrated that the line of action at that time was the only form in which the First and Second Naval Law could pass." Before the discussion could descend into further considerations of the merits of Anglophobe rhetoric, Bülow intervened in an attempt to take the edge against Britain off the next round of naval appropriations: "The Chancellor mentioned, His Majesty had informed him that the coastal defences of Kiel and Hamburg were so flawed that the English fleet could simply drive in there. Could the next stipulation for the navy not be aimed at this? I replied, those defence stipulations were secondary issues, indeed trivia; that all depended on the stipulations for ships. Metternich and Richthofen suggest a simple budget

[296] Schulenburg, Memorandum, 13 December 1904, PA AA R5773; and: Eulenburg, Memorandum 15 December 1904, PA AA R5773; see also: GP XIX, vol. 2, 6154 & 6155, pp. 359-367

stipulation. I respond, the issue would be impossible without changes to the law, we would have to do it."[297]

The intransigence of Tirpitz in his defence of naval expansion shows that he was conscious of his strong position, despite being isolated at the meeting. Having the Kaiser's backing, the admiral was a factor to be reckoned with, as his frequent inclusion in deliberations on foreign policy from 1904 onwards demonstrates. The degree of freedom he enjoyed in shaping decision making according to his views and preferences is not only reflected by his brushing off any suggestions of compromise during the meeting, but also by his earlier confident assurance that he could influence the Emperor in his tactical decisions on the withdrawal of cruisers from overseas.

Bülow, as the Chancellor and most prominent proponent of *Weltpolitik*, on the other hand, was instrumental in ensuring the success of Tirpitz's naval policy. As a consequence of this role he was keenly aware of being blamed for the sorry state of Anglo-German relations. The assessment of his diplomats in London, and particularly Metternich's sharp criticism, which did not preclude a future war with Britain, may have brought it home to Bülow that he would be held responsible for any further escalation. Hence his clumsy suggestion to temporarily limit the naval expansion that he stood for.

A remarkable detail of the meeting was the absence of Friedrich von Holstein. He had asked Bülow not to include him, claiming that it was hardly necessary for him to attend because the Chancellor was thoroughly familiar with his views.[298] Thus he was able to keep a low profile in what he must have expected to become a heated debate. Nevertheless, it was Holstein who had set the agenda, knowing Metternich's outspoken disdain for Bülow's Weltpolitik. His

[297] Nachlass Tirpitz, BA-MA N253/21/45-46
[298] Holstein to Bülow, 15 December 1904, HP IV, 870, p. 319

advice to call in the ambassador and to present him with the questions he had formulated allowed him to remain in the background while pulling the strings.

In his seminal biography of the counsellor, Norman Rich has suggested that Holstein was the principal proponent of an alliance with Russia in autumn 1904, despite his longstanding and well known aversion against closer ties with the eastern neighbour.[299] The evidence presented for that claim is, however, highly speculative. The fact that Holstein summarized the rationale for the alliance talks in a memorandum, once the negotiations had been shelved, does not prove his support but was rather due to his professionalism as an official of the Wilhelmstrasse. This also applies to his meeting with the Russian ambassador and his briefing of Prince Radolin on the subject. In accordance with his role he carried out its function regardless of his personal dissent, which is indeed a hallmark of the official in a rational bureaucracy as defined by Max Weber.[300] Moreover, other actions of Holstein do not square with Rich's interpretation: If the counsellor was the partisan of a Russo-German alliance or even inspired it, why would he propose to link its realisation to Metternich's assessment of the likely impact on Anglo-German relations? And why would Holstein demand firmness by Bülow in the face of the Kaiser even before Metternich's arrival in Berlin, if the counsellor did not expect the outcome of the consultations which eventually materialised? Rather, it seems that with his suggestion to summon the ambassador to Berlin, Holstein had found a lever with which he could prevent the alliance without exposing himself. The Emperor had supported him in his recent stand-off with Bülow and subsequently he had become officially the political director of the foreign office. (see chapter2). It was therefore not advisable for the counsellor to openly oppose Wilhelm's pet project. As with his scepticism about Bülow's British policy, he refrained from outing

[299] Rich, pp. 688-689
[300] Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, p. 1062

himself as an opponent but sent others in to do the job for him. (compare chapter 2) He thereby managed to retain Bülow's confidence and to preserve his influence over the Chancellor.

Further reassurance that war with Britain was not coming anytime soon was provided by Frank Lascelles, the British ambassador in Berlin. In long conversations with Bülow on Christmas Eve and two days later with Holstein he denied that such intentions were being nourished by the British government. Bülow complained to the ambassador about the press campaign against Germany, which had not even met with official disapproval. These constant attacks, combined with the measures to reorganise the Royal Navy, had led to the widespread belief that war was imminent.[301] Supporting the Chancellor's argument, Holstein stressed the potential danger of war, which the action of the Press had created in his view. Given the prevailing atmosphere, any untoward incident involving both countries might have proved impossible to settle by peaceful means, the counsellor observed.[302]

Lascelles voiced his impression of a recently improved tone in the English papers. He rejected the view of his interlocutors that the British government could influence the press, and reminded them of the anti-English attacks of German newspapers in previous years.[303] The ambassador dismissed as preposterous the idea that England could ever attack Germany. The reorganisation of the navy was a purely defensive measure in reaction to the construction of the German fleet, which many of his countrymen regarded as a menace.[304] Sir Frank predicted in his conversation with Holstein "that if such a calamity as a war between our two countries were to be brought about, it would certainly be the Germans who would begin it, as we should never attack them, although we should naturally have to fight if they attacked us." To which

[301] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 28 December 1904, BD 3/65a pp. 56-58
[302] Lascelles to Lansdowne, 30 December 1904, BD 3/65b pp. 58
[303] Ibid. BD 3/65 a & b; Bülow to Wilhelm, 26 December 1904, GP XIX, vol. 2, 6157, pp. 372-373
[304] Ibid BD 3/65 a

the counsellor ominously replied "that it was not always the power who attacked who was really responsible for the war".[305]

Bülow, who summarized his conversation with the British ambassador in a letter to the Emperor, concluded that regarding relations with England, "all depends on our getting over the coming years with a lot of patience, not provoking any incidents and not providing any cause for suspicion." Notorious for showing off his knowledge of the classics he then likened Germany's situation to that of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, when it had to avoid the attention of Sparta while completing the long walls at Piraeus.[306]

Grievances with 'Personal Rule'

That Bülow urged patience while Germany's naval program was crossing the "danger zone", reflected his worries about Wilhelm's increasing interference in foreign affairs, such as his efforts mentioned above to instigate a Russo-German alliance. In early January 1905 Bülow had to dissuade the Kaiser from mentioning to Lascelles recent rumours of Russian and French attempts to sow enmity between Britain and Germany. Such an intimation, Bülow argued, would create the impression on Lascelles and King Edward "that he wanted to draw England from France's side and to sow enmity between England and Russia."[307] Back in December the Chancellor had learned from the diplomat Wilhelm von Schoen that the Emperor had not only instructed the Chiefs of the General and the Naval Staff to prepare for the possibility of a war against England but had also ordered them to consider the strategic seizure of territory in

[305] ibid BD 3/65 b

[306] Bülow to Wilhelm, 26 December 1904, GP XIX, vol. 2, 6157, p. 373 - On the margins of this letter, Wilhelm claimed to be the actual author of this analogy. Ironically, both men seem to have neglected Athens' eventual fate in their excursions into antiquity.

[307] Bülow to Holstein, 15 January 1905, HP IV, 875, pp. 323-324

neighbouring countries as part of the campaign. This would include a German occupation of the Danish coast and the partial seizure of Zealand and other Danish islands.[308] In a memorandum for the Kaiser, Admiral Büchsel the Naval Chief of Staff argued that in order for Germany to stand a chance against England, all measures had to be aimed at supporting the war effort of the fleet. "The situations we require must be created without any regard for neighbours and with the most extensive interpretation of the rights of the combatants."[309]

During a speech on 4 February 1905 the British parliamentarian and Civil Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Arthur Lee, demanded steps to "Copenhagen" the German fleet, and thus rekindled fears of a pre-emptive strike. As a result, the Kaiser told his Naval Staff to shelve the plans for a far-reaching seizure of Danish territory and reverted back to his earlier project of an alliance with Denmark instead. Bülow recorded this shift of imperial priorities in a memorandum of 6 February 1905: "In connection with the English threats, H.M. again spoke of Denmark. He admitted that any threat against Denmark could have dangerous consequences, but did express his urgent desire for an alliance with Denmark, in order to prevent thereby an English surprise attack on Kiel and the Baltic ports."[310]

The Chancellor seems to have supported that idea at first, but Holstein dismissed the scheme as too dangerous – not least with a view to the implications for Anglo-German relations: "A diplomatic action by Germany to bring about an alliance with Denmark could at this moment considerably heighten the already existing state of general insecurity. An alliance between powerful Germany and little Denmark would be generally regarded as a renunciation of her independence by Denmark and her incorporation in the German empire." Regarding the hostility of the Danish people towards Germany as "axiomatic", Holstein argued that people,

[308] Bülow, Denkwürdigkeiten, vol. 2, pp. 66-67
[309] Büchsel to Wilhelm, quoted in Röhl 2008, p. 360
[310] Holstein, memorandum, 6 February 1905, HP IV, 876, footnote 3, p. 324

press and government would turn for help to Britain and Russia, probably ousting the monarchy in the process. "The English would then be given an opportunity to pose as the defenders of Denmark's independence against a feared alliance with Germany, either by themselves, or more probably together with other powers." Both, Britain's and Russia's aim was to maintain the status quo in the Baltic, the counsellor observed. He therefore warned that French diplomacy might attempt to exploit this shared interest in order to instigate a rapprochement between Britain and Russia. "The plan of drawing Denmark within the outer ambit of the German Empire is a great idea of the future; but a condition for its realization is that either the English fleet should be otherwise engaged, or that the German fleet, either by itself or in conjunction with an ally, should be more or less equally strong. And a step in this direction today would be welcomed by the enemies of Germany and in particular those who are diplomatically working for a Franco-Russian-English Triplice."[311]

The counsellor's analysis demonstrates once more how Germany's policy options were inextricably linked to her relationship with England. Moreover, it reinforces the impression that the officials of the Wilhelmstrasse had become increasingly occupied with the assessment of foreign policy proposals by the Emperor and had to muster their diplomatic skills to discard them. Their efforts to keep pace with Wilhelm's ever-changing and sometimes contradictory initiatives placed an additional burden on decision making. As we will see, Germany's prestige also suffered from his interference in private matters of his fellow monarchs. The Emperor's restlessness was thus taxing the nerves of his responsible advisors, and those of Bülow in particular. Since coming to office the Chancellor had reserved several hours per day for face-time with the Kaiser.[312] At the beginning of 1905 he recognized that his micromanagement of

[311] Holstein, memorandum, 6 February 1905, HP IV, 876, pp. 324-325. This sensible advice by the counsellor, not to play into the hands of those who sought ever closer ties between Britain, Russia and France, surprises when considering his role, a few months later, in the First Moroccan Crisis, which strengthened the entente cordiale and probably sped up the settlement on British differences with Russia.
[312] Lerman, The Chancellor as courtier, p. 87

Wilhelm's dabbling in politics was failing. During a stroll with Tirpitz on 4 January 1905 he let go against the monarch: "[Bülow] complained exceedingly about H.M. whose boundless vanity offended the sensibilities of all sovereigns all the time. The German princes, on whom we relied after all, if we wanted to improve Germany's domestic situation; the King of England whom he had accosted on several occasions concerning his private life, and who was now returning it to him; the King of Italy and his wife whom he made feel that he regarded their marriage as a *mésalliance*, and whom he had annoyed when visiting them with all-giant companions; [...] the King of Portugal whom he had slighted when passing Lisbon, despite an invitation. And then H.M. was surprised when these monarchs returned it. H.M. suffered from an exceptional lack of logical thinking. Empress Friedrich [Wilhelm's mother] said, her son had never been a young man and would never be a mature man. At the age of fourteen he had already been insufferable for his parents and used to cut short his father [...]. He, the Chancellor, could not listen to the constant bragging any longer. The calmest, most prudential people were check-mated in his sustained company. Phili Eulenburg always lay in bed for three days after a visit. [...] And the New Year's address had been incredibly immature."[313]

Judging by this outburst, Bülow must have been a desperate man in early 1905. Despite his best efforts, he had not managed to keep Wilhelm's impulsiveness at bay and out of the foreign ministry. Not only did the Emperor tirelessly dream up new strategic initiatives whose assessment further added to the already towering workload of the diplomats; the personal touch with which he tended dynastic relations also alienated the crowned heads of other European states. Moreover, the Emperor was beginning to encroach on the decision making of his responsible advisors, as shall be seen in a moment. The second half of this chapter investigates how the Chancellor and the foreign office attempted to regain the initiative in policy-making

[313] Nachlass Tirpitz, BA-MA N253/21/45

and to channel the Emperor's energy behind their project for improving Germany's international position.

Impaired policy making and the foreign ministry's quest for regaining prestige

When he learned that Wilhelm, who looked forward to his second Mediterranean cruise in spring 1905, intended to sail along the Moroccan coast and venture a brief landing in order to visit the city of Tangier, Bülow could barely disguise his disapproval. As Count Zedlitz-Truetschler, the Kaiser's lord steward, observed, "From the whole situation it became clear that the Chancellor regarded a visit to Tangier as highly undesirable but that he did not express this with the appropriate assertiveness."[314] Bülow's initial reaction is puzzling, considering his later insistence on the visit when the Emperor started to voice concerns about his personal safety. It becomes less surprising, however, when taking into account the diplomatic preludes to the German initiative in Morocco.

One year earlier, on 30 March 1904, the Chancellor had asked the Emperor for permission to send three German warships to Morocco. He deemed this show of resolve necessary to support demands for the immediate release of a Moroccan subject who acted as the representative (mochalat) of a German company. Earlier calls by German diplomats on the Moroccan authorities to set him free had resulted in the *mochalat* being chained and thrown into a dungeon instead. Other German grievances against Morocco included the protracted investigation of the death of a German journalist who had been murdered in Fez earlier that month. Germany's political and economic prestige among the other nations engaged in the North African country required the use of military might to demand compensation for this

[314] Zedlitz-Trützschler., Zwoelf Jahre, p. 127

"open mockery of our rights", the Chancellor reasoned.[315] Nevertheless, the Emperor rejected Bülow's request for a forceful claim against the Sharifian Empire. The negotiations between England and France to settle their disputes about Morocco and Egypt were far advanced, he argued.[316] A unilateral belligerent act at this stage would undoubtedly raise the suspicions of both powers. Moreover, it would throw an ambiguous light on German policy, thus undermining trust in Wilhelm's repeated assurance to the King of Spain that Germany was not seeking any exclusive rights in Morocco. He suggested consulting instead with Britain, France and Spain in order to agree any coercive measures on a multilateral basis.[317]

It is likely that the Emperor's assessment of the situation reflected the views of Heinrich von Tschirschky, the representative of the foreign office in the imperial entourage during Wilhelm's spring cruise. The diplomat, who cabled the imperial verdict to Bülow from Sicily, was a known favourite. In January 1906, after Richthofen's sudden death, he would become foreign secretary against the explicit wishes of the Chancellor and Holstein. Without intending an assessment of the respective merits of Bülow's more belligerent stance and Wilhelm's multilateral preference, it becomes apparent that on this occasion the Emperor, advised by a subordinate member of the foreign ministry, overruled the policy choice of the politician responsible for conducting Germany's foreign affairs.

Bülow thus had to refrain from adopting unilateral measures, but he dismissed the imperial advice to seek cooperation with the other three powers. Such a liaison could have "undesirable repercussions on the fate of the expected new naval bill." The Chancellor feared that relying on foreign help against Morocco would furnish the opposition with arguments against the fleet.[318] His concerns about the possible effects of a multilateral approach on the

[315] Bülow to Wilhelm, 30 March 1904, GP XX, vol.1, 6512, pp. 197-199
[316] The entente cordial would indeed be announced only a few days later, on 8 April 1904.
[317] Tschirschky to Bülow, 3 April 1904, GP XX, vol.1, 6513, pp. 199-201
[318] Bülow to Tschirschky, Berlin 6 April 1904, GP XX, vol.1, 6514, p. 201

naval bill may hint at his motive for seeking unilateral action in the first place: the Emperor's veto had just spoilt an opportunity to use foreign policy as a public relations tool in support for naval agitation.

While the use of force was barred by all-highest intervention, an overwhelming number of German diplomats continued to favour this option even after the *entente cordiale* had been announced on 8 April 1904. Friedrich von Mentzingen, the German envoy in Tangier, urged action by occupying a coastal area such as Agadir and surroundings before the French could extend their influence in Morocco. France would regard such a move as less intrusive now than at a later stage when it had asserted its predominant position, he argued. In order to realise this goal, the envoy advocated a full blown naval operation.[319]

Prince Lichnowsky, expert on British affairs at the Wilhelmstrasse, supported Mentzingen's proposal and suggested giving it due consideration after its feasibility had been discussed with the navy. "We need a success in foreign policy, since the Anglo-French entente as well as the French-Italian rapprochement are generally regarded as a defeat for us." He therefore recommended instructing Metternich to inquire in London whether Britain had any objections to such a forcible reprisal. Given its declared disinterestedness in Morocco, Lichnowsky reasoned, the British government might regard this as "a not unwelcome accentuation of the Franco-German antagonism by which the French would be made even more amenable to their wishes than before."[320]

More than a month passed after Mentzingen's cable had been received, however, before the Undersecretary of State for foreign affairs, Otto von Mühlberg, expressed his personal regret to the baron that Germany had to refrain from sending the navy into Moroccan waters. In line

[319] Menzingen to Bülow, Tangier, 5 April 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6515, p. 202
[320] Note by Prince Lichnowsky, 13 April 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6516, pp. 202-203. (It appears that Metternich was not consulted on this occasion; no according instruction or response was found in the PA AA files.)

with the Emperor's orders from 3 April 1904, he explained the caution by the need to forestall any misinterpretations of German intentions and instructed the envoy to avoid an open conflict with the Sultan's administration until it became clear how the external relations of the country would be influenced by its cession to France.[321]

The envisaged *pénétration pacifique* of Morocco, for which Britain had accorded France its diplomatic support in Article IX of the *entente* agreement, raised concerns in the Wilhelmstrasse that German economic interests might suffer as a result. Whereas trade and shipping would be protected by the existing most favourite nation clauses - provided Morocco remained formally independent - German industry and investors were likely to find themselves at a disadvantage when it came to concessions and the public procurement for large infrastructural projects such as the building and running of railways and port facilities.[322]

The fact that France had not regarded it as necessary to formally notify Germany about its intentions in Morocco after signing the Anglo-French *entente* deeply troubled German diplomats. Britain, by contrast, had approached Germany over its part of the deal, and negotiated for German consent to British fiscal domination of Egypt. If France intended to absorb Morocco, as it had done Tunisia and Madagascar, and thereby harmed German economic interests, Germany had a right to be consulted, Holstein reasoned, warning of the loss of prestige that muted acceptance would entail.[323] On the other hand, German prestige would be also at stake if the issue was broached with France. If Germany made the first step of sounding the French government about a possible settlement, this could be regarded as recognition of France's preponderant position in Morocco without any guarantees that a

[321] Mühlberg to Mentzingen, Berlin, 21 May 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6520, pp. 206-207
[322] Bülow to Radolin, 21 July 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6523, pp. 210-214
[323] Memorandum by Holstein, 3 June 1904 GP XX, vol. 1, 6521, pp. 207-209

commercial agreement would be reached. Prince Radolin, the German Ambassador in Paris, therefore recommended forcing France to make the first move. As a signatory of the Madrid Convention of 1880 Germany had the same right as France to maintain order in Tangier with the help of a police force and other troops, Radolin argued, and if the French foreign minister Delcassé was sending warships to Tangier, the Germans could do the same. Moreover, Germany could also back the Sultan in case he started to resent French encroachments.[324]

Meanwhile, Mentzingen continued to push for a robust stance over the pending German complaints. On 6 August, he warned that failing this, the Sherifian authorities might expect to get away with negligence, and that would harm Germany's position and trading interests in the country. Regarding the afore mentioned murder investigation the envoy suggested backing up demands for punishment and compensation with a six-months' ultimatum which could also be tied to any other German claims. Such a vigorous announcement would not fail to impress the Moroccan government, he predicted. In case of non-compliance, however, 'a forceful step' ought to be taken.[325]

When reporting this proposal to Bülow, who was on vacation in Norderney, Mühlberg insisted that public opinion desired satisfaction for the Moroccan encroachments as soon as possible. Even if a show of force became necessary, it was unlikely to produce any complications, he argued. The deputy foreign secretary pointed out to the Chancellor that Britain had just recently sent a warship to Tangier in order to reassert its protection rights over Menebhi. It was therefore safe to assume that Britain would not intervene. Germany's enforcement of pending claims would not affect the British pledge for diplomatic support of France, laid down in the entente declaration. Moreover, public opinion in Britain would be

[324] Radolin to Bülow, 27 July 1904 GP XX, vol. 1, 6524, pp. 215-217
[325] Mentzingen to Bülow, 6 August 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6528, pp. 222-223

glad to see France's difficulties with its newest colonial acquisition multiply, Mühlberg argued.[326]

Bülow was aware that his foreign secretary also supported the demands to bring the grievances over Moroccan defiance to a head. The Chancellor had scribbled his approval on the margins of a memorandum in which Richthofen recommended frequently showing the German naval ensign in Moroccan waters and on one of these occasions to settle accounts with the Moroccan government.[327]

But how would Britain react? At the Wilhelmstrasse the view prevailed that, despite a "platonic" commitment to the *pénétration pacifique*, Britain could not possess a heightened interest in France's smooth absorption of Morocco, given the latter's strategically important position as well as the flourishing British trade with the country. If Germany could cast itself as the defender of the open door in the broadest sense, the reasoning went, it would act in accordance with British interests. Metternich was therefore instructed to find out if Germany could indeed count on English neutrality.[328]

During his interview with the ambassador, Lord Lansdowne refused to speculate over British support for France without a particular case at hand, but Metternich came away with the impression that the foreign secretary was inclined to restrictively interpret any duties of support deriving from the text of the *entente*. "If we have contract law on our side, we can be unconcerned about England when we act firmly against France. To halt the process of French establishment in Morocco, on the other hand, would be very difficult for us when considering the current international situation. On England's benevolent forbearance in this regard we cannot count. While England will not contribute of its own accord to speeding up French

[326] Mühlberg, Memorandum for Bülow, 16 August 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6529, pp. 223-224
[327] Richthofen, Memorandum 29 June 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6525, p. 217
[328] Mühlberg to Metternich, Berlin, 7 August 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6526, pp. 217-219

penetration of Morocco, it will not do anything which may risk its comity with France because of Morocco." Metternich cautioned that any further reaching measures such as a German attempt to gain control over a port on the western coast of the country were likely to trigger British intervention on behalf of France. "If any power tried to contest politically the French position, however, English diplomacy and above all public opinion here would be found on the side of the French."[329]

Bülow had not yet received Metternich's report, when he instructed Mühlberg to seek the Emperor's approval for an ultimatum to Morocco, agreeing with the Undersecretary of State for foreign affairs that a deadline of three months would put more credible pressure on the sultan's government than a six-months' period.[330] Mühlberg was going to plead the case for the ultimatum together with Tschirschky, the representative of the foreign ministry in the imperial entourage, who had also been present a few months earlier, when the Kaiser rejected employing the navy against Morocco on the grounds that it might raise British and French suspicions. The meeting took place at Wilhelmshöhe, the Emperor's summer residence, on 18 August. No account of what was said regarding Morocco during that meeting appears to exists in the files, but the fact that it did not come to an ultimatum led the editors of the official document collection to believe that Wilhelm once again refused to take military action against Morocco.[331] This indicates that Tschirschky, once again, may have supported the Emperor in dismissing the political course deemed to be expedient by the person in charge of Germany's foreign affairs.

Baron Mentzingen, on the other hand, was still confident that his government would eventually show resolve. On 13 September he suggested demanding 100-150,000 francs in

[329] Metternich to Bülow, 15 August 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6527, pp. 219-222
[330] Bülow to Tschirschky, 17 August 1904, GP XX, vol. 1, 6530, pp. 224-225
[331] Ibid, Footnote **

compensation for the murder of the journalist, and if the Moroccan government did not pay within eight days, to seize as collateral their only steamboat, with the help of two German warships.[332] It is remarkable, that at this stage Berlin does not seem to have discarded the military option yet, for in a cable on 17 September the envoy was asked to suggest additional measures in case the seizure of the vessel missed its purpose.[333]

Apparently, the officials at the Wilhelmstrasse did not fully realize until October that an intervention was out of the question. Confirming the Emperor's continued reluctance to use coercion, Richthofen commented on Mentzingen's proposal on 7 October: "After His Majesty has expressed himself persistently and very decidedly against military action in Morocco, it would not be easy to obtain the all highest approval for the deployment of the two required warships." Richthofen doubted that seizing the steamboat would have the desired effect and questioned the wisdom of occupying Agadir which Mentzingen had suggested as an additional means of pressure. Expressly referring to Metternich's report he warned that "the occupation of this port, even if we label it as a temporary coercive measure, would drive the English to the French side and would in general cause new mistrust of us."[334]

In his record for the Chancellor, Richthofen also suggested that direct negotiations with France ought to be considered after all, in order to ensure that Germans could continue to compete freely for public procurements and concessions in Morocco. The fact that Russia was occupied with its war against Japan and therefore unable to back its French ally was likely to make France more accommodating to German demands, the foreign secretary reasoned. Moreover, German services presently rendered to Russia – i.e. the supply of the

[332] Mentzingen to foreign ministry, 13 September 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6532, pp. 226-227
[333] Mentzingen to foreign ministry, 18 September 1904; GP XX, vol. 1 6533, footnote *, p. 227
[334] Richthofen, Memorandum for Bülow, 7 October 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6534, pp. 228-230

Baltic Fleet with coal – could be brought to bear to ask for Russia's influence in Germany's favour.[335]

Several elements shine up in this assessment, which would become recurring features during the crisis in the following year: exploiting Russia's temporary weakness to put pressure on France; employing Russia's imagined moral indebtedness to Germany to influence the former's ally; but also the demands for direct negotiations with France which occasionally surfaced among German diplomats throughout 1905. However, Richthofen also recognized the dilemma faced by Germany when he pointed out that in order to keep the future open in Morocco, any formal recognition of French preponderance ought to be avoided.[336]

Ultimately it was this last consideration which informed Germany's Moroccan policy up to the eve of the Tangier landing - and beyond. Richard von Kühlmann, the new *chargé d'affaires* in Tangier, advised letting time work for German interests. Whereas a noisy intervention would strengthen the ties of Anglo-French friendship, an expectant German policy would provide room for both *entente* powers to discover their differences, and especially for French doubts about British reliability in the Moroccan question to gain ground, he argued. Meanwhile, articles in the press and carefully dropped hints in diplomatic circles would keep the French government under pressure. This "*attitude muette et énigmatique*, combined with the occasional insinuation of a possible intervention, ought to suffice entirely to strengthen the conviction that for the time being it would be good French policy to remove everything which might serve as a pretext for a possible German

[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid.

intervention."[337] Upon receipt of these suggestions, Bülow asked to cable his approval to Kühlmann.[338]

Towards the end of 1904, while German policy makers were still under the impression of the naval scare, their diplomatic restraint over Morocco began to bear fruits. The journey of the French envoy St.-René Taillandier to Fez, with the intention of securing French control over the Moroccan administration, had to be delayed when the Sultan attempted to reassert the independence of his country. Kühlmann alleged that Walter Harris, the correspondent of *The Times* in Tangier, had encouraged the anti-French attitude of the Sultan, who was gathering a council of notables to strengthen his moral resolve against French demands. Harris, an influential figure in the local British community, was concerned about the impact of a French take-over on British traders. In a previous cable, Kühlmann had reported on Harris's efforts to draw Moroccan attention to the possibility of German support.[339] In Britain, the satirical magazine *Punch* poured scorn over the sacrifice of Morocco by its government. In a mock version of the King's Speech the authors let King Edward VII declare the selling out of British interests in the country.[340] On 25 February Bülow was therefore confident when he observed: "It can be assumed with certainty that the English government, out of consideration for the English trade interests, would not regard it unwillingly, if, without their help, the current state of commercial equality remained protected in the face of French ambitions of annexation."[341]

The prospect that Germany might benefit from the ongoing French problems must have looked promising in the eyes of German policy makers. Bülow was aware that public opinion

[337] Kühlmann to Bülow, 9 November 1904; GP XX, vol. 1, 6536, pp. 232-234
[338] Ibid.
[339] Kühlmann to Bülow, 29 January 1905; GP XX, vol. 1, 6552, pp. 248-249
[340] "The Convention entered into between my Government and that of the French Republic has been approved by the French legislature and duly ratified. This is not surprising when account is taken of the way in which my Government has applied to the French claims in Morocco its traditional policy of grateful concession." (Punch, 22 February 1905, p. 128)
[341] Bülow to Speck von Sternburg, 25 February 1905; GP XX, vol. 1, 6558, pp. 256-258

in France was reluctant to consider a military adventure in the North African country, for fear that this might expose the French border with Germany at a time when the Russian ally could not afford any help.[342] Any troubles that France would encounter during its *pénétration pacifique* were therefore likely to endure, while Germany could tacitly support Moroccan resistance. Thus, Germany's bargaining position for a future bilateral settlement with France was improving. Moreover, whereas a large number of German diplomats favoured a more assertive attitude over Morocco, both in order to redress grievances with the Sharifian authorities and to secure an economic stake in its future, German restraint reflected the policy preferences of Emperor Wilhelm II who had repeatedly expressed the wish to avoid ambiguities over his country's intentions, after publicly renouncing any territorial ambitions in Morocco.

It is in this light, that Wilhelm's sudden desire to visit Tangier must be regarded. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the German Chancellor was by the beginning of 1905 increasingly irritated about the sovereign's interference in international relations. The envisaged landing could be regarded as yet another erratic shift of his strategic preferences. If Zedlitz therefore observed that Bülow did not appreciate the Emperor's plan when he first heard about it, he might have witnessed a rare slip in the Chancellor's composure. For the past year, Bülow had closely followed the Emperor's instructions and avoided any open conflict over Morocco, against his own inclinations and despite the advice to the contrary of a considerable number of senior diplomats. On 11 February 1905 he had reiterated this policy in a cable to Kühlmann: "The more quiet our whole diplomatic activity remains and the less of an object of criticism or even praise it becomes in the press, the better."[343] A landing of the

[342] Bülow to Kühlmann, 11 February 1905; GP XX, vol. 1, 6554, pp. 251-253
[343] ibid. GP XX, vol. 1, 6554, pp. 251-253

German Emperor in Tangier would certainly upset these principles which Wilhelm himself had forced his diplomats to adopt - hence Bülow's initial disapproval.

Yet the Chancellor did not advise against the visit. After what must have been an initial huff over yet another *volte-face* of his imperial master, Bülow began to recognize its potential to free the Moroccan policy from the restrictions imposed by the Emperor. While apparently successful in the short term, the *attitude muette et énigmatique* was ill suited to exploit the opportunities arising from the growing alienation between the Sultan and France. In his cables to Berlin, Kühlmann repeatedly highlighted the Moroccan desire for moral support from Germany.[344] Although a cautious consideration of this piece of intelligence might have detected a possible intention on the part of the Sultan to play the European powers off against each other, the wish to gain an advantage over France was still dominant in the minds of German diplomats. Holstein therefore outlined a flexible strategy for the medium term when he drafted a cable to Kühlmann: "Depending on whether the Sultan shows himself firm or docile [towards France], the German policy must either encourage him by all means, or merely tend to Germany's economic interests. Until we understand the Sultan's position better, we would like to avoid official statements to France."[345]

In his memoirs, Kühlmann claimed credit for having inspired the Emperor's wish to visit Morocco by means of a news telegram which he had drafted together with the Tangier correspondent of the *Kölnische Zeitung*.[346] Accordingly he was overjoyed when learning of the envisaged landing and praised it as an act of world historical significance. "A landing was precisely what I had ardently wished for in the interest of our policy; a neutral act in

[344] Kühlmann to Bülow, 31 January 1905; GP XX, vol. 1, 6553, pp. 251-253
[345] Bülow to Kühlmann, 16 February 1905; GP XX, vol. 1, 6556, pp. 254-255
[346] Kühlmann, R.: Erinnerungen, p. 225

principle, which nevertheless contained strong elements of protest without formally expressing it as such."[347]

Eventually, Bülow must have welcomed the idea of an imperial visit to Tangier as a chance to remove the obstacles to a more active Moroccan policy which many of his diplomats had deemed necessary all along. By gearing the Emperor to his policy the Chancellor hoped to regain the initiative in foreign affairs. Moreover, as discussed in previous chapters, Bülow knew that his foreign office staff blamed him personally for the diplomatic setbacks of the recent past, particularly for the deteriorating relations with Britain and ultimately for the Anglo-French entente. If he managed to regain his freedom of action in foreign policy making and place himself at the helm of a diplomatic stand-off with France, he could hope to recapture the trust of his diplomats who desired a boost for German prestige.

The absence of any official documents which analyse the possible foreign reactions to the visit indicate that the Chancellor, at the outset, might have been more concerned with these domestic effects of his plan than with thoroughly assessing its likely impact. Once the envisaged landing had been announced, his only worry, according to the available diplomatic correspondence, consisted in making sure that the Emperor would go through with it. The impromptu character of German policy during this episode was certainly not lost to Wilhelm's lord steward, who depicted how the idea for the visit was conceived out of a whim of the Kaiser. In his diary he scornfully observed on 7 April 1905 how official circles in Germany and the press now pretended that all had been diplomatically well considered and how the personal presence of the Emperor was necessary to reiterate a policy of the open door in Morocco.[348]

[347] Ibid.
[348] Zedlitz-Trütschler, p. 126

The First Moroccan Crisis takes its course

When Wilhelm II. landed in Tangier on 31 March 1905, eleven days after the first rumours of the impending event appeared in the press, the public debate was already in full swing. The bemused *Times* correspondent reported from Germany on the day before: "As far as the majority of Germans are concerned, the question of Morocco is barely ten days old, and yet numerous contradictory statements are already being made under the influence of what is considered and evidently felt to be a moment great with dramatic possibilities. [...] All that has been written during the past week with regard to German 'interests' in Morocco would lead the casual observer to suppose that German commerce in and with that country was one of the most valuable items of her commercial budget. Yet the value both of British and French trade is each several times greater than that of the German stake. German anticipations with regard to the future are apparently based upon the question as to how far the Sultan will or can make Germany the mortgagee of his country's commercial destinies."[349]

The political tune for the Emperor's visit came from Berlin, where Bernhard von Bülow before the Reichstag demanded a say in Morocco's future. Almost exactly a year earlier, he had greeted the Anglo-French agreement over Morocco and Egypt with equanimity; however, on 29 March 1905 he declared: "German interests in Morocco are [...] very considerable, and we have to see to it that they remain possessed of rights equal to those enjoyed by all other Powers. [...] In so far as attempts are made to alter the international position of Morocco, or to subject to control the economic development of the principle of the open door, we must exercise a correspondingly higher degree of care that our commercial interests in Morocco remain un-imperilled. In connexion with this matter we propose, in the first place, shortly to

[349] The Times, 31. 03. 1905

place ourselves in communication with the Sultan of Morocco."[350] As the Paris correspondent of *The Times* keenly pointed out, the Chancellor's announcement of negotiations with the Sultan distinctly implied that Germany would not negotiate with France.[351]

The journalist's assessment would be proven right by Germany's handling of the crisis. The firm refusal of a bilateral settlement and the insistence on an international conference to determine the fate of the North African country would form the tenets of Berlin's Moroccan policy throughout the year of tensions that followed. German intransigence was based on considerations of economics and political symbolism. Given the marginal commercial stakes of Germany, referred to in *The Times*, direct negotiations with France were likely to yield little for the German side. It was therefore preferable to postpone a carving up of the country for as long as possible. The status quo would best be preserved by a conference that assembled all signatories of the Madrid convention which in 1880 had guaranteed the independence of the Sherifian empire and the open door for all stakeholders.

The legally unassailable demand for a conference would also be the most effective method to inflict a diplomatic defeat on France. As Holstein, who strongly advocated this policy, pointed out, contractual collectivity "has the advantage that while affecting French interests, it does not affect French pride, just as the collective victories of 1814 were not so great an insult to the French as the German victory, gained alone, in 1870. [...] If the conference is held, it will, whatever the results, definitely not hand Morocco over to the French."[352]

What is more, a conference would nullify France's gains from its deal with Britain. "If a conference materialized, Egypt will, for the present, be a one-sided gift by France for England", Metternich reasoned. The ambassador did not gain the impression that Britain had

[350] The Times, 30. 03. 1905
[351] The Times, 31. 03. 1905
[352] Holstein to Bülow, 5 April 1905, HP IV, 882, p. 328-329

already taken sides against Germany over Morocco, when he briefly talked to the British Foreign Secretary during a wedding; but he warned that insistence on a conference would change this: "The British government would certainly not act in the Moroccan question against France, if only, because France might then declare itself no longer bound to the other part of the treaty regarding Egypt."[353]

It was this perception, that Germany attempted to break up the *entente cordiale*, which produced the most violent anti-German backlash in Britain witnessed to date and ultimately led to a strengthening of the Anglo-French ties, as numerous observers predicted at the time. British support for France ranged from symbolic gestures such as the mutual visits of the Royal and the French navies in summer 1905, over backing the French in resisting the German demands for a conference, to repeated warnings that a German aggression against France would have to face Britain's might as well. The diverse facets of the First Moroccan crisis as it unfolded have been documented by a wealth of historical research over the past century.[354] A thorough account is therefore not intended in this thesis.

In Germany, Holstein tried to keep policy on track against attempts by a number of German diplomats eager to give in to the international calls for an arrangement with France. Otto von Hamann, the Head of the Press Office, Count Anton von Monts, the German Ambassador in Rome and Hermann von Eckardstein all encountered the counsellor's wrath when they, independently, hinted at the desirability of bilateral negotiations. Bülow, who was afraid that his strategy might be counteracted by imperial intervention, watched carefully over access to the Emperor, as Eckardstein would find out. On 5 May, he attempted to visit Wilhelm in Karlsruhe, where the latter stayed at the palace of his uncle, the grand duke of Baden. Acting

[353] Metternich to AA, 15 June 1905; GP XX, vol. 2, 6712, pp. 441

[354] e.g. see: Raulff, H.: Zwischen Machtpolitik und Imperialismus, Düsseldorf 1976; Moritz, A. Das Problem des Präventivkrieges in der deutschen Politik während der ersten Marokkokrise. Bern/Frankfurt 1974.

as a go-between for the French Premier Rouvier he intended to win his sovereign for the idea of a Franco-German solution. But the baron found the doors of the palace closed to his mission. As he would learn from his friends among the imperial entourage, Bülow had given explicit orders not to receive him.[355] Both Holstein and Bülow would soon have occasion to confirm that their doubts about the reliability of Wilhelm were well founded.

In summer 1905 the banker Paul von Schwabach informed Holstein that the Kaiser had reassured French and British generals who attended the wedding of the Prussian crown prince that he would not fight against France over Morocco.[356] The counsellor blamed the Emperor's communication for renewed difficulties in bringing France to accept the conference. Holstein's biographer denies that Holstein actually wished for war in 1905, but regards the possibility of war as a credible threat in order to pressure France to be central to the counsellor's thinking during the crisis. [357] In Holstein's eyes German policy had been compromised by Wilhelm's remarks. When considering resignation later that year, as so often during his career, Holstein complained to Bülow: "We must face the fact that this sort of thing may occur again. We must therefore count with the possibility of finding ourselves, without any means of preventing it, in impossible situations."[358]

The impression that it was impossible to check the Kaiser would be reinforced when Bülow received news that Wilhelm had altered the draft treaty of an alliance with Russia, without prior consultation of the Foreign Office. The treaty which he and his cousin Tsar Nicolas signed on their yachts, off the coast of Björkö, was expected to form the centrepiece of a new continental alliance. German foreign policy makers hoped that France would align itself with this bloc, once the conference over Morocco would prove the *entente cordiale* to be futile.

[355] Eckardstein, vol. 3, p. 112-113
[356] Schwabach, P.: Aus meinen Akten; p. 336-337
[357] Rich, p. 699
[358] Holstein to Bülow, 19 September 1905, HP IV, 913, p. 373-374

The envisaged alliance had a clear edge against Britain. In the eyes of the diplomats it lost any practical value, however, when Wilhelm limited its geographical scope to Europe. An advance on Afghanistan and India, the only place where Russia could bring relief for Germany in a confrontation with Britain, was thereby precluded. That Bülow tendered his resignation as a result has been interpreted by contemporaries and historians alike as an attempt to rein in the Emperor's high-handedness and to regain control over foreign affairs.[359]

Some historians have claimed that Holstein did not only regard the possibility of a war with France as a useful means of pressure, but that he actually wished to provoke one in 1905. Rassow identified divergent goals among the three German protagonists in the Moroccan crisis. Accordingly, the Emperor dreamt of a great continental alliance with Russia, whereas Bülow believed that his policy could bluff France into joining as the junior partner. Holstein on the other hand aimed at destroying the 'encirclement' of Germany by force, Rassow argued. Together with his old acquaintance Count Schlieffen, the counsellor attempted to exploit the temporary weakness of Russia for a pre-emptive strike against France.[360]

There is no documentary evidence to substantiate this claim, as Rich correctly points out. However, the absence of a smoking gun is not sufficient to prove a lack of intention. Schlieffen's documents for this period give a cleansed impression. They just contain two insignificant letters from Holstein, one of which indicates, however, that both men saw each other frequently.[361] Regarded in France and Britain at the time as the German 'war party', it is not unlikely that they suppressed any compromising material out of concern for their image in posterity.

[359] Hamann, p. 144; Brandenburg, p. 202

[360] Rassow, P.: Schlieffen und Holstein; in : Historische Zeitschrift, 173, 1952; pp. 307-313

[361] Holstein to Schlieffen, 29 November 1904, HP IV, 865, p. 314-315

Holstein's policy of mounting military pressure on France could also point to another motive that went beyond the desire for a diplomatic victory and possible break-up of the entente: a strategic refocussing of Germany's armament efforts. In a leader by the editor of the *Schlesische Zeitung* on 29 April 1906, which Holstein claimed to have authored[362], he advocated shifting away from naval expansion back to strengthening the army. The counsellor denied that there ever had been a danger of war over Morocco, because it was 'mathematically certain' that, in the event of a war, Germany would have to face France and Britain side by side. This held true, he warned, as long as Britain's alarm over German naval expansion continued to be fuelled by the chauvinistic-aggressive references in Germany to an 'unavoidable English war'. A German fleet would therefore have to be equally as strong as those of both powers combined. As that would never be the case, it constituted an element of weakness, Holstein argued. "The increased danger that we bring upon ourselves with our present naval policy is totally out of proportion with what our fleet could possibly achieve." He demanded limiting the naval program to Germany's geographical and political position and fiscal capacity, and regretted that too little attention was paid to the army, whose burden was growing "to the extent that our fleet is creating new enemies."[…] "Now, that we can soon claim: enemies all around!, the existence of the German empire rests on the army more than ever before." In Holstein's opinion it all boiled down to the question: 'Expedient or inexpedient preparations for war?'(the title of the article was: 'Expedient and inexpedient readiness for war')[363]. A crisis that awakened German public opinion to the limited usefulness of the navy could therefore have been exploited to roll back naval expenditure in

[362] In the letter to his cousin which contained a copy of the article he claimed that he had dictated it to the journalist Otto Röse. Published shortly after he retired from the foreign ministry, he wanted to keep his name secret, in order to avoid allegations that he had written it out of bitterness. Holstein to Ida Stülpnagel, 28 May 1906, in: Rogge, Lebensbekenntnis, p. 253.

[363] Schlesische Zeitung Nr. 297, 29 May 1906: 'Praktische und unpraktische Kriegsbereitschaft'

favour of the army and curtail the growing influence of the Imperial Naval Office on decision making in foreign affairs. It is not unlikely that Holstein and Schlieffen may have discussed this opportunity during their frequent encounters.

There can be no doubt, however, that war, not only with France but also with England, was regarded by contemporary observers, such as the well-connected baroness Spitzemberg, as a distinct possibility.[364] As Rassow points out, in December 1905 Schlieffen was factoring in a possible Anglo-French alliance into his war plan, reflected by the title 'War against France allied to England' (Krieg gegen das mit England verbündete Frankreich).[365]

Rich claims that Holstein could not be regarded as bellicose, because he always favoured an international conference, in which a victory would remove all reasons for Germany to go to war.[366] Metternich must have had serious doubts, however, that a German victory at the Algeciras conference would be likely or indeed intended. In a memorandum dated 2 November 1905 he analysed the three options available to the German negotiators. Either they could give in to French demands in all but name; or they could seek a compromise with the other participants by giving up many German demands in exchange for a few gains; the third option was to firmly demand the status quo for Morocco, in which case the conference was likely to fail and this failure might be tantamount to war with France and England. Metternich identified Count Tattenbach as the diplomat most suitable to pursue this third course.[367] Bülow would indeed appoint Tattenbach to head the German delegation during the Algeciras conference, together with Count Radowitz, the German ambassador to Spain. By December 1905 the Chancellor seemed to regard war as a possible outcome of the

[364] Diary entry, 29 December 1905, Spitzemberg, p. 454
[365] Rassow, Schlieffen und Holstein, in: HZ 173, 1952, p. 305; Ritter traces Schlieffen's shift in perception back to a footnote in his "military testament" Ritter, G. The Schlieffenplan, London 1958, pp. 69; see also Mombauer, who argues that Schlieffen may have been replaced as a result of his demand for preventive war in 1905. Mombauer, Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War, Cambridge 2001, pp. 43.
[366] Rich, p. 701
[367] Metternich to Bülow, 2 November 1905, GP XX, vol. 2, Annex to 6881, pp. 676-678

conference. In an article for his press office he concluded: "I fear, at the conference in Algeciras, the emergence of a tendency on the part of France – and probably supported by England – to move Germany into a position where it only has the choice between a heavy loss of prestige in the world and an armed conflict. Such [a conflict] is anticipated and desired here by many for spring."[368]

In his study of the preventive war hypothesis, Moritz rejects the idea that German leaders premeditated a war against France. His calculation of the military odds demonstrates that the men and material which each side was able to field did not clearly favour a German victory.[369] Moreover, the naval program still required avoiding any threat to peace and the German army was in the middle of introducing new rifles and field guns.[370] The German re-equipment efforts were necessary because the French army had recently introduced a new field-gun with a far superior firing speed.[371] Surely, such significant impediments could not have escaped the attention of a general of Schlieffen's calibre who would have certainly communicated the fact to his acquaintance Holstein.

The Emperor, on the other hand, consistently denied any intentions to seek war, throughout the whole crisis. In his traditional new year's address to the German generals he reiterated that he would not go to war over Morocco.[372] In a letter which he wrote to the Chancellor on New Year's Eve he claimed that 1906 would be a bad year to conduct a war, due to the above-mentioned modernisation of the German artillery and infantry. Instead, Wilhelm

[368] Hamann, Bilder, p. 45
[369] Moritz, *Das Problem des Präventivkriegs in der deutschen Politik während der Ersten Marokkokrise*, Frankfurt 1974 pp. 103-104;

[370] Moritz, p. 281; Stevenson argues that although Germany accelerated the re-equipment of its army, with magazine rifles and quick-firing field guns, this measure would not be completed until July 1906. Stevenson, D., Militarisation and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914; in: International Security, Vol. 22, No. 1, Summer 1997, p. 130.
[371] Stevenson, The Field Artillery Revolution and the European Military Balance, in: International History Review, 2018)

[372] Einem, p. 144

wanted to postpone fighting France and England until Germany had concluded an alliance with Turkey and all other Islamic potentates (!).[373]

In March 1906, the Emperor would intervene by putting an end to the aggressive recalcitrance of his negotiators in Algeciras, which had almost completely isolated Germany at the conference. He ordered his representatives to give in to the French and British demands, thereby ending the international tension at the price of a humiliating diplomatic defeat. [374] Shortly afterwards, on 5 April, during a session of the Reichstag where he stood to answer for his policy and its outcome, the Chancellor suffered a collapse. Bülow used the ensuing absence from his office to avoid the brunt of the public outrage and to create a distance between himself and the conduct of foreign affairs. At the same time, he repositioned himself for his eventual comeback through dexterous moves behind the scene – as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Domestic fallout of the crisis

Until his collapse the Chancellor witnessed how control of the foreign ministry began to slip away from him. His reputation as a diplomat had suffered and Wilhelm was strengthening his foothold by appointing a new foreign secretary over his head. Holstein, on the other hand, who was outspokenly hostile towards the Emperor's 'personal rule' and its beneficiaries, had managed to push the Chancellor into getting promoted to one of the most powerful roles at the Wilhelmstrasse. The counsellor's intense personality and past animosities meant that clashes with the other leading figures of the ministry were only a question of time. Probably

[373] Bülow, Denkwürdigkeiten, vol. 2, pp. 197-198
[374] Röhl, (2008), pp. 474-479

most worrying for Bülow was the prospect that Holstein might demand more assertive measures to curb the All-highest interference in foreign affairs.

On account of the hopeless position into which German foreign policy makers had manoeuvred themselves, the Kaiser's esteem for the ability of his diplomats was reaching new lows since the beginning of the year. As was to be expected, this contrasted starkly with the monarch's opinion of his own abilities. Commenting on a newspaper article which made reference to the smooth handling of the German occupation of Kiaochow in 1898, he claimed that he was the one taking the decisions at the time, in close cooperation with the Chancellor (Hohenlohe) and the navy, "while the Foreign Ministry had shat in its pants and Tirpitz stood aside and grumbled."[375]

Holstein, who had advised Hohenlohe during the Kiaochow episode was outraged when he read the imperial marginalia, and, once again, considered resigning.[376] He decided to stay on, however, when he was given the post of political director of the foreign office, which included control over the press office. Its head, Otto Hammann, had already clashed with the counsellor at the outset of the Moroccan crisis because he advocated direct negotiations with France.[377] Moreover, the promotion was expected to strengthen Holstein's role under a new foreign secretary.[378] His old rival Richthofen had suffered a stroke and died on 17 January. As his successor, Holstein and Bülow wanted Otto von Mühlberg, the deputy foreign secretary, who was widely regarded as the most able candidate. However, Wilhelm decided to assert his prerogative and appointed his favourite Heinrich von Tschirschky.

[375] Holstein to Bülow, 11 January 1906, HP IV, 921, Footnote 2, p. 383-385
[376] Ibid.
[377] Holstein to Bülow, 5 April 1905, HP IV, 882, pp. 328-329
[378] Lerman, p. 138

After initial attempts to weaken Tschirschky's reputation as foreign secretary[379], Bülow recognized that the power over foreign policy making had shifted. Adept at adjusting to the new constellation, the Chancellor decided to save himself and get rid of his long-time mentor Friedrich von Holstein. He acted shortly after his collapse, when his absence from the foreign ministry deflected any suspicions of his involvement in Holstein's removal. The deception with which the Chancellor managed to end the career of one of his longest serving and most influential diplomats has been well documented by Rich.[380] The fact that the old counsellor did not realise until his death that his protégé was responsible for his fall, meant that Bülow could continue to benefit from Holstein's valuable advice in the following years.

Conclusion

In 1904 the German naval build-up reached proportions which caused widespread concern in Britain. Based on vociferous articles in the British popular press and the jingoistic remarks of a few politicians and officers, foreign policy makers in Germany began to believe in an imminent attack by the Royal Navy. Although these worries would prove exaggerated at the time, they were not entirely unfounded. German naval planners were acutely aware that their project of constructing a battle fleet, which could rival that of the world's most formidable naval power, would be vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike, as long as there was just a negligible risk for the attacker. Avoiding that the new ships fell prey to such an ignominious fate required careful consideration of any step on the international stage that might impact Anglo-German relations. The need to coordinate foreign policy with the demands of the

[379] Lerman, p. 140
[380] Rich, pp. 746-753

budding fleet explains why Admiral Tirpitz began to be more frequently included in the decision-making process. While German leaders and the public were in the grip of the naval-scare, independent-minded German diplomats began to resent the burden which the Emperor's interference in foreign affairs placed on their task. A case in point was Morocco, where numerous grievances with the authorities of that country had convinced German diplomats of the need for assertive action in spring 1904. The Chancellor also favoured that approach, but was compelled to bow to the wishes of the Emperor whose entourage advised against belligerent measures. Disregarding his own preferences and those of many of his officials, Bülow re-adjusted Moroccan policy in favour of a more observant approach, in accordance with the All-Highest instructions. Once he had committed his diplomats to the new policy, however, it was disrupted again when Wilhelm expressed his desire to visit Tangier during his Mediterranean cruise in the following year. At first the Chancellor regarded this shift in imperial priorities as yet another nuisance, but he soon recognized that it potentially allowed him to return to the more assertive Moroccan policy he had favoured all along. He therefore seized on a whim of the Kaiser to liberate policy making from what he regarded as too limited a scope. By gearing the Emperor to his more ambitious objectives, Bülow also intended to rehabilitate his reputation as a skilled diplomat, which had suffered as a result of German setbacks in international relations. The lopsided focus on these domestic motives and the improvised character of the initiative resulted in the diplomatic disaster known as the First Moroccan Crisis. By the end of 1905, war with Britain was no longer just the chimera of paranoid policy makers but had become a distinct possibility for the future. The Emperor's impatience with these developments drove him to reinvigorate his 'personal rule' over the foreign office. What was undoubtedly the severest miscalculation of international politics to-date thus had also a domestic dimension to its motives and, contrary

to its intentions, resulted not only in a weakened Germany but also in a further weakening of the German foreign office.

Chapter IV

Rien ne va plus. Anglo-German Relations after Algeciras and the Struggle between Responsible Government and 'Personal Rule' in Foreign Affairs.

This chapter opens with the lull that ensued in diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany after the Algeciras conference had ended. It soon became clear that the Moroccan crisis had consolidated the *entente cordiale*, and British foreign policy makers were reluctant to do anything that they suspected might endanger the amicable Anglo-French relationship. While German diplomats thus found their British counterparts to be intransigent, the latter eyed with suspicion the flurry of semi-official visits and Anglo-German encounters between members of each other's civil society, which was replacing the dialogue through official channels. At the German Foreign Office, the onset of the period under observation was characterised by the Chancellor's prolonged absence, which meant that the conduct of foreign affairs effectively changed into the hands of the new Foreign Minister, who had been appointed by the Emperor and was widely regarded as doing his will. Subsequently the chapter will account for Bülow's only partially successful manoeuvres to recover full control of the Wilhelmstrasse and to fend off the frequent encroachments by the Emperor and the increasingly bold interference with the definition of Berlin's British policy by the Head of the Naval Office, Alfred von Tirpitz. By the end of his tenure as German Chancellor, Bülow's ability to conduct foreign policy was severely constrained by the consequences of his own role in Germany's naval expansion and by the ever-growing influence of Tirpitz and the Emperor's 'personal rule'.

Diplomatic standstill and the conduct of bilateral relations by alternative means

After gauging new depths during the Moroccan crisis, Anglo-German relations in 1906 were in desperate need of repair. The humiliating experience at Algeciras where Germany found itself isolated by joint Anglo-French efforts, strengthened the resolve in Berlin to bring relations with Britain back on track.

At the behest of the Emperor, Heinrich von Tschirschky, the new Secretary of State for foreign affairs, reminded his ambassador in London of the repeated conciliatory statements which his British counterpart, Sir Edward Grey, had made while the conference was meeting in Spain. At Algeciras, Great Britain had dangled the prospect of improving bilateral relations before the German diplomats, provided that Germany gave in to French demands over Morocco. Keen to end the "lengthy period of sterile standstill" between both countries, Tschirschky demanded to know whether Metternich could yet detect any sign of a changing sentiment towards Germany among politicians and businessmen or in the press.[381]

In a series of cables, Metternich pointed out that resentment against Germany had peaked at the height of the crisis in summer 1905, but had since improved and given way to a calmer assessment of bilateral relations. The ambassador observed that the British public might have grown tired over the continuous reports of ups and downs in dealings with Germany, and was presently more concerned with questions of domestic politics such as industrial relations, education and the record of the new government. He therefore recommended to "let sleeping dogs lie" and give Anglo-German relations a rest. This was the more so as Sir Edward had not yet given any indication that he would make good his promise and promote better relations once the Franco-German difficulties had been overcome. "We can wait until [this]

[381] Tschirschky to Metternich, 1. May 1906, GP XXI/2, 7179.

desire begins to stir again over here. If we managed to bring about an inner reconciliation with France, England would follow suit on its own account. In case an earlier opportunity for a rapprochement with England arose, it would be certainly wrong not to take it. For the moment, however, I do not see such opportunity."[382]

With regard to Germany, Metternich identified a class divide in British public opinion: Among the commercial classes he found the strongest support for good relations with Germany, despite the much-quoted trade rivalry. The working class, whose influence on public life was steadily growing, did share this desire, according to the ambassador, who then turned to the "higher and powerful circles" where he saw the least political sympathies for Germany. He attributed this state of affairs primarily to the inclinations of large parts of the court, as well as to the strained relations between the sovereigns of both countries. Metternich suggested that a friendly encounter between the two monarchs might change many things for the better, a view, which he claimed was shared by many of his contacts.[383]

Dynastic relations had been at a low ebb since the previous summer, when King Edward VII, at the height of the Moroccan crisis, had found the time to pay the French President Loubet an informal visit, but avoided meeting his nephew, the Kaiser, when travelling through Germany on the way to his annual sojourn in Marienbad. Wilhelm's anger at this slight apparently still ran high when he commented on the margins of Metternich's cable: "Encounters with Edward are of no lasting value because he is envious. Propter invidiam!"[384]

Richard Haldane, the new Secretary of State for War, backed up the ambassador's observations when he visited Metternich a few days later. He declared it a matter of utmost

[382] Metternich to Tschirschky, 4 May 1906, GP XXI, 2, 7180, pp. 424

[383] Ibid.

[384] Ibid.; Footnote

importance for Anglo-German relations that the Emperor and King Edward resumed personal relations.[385] During his conversation with the ambassador, the minister also confirmed the diplomat's sceptical assessment of the prospects for a rapprochement, when he outlined what could be termed the principle of observant reserve which would come to guide his government's German policy in the years ahead and which all British statesmen would reiterate in more or less detail during their encounters with representatives of Germany: while Edward Grey and the Liberal cabinet desired relations with Germany on a friendly basis, nothing should be precipitated, but rather a suitable occasion be waited for. Haldane expressed his personal belief, however, that the time would soon come to address practical questions again. Metternich challenged this claim by offering to postpone his planned leave in case the minister anticipated a move in this direction for the coming weeks, but Haldane denied that any bilateral negotiations were in the offing.

Reporting the substance of this conversation to Berlin, Metternich advised his government to consider only with utmost caution renewed negotiations over practical questions. He reminded his superiors of the indignation with which British public opinion had greeted Anglo-German cooperation during the naval intervention in Venezuela (see chapter 2) and suggested that, in order to prepare public opinion, any official agreement should be preceded by a "German-friendly ministerial demonstration". Moreover, any initiative for a rapprochement with Germany ought to come from the "imperialist" wing of the Liberal government with Haldane, Grey and Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as its most influential exponents. Albeit smaller than the radical wing under Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, this group enjoyed the greatest respect among the Conservative opposition,

[385] Metternich to Bülow, 8. May 1906, GP XXI, 2, 7181, pp. 427-432

Metternich observed, and was therefore less likely to encounter resistance to its foreign policy initiatives.

The perception that Germany was kept at arm's length while Anglo-French friendship blossomed, was accentuated when Edward VII met the French President Fallières in Paris on 4 May 1906. Upon his return, Charles Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, who had accompanied the King on his journey, echoed Haldane's words when he assured Metternich of his government's desire to initiate amicable relations with Germany. He pointed out that this required time and opportunity however, which, Hardinge hoped, would present themselves in the course of the coming months.[386]

This lukewarm attitude on the part of the British government was hardly surprising, given recent events and the pervasive distrust of German intentions. However, the British lack of enthusiasm for a *rapprochement* with Germany was also rooted in the feared repercussions of such a move on the *entente cordiale*, as Haldane frankly admitted during an interview with the German *chargé d'affaires* Wilhelm von Stumm. While his government desired a *rapprochement* with Germany, it could not and would not want to relinquish its relations with France, the Secretary of State for War declared.[387]

Taking a lively interest in all diplomatic reports from London at the time, as revealed by his frequent marginal comments, the German Emperor came to his own conclusions about the likely motives behind the steadfast British adherence to France. He shared this interpretation with the British Ambassador on the occasion of the funeral of his great aunt Princess Fredrick Charles of Prussia. After the church service, Sir Frank, who conveyed the condolences of King Edward, complimented the Emperor on his healthy looks, to which he replied: "Yes, I

[386] Metternich to Bülow, 8 May 1906, GP XXI vol. 2, 7182, p. 432;

[387] Stumm to Bülow, 19 May 1906, GP XXI vol. 2, 7185, p. 434;

am very well, as I always am when I come back from the provinces where I have assured myself that I am quite prepared to deal with your friends across the frontier if they should attempt to attack me at your instigation."[388] Despite recognising that the monarch might have been joking, the British ambassador nevertheless paid a visit to the German foreign secretary a few days later, in order to clarify, as he expressed it, that he conveyed a correct impression of the Emperor's meaning when "reporting the language held by his Majesty."[389] Tschirschky undoubtedly must have had a few painful moments when he attempted to impress on the ambassador that the Emperor "desired Friendship with England", and called it fortunate that Sir Frank knew Wilhelm well enough to understand the jocose nature of his comment.[390]

Meanwhile, British diplomats became concerned that their French partners might grow nervous over a number of semi-official Anglo-German contacts taking place at the time. A delegation of German Burgomasters visited Britain on 13-19 May, and was treated by the Lord Mayor of London to a banquet at Mansion House where Haldane delivered the welcome address in German. On the eve of their return to Germany, King Edward VII even honoured the Burgomasters with an official reception. In June, the British and German governments agreed on a – strictly private – meeting of their monarchs in Germany, which would take place in August. And last but not least, on 20-29 June, a group of German journalists visited England and was grandly entertained by the London press, with the minister of war most prominently attending. On 26 June, The Times promptly published an extract from a German newspaper which had expressed *Schadenfreude* over the French unease about the journalists' visit.[391] It was probably with such a scenario in mind, that earlier that month, Counsellor von

[388] Lascelles to Grey, 24 May 1906, BD vol. 3, p. 356 No. 415,

[389] Lascelles to Grey, 24 May 1906, BD vol. 3, p. 357, No. 416,

[390] Ibid

[391] 24 June 1906, BD, p. 360, attachement to No. 419

Stumm at the German embassy in London had uttered his concern about the "ostentatious manifestations of sympathy" in a private letter to Tschirschky and urged more restraint with regard to the visits and exhibitions scheduled for the summer. The less public opinion occupied itself with Anglo-German relations, he reasoned, the earlier memories of past events would fade.[392]

In a comment foreshadowing his famous memorandum, which the diplomat would produce six months later, Sir Eyre Crowe cautioned that the well-meaning get-togethers might be exploited by the German government: "In the interest of our understanding with France it may become necessary to take some steps to counteract the impression which the sudden and indiscriminate fraternization with the very men who have for years poured out the venom of their hatred of England in their papers, and who are equally rabid and hectoring in dealing with France, cannot but tend to produce in Paris." Such fraternizing would not lead to improved bilateral relations, Crowe warned, and suggested instead: "The way to maintain good relations with Germany is to be ever courteous and correct, but reserved, and firm in the defence of British interests, and to object and remonstrate invariably when Germany offends. Everyone who knows the minds of German officials will admit that such an attitude wins their respect. Firmness and punctiliousness are their own ideals and they readily recognise them in others. [...] They are essentially people whom it does not pay to 'run after'."[393]

As if to corroborate the concerns held in London, von Mühlberg, the German Undersecretary of State, instructed his ambassador in Paris to reassure the French government that the recent contacts, which he labelled an Anglo-German *détente*, were not intended to affect the Anglo-

[392] Stumm to Tschirschky, 1 June 1906, PA AA R5774

[393] Crowe, minutes, 26 June 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 419, pp. 359

French friendship in any way.[394] Alarmed by this unsolicited communication, the French Foreign Minister had his ambassador inquire in London. Sir Edward Grey assured the diplomat however, that there was not much of a rapprochement with Germany, as there was "nothing to discuss between the two governments". He reiterated that the "independent persons" who had been promoting civilities and hospitalities to visitors from Germany were "in no way connected with the government" and that these events would not imply any change of policy.[395] While the French worries were thus quickly dispersed by British assurances, as Metternich correctly assumed[396], the episode had certainly raised suspicions in Whitehall of what was perceived as German scheming. [397]

When debating the budget estimates for the Foreign Office in the House of Commons on 5 July 1906, Edward Grey would interpret "the recent remarkable readiness shown to give hospitality to and to receive hospitality from other countries" as proof of peaceful British intentions; but the Foreign Secretary also defined Britain's relations to France as the key element of his policy: "it must be recognized, that that good understanding [with France] must not be impaired by any other development of our foreign policy."[398] As Metternich observed, good relations between Britain and Germany were only to be had if they did not harm the *entente*.[399] Concerned about a chilling effect on what he regarded as the budding Anglo-German rapprochement, the ambassador blamed British fear of French jealousy for the renewed aloofness.

---

[394] Mühlberg to Radolin, 27 June 1906, GP XXI vol. 2, 7187, pp. 437,

[395] Grey to Bertie, 9 July 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 420, pp. 361,

[396] Metternich to Bülow, 31 July 1906, GP XXI vol. 2, 7191, pp. 441

[397] Bertie to Grey, 12 July 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 421, pp. 362,

[398] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1906/jul/05/class-ii#S4V0160P0_19060705_HOC_286

[399] 31 July 1906, GP XXI vol. 2, 7191, p. 441

Appeasing British public opinion

With the effectiveness of traditional diplomacy being limited by the reluctance encountered among official British circles, it is perhaps hardly surprising that German efforts to improve bilateral relations shifted to the 'soft' target of civil society. The period in question coincided, moreover, with the absence from the Foreign Office of Prince Bülow. The Chancellor was still convalescing from his breakdown in parliament in the aftermath of the Moroccan crisis and probably had his good reasons to abstain from overseeing policy making at the Wilhelmstrasse, as will be discussed further below. Some initiatives, aimed at enhancing Germany's standing in British public opinion, which took shape in 1906 could therefore also be interpreted in the light of the power vacuum that Bülow had created himself by his prolonged absence and his ousting of Counsellor Holstein, until then his staunchest ally in defending the independence of the Foreign Office against encroachments by the Emperor. Tschirschky, the new Foreign Secretary, on the other hand, who had been a long-time favourite of Wilhelm, owed his current position to All-Highest intervention.

As has been seen throughout this study, British public opinion was always a matter of concern for German diplomats. Their struggles to tame the British press while agitation among the German public for naval expansion was rampant has been epitomized in Dominik Geppert's seminal work on the subject.[400] It was probably with the fallout from the Moroccan crisis in mind, which had severely damaged Germany's reputation in the world, that Otto von Hamman, head of the Press Office at the Wilhelmstrasse, speculated about the usefulness of a German wire service from overseas which would counteract the influence at home of foreign

[400] Geppert, D., *Pressekriege*; pp. 256, pp. 295

news agencies, and could work as a defence against attacks by the 'international press'.[401] Indeed, influential German business leaders were growing concerned that American papers sourced their news about Germany mainly from the British press and thereby imported an anti-German spin that had the potential to harm their interests in the increasingly important US market.[402]

Presumably it had been this concern that allowed Tschirschky to orchestrate what according to the historian Ralph Menning was "Germany's largest expenditure before the First World War, on influencing the press"[403]: In December 1906, a group of twenty leading German industrialists and bankers forked out the sum of 880,000 marks, which the foreign ministry would top up to 980,000 marks, for the sole purpose of buying a commanding stake in the *Tribune*, a Liberal London newspaper that had been founded earlier that year. The ambition of the proprietor, to create a Liberal counterweight to the Conservative *Times*, chimed well with the intentions of the investors who expected the publication not only to enhance the image of Germany in Britain, but also to influence positively public opinion in the US. The absolute secrecy that such an undertaking required may explain the conspiratorial character of the meetings of the financiers and diplomats which were held in the week between Christmas and New Year and conducted by the head of the foreign office's commercial department. It is remarkable, however, that Otto von Hammann as Head of the Press Office was not involved and was probably not even informed of the deal[404].

[401] Hammann to Geschäftsträger Santiago, 19 September 1906, PA AA Europa generalia 86 Nr. 4

[402] Menning, R.; *Measure of Despair: the Syndicate for Commerce and Industry, the London Tribune, and German Foreign Policy*, 1906-8; The International History Review, Vol. 34, No. 3, September 2012; pp. 526-28

[403] Ibid, p. 519)

[404] Menning, p. 548, footnote 81

If Hammann, one of Bülow's closest collaborators, did not know about it, the Chancellor might have been sidelined as well. On the other hand, the devastating consequences of a possible leak could mean that he carefully avoided any official record of his knowledge in the interest of plausible deniability. What cannot be denied, however, is the apparent independence, at least from the Chancellor, with which the new Foreign Secretary acted during this episode and more in general during the course of his tenure, as will be discussed below. This points to a loosening of Bülow's grip on foreign policy making as the power-vacuum was being filled by actors whose allegiance was to the Emperor rather than the office.

Metternich also regarded Tschirschky as the intellectual author of the project. In a private letter to the Secretary of State he expressed his hope that "Whelpley's new enterprise"[405] would have as little to do with the embassy as possible. He warned that nothing would discredit the embassy more than if anything was leaked about the matter, which he feared could not be ruled out given the notorious "lack of journalistic reliability".[406] The secret appears to have been well kept, however, thanks to the discretion of those involved. In fact, the only mention of the project in the top-secret *England* series seems to be this short passage in a much longer letter on miscellaneous issues. In any case, the "largest expenditure on influencing the press" may also count among the most unsuccessful business ventures of German industry leaders at the time: The *Tribune* did not find favour with the British readers and on 8 February 1908, after only two years in existence, was published for the last time.[407]

[405] James Davenport Whelpley was the Foreign Editor of the Tribune, see: Menning, p. 532

[406] Metternich to Tschirschky, 1 February 1907, PA AA R5775

[407] Menning, p. 534

Although it is not clear if or to what extent Wilhelm was aware of his subjects' efforts to improve the perception of Germany in the world, the idea that it was possible to influence public opinion abroad, and even influence foreign holders of political office, by means of direct intervention, must have been firmly established in his head by the time the *Tribune* went out of business. His 'Tweedmouth letter' and the 'Daily Telegraph interview' of that year, as well as the 'Hale interview' were aimed at personally influencing British and American audiences respectively. All three documents have attracted much scholarly attention and have been discussed in great depth elsewhere.[408] For the present study, they are mainly significant because they demonstrate, once more, how the Emperor's interference in foreign affairs was eroding the prerogative of his responsible advisors during the period covered by this chapter.

A more benign example of the Emperor's involvement in shaping Anglo-German relations, but in that case undoubtedly the prerogative of the sovereign, was his renewed interest in cultivating dynastic relations with his uncle Edward, probably as a result of their meeting in the summer of 1906 which will be discussed below. In their Christmas correspondence of 1906 William presented Edward with the miniature bronze and photograph of a statue of William III, Prince of Orange, which he had had recently erected in the gardens of his palace in Potsdam as part of an assembly of statues that represented ancestors of the house of Hohenzollern. The uncle, who appeared genuinely pleased, thanked his nephew for the gift and accepted his offer to present the British people with a replica of the statue.[409] The top-secret *England* files contain a considerable body of correspondence ranging from Wilhelm's generous addition of a plinth, over technical details, to considerations of a suitable site for the

[408] See Röhl, J. *Der Weg in den Abgrund*; pp. 655-661 & pp. 706-739; also: Winzen, P. *Das Kaiserreich am Abgrund. Die Daily Telegraph Affäre und das Hale Interview von 1908*. Stuttgart 2002.

[409] Edward to Wilhelm, Sandringham, 26 December 1906, PA AA R5775

statue. In case the symbolic subtlety of the present was lost to anybody, Wilhelm suggested that the inscription on the plinth mentioned William III's role as a European champion of the fight against French expansionism.[410] Apparently, this suggestion was never conveyed to his uncle, but the statue, a work of the German sculptor Heinrich Baucke, was unveiled on 14 October 1907 in front of Kensington Palace,[411] where it continues to stand to this day.

Preserving France's trust

That the fear of French suspicions was a powerful motive for the British reluctance to engage in an "open relationship of friendliness" with Germany was further confirmed by Francis Bertie, Britain's ambassador to Paris, when he discussed the summary of an article which had just been published in a German monthly. Moreover, as the diplomat pointed out, improved Franco-German relations were not in the British interest either. The article in the *Deutsche Revue* warned against the costly consequences if Germany felt encircled by a system of *ententes* forged against her and would deem it necessary to break that circle. Instead, a simpler and safer strategy to ensure peace and stability in Europe would consist of including Germany in this system, the author suggested. If Britain conducted an open and fearless rapprochement with Germany now, a more conciliatory sentiment for Germany would soon result in France and open the path to such a constellation.[412] Bertie objected that attempting to induce France to improve its rapport with Germany would endanger the good understanding which existed between Britain and France. The French would regard this "as an attempt to persuade the mouse to make friends with the cat" and would suspect secret designs against

[410] Lucanus to Auswärtiges Amt, 17 January 1907, PA AA R5775

[411] Metternich to Bülow, London, 14 October 1907, PA AA R5775

[412] *Deutsche Revue*, September 1906. The article echoed the arguments advanced by Metternich in his conversations with Grey in July 1906; see GP XXI vol. 2, 7191, 31 July 1906, pp. 441

them.[413] But even if an Anglo-German rapprochement would have helped to improve Germany's relations with France, as the article suggested, a better understanding between both continental powers was not desirable from a British perspective, as Bertie argued in his letter to Grey. "It appears to me, that our policy as regards relations between France and Germany should be not to create friction [...] but to do nothing to facilitate an understanding between Germany and France; for it is difficult to conceive how an understanding of any real importance between these two countries could be satisfactory to Germany without being detrimental to our interest."[414]

With any further improvement in official Anglo-German relations being thus unlikely at present, it was hardly surprising that the meeting of Wilhelm II and Edward VII in Kronberg on 15 August 1906 did not result in any significant changes.[415] Indeed, King Edward had wished the encounter to be of a strictly apolitical nature.[416] Yet the fact that Hardinge, the British permanent undersecretary of state, and Tschirschky, the German foreign secretary, both attended the *entrevue* of nephew and uncle meant that a political dimension was difficult to avoid. If anything, the conversation between both diplomats, as well as that between the Kaiser and Hardinge, confirmed the status quo prevailing in the relations between the two countries. Hardinge reported that he "took every opportunity to rubbing (...) in", that, if at all, friendly Anglo-German relations could only exist alongside Britain's entente with France.[417]

[413] Bertie to Grey, 6 September 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 437, pp. 385

[414] Ibid.

[415] For a detailed account of this meeting see Roehl (2008), pp.494-499

[416] Tschirschky to Eisendecher, 27 July 1906, Eisendecher Papers 3/3

[417] Hardinge to Grey, 16 August 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 425, pp. 366

A few weeks later, when he saw the British ambassador again, who had also attended the royal meeting, Tschirschky praised the success of the King's visit.[418] In an apparent attempt at expectation management, Lascelles pointed out that during their most friendly conversation the two monarchs had referred to many subjects but not to bilateral relations. While he was "not without hope" that a better understanding between both countries might eventually result from the improved personal relations of the two sovereigns, it was yet too early to tell, the ambassador declared. He therefore advised the German foreign secretary to avoid exaggerating the effect of the encounter, in order to prevent the revival of mutual suspicions, which, he regretted, continued to exist in certain circles.[419]

Back in London, Edward Grey was careful to allay French suspicions over the intensified travel activities of British dignitaries to Germany. He assured M. Cambon, the French Ambassador, that Britain would support France as strongly and firmly as before, if ever a subject such as the Morocco crisis should arise again. With regard to Germany, "there was nothing stirring in political relations between us. We were sometimes embarrassed by rather too many invitations to pay visits, which it would be discourteous to refuse, but there was nothing political in them."[420] Acting under the impression of Richard Haldane's visit to Berlin which took place in early September, Cambon had recently warned the British government that with regard to Anglo-French relations, the legend of "perfidious Albion" was still alive in France.[421]

With a view to a planned army reform at home, the British Secretary of State for War accepted an invitation from the German Emperor to study the organisation of the Prussian

[418] Lascelles to Grey, 14 September 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 438, pp. 388

[419] Ibid.

[420] Grey to Bertie, 8 November 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 442, pp. 393

[421] Spring-Rice to Grey, 31 August 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 432, pp. 374

army. His visit coincided however, with the anniversary of the German victory over the French at the Battle of Sedan in 1870, which was a public holiday in Germany. Unaware of the significance of that date, Haldane had confirmed his attendance at a military parade and dinner which, it was subsequently feared, might have been scheduled to commemorate the event. After some hectic consultations between the British and French embassies in Berlin, the diplomats agreed that it was out of the question for the Secretary of State for War to withdraw his acceptance at the last moment, as this could have done more harm to the relations between the three countries than risking hostile comments in the French press.[422] Instead, Haldane, who attended the parade in civilian clothing and took great care to go at some distance from the Kaiser, paid the French ambassador a visit in the afternoon of the same day, in order to counterbalance any bad impression in France. At the behest of the French government he then sent a note to Reuters, the news agency, intimating that their meeting had taken place.[423]

Although Haldane had the opportunity to talk to the Kaiser, Bülow, Tschirschky and Helmuth von Moltke, the new Chief of the General Staff, during his stay, their conversations on bilateral relations did not exceed mutual professions of peaceful intent and the desire for friendship.[424] This was in accordance with the unofficial nature of his visit, as he pointed out to Tschirschky, whom he found keen to talk and who would repeat the German overtures for a rapprochement during their interview.[425]

[422] Lascelles to Grey, 31 August 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 431, p.374

[423] Diary of Haldane's visit to Germany, 2 September 1906, BD vol. 3, No. 435, pp. 376

[424] The only remark which stands out from Haldane's account of his interviews is Moltke's farsighted prediction, that a war between Britain and Germany could not be short, but would mean slow exhaustion. (Ibid.)

[425] Ibid

Bülow's absence and eventual comeback

So far, this chapter has analysed how progress in Anglo-German relations after Algeciras was stalled partly because of the priority given by the British government to the cultivation of the *entente cordiale* and Britain's anxious wish to avoid any course of foreign policy which could have upset the newly won French trust. However, the fact that "there was nothing stirring" between the two countries (Grey) probably also proved convenient to Bülow, who was yet to entirely recover from his collapse in the Reichstag in April 1906. In order to keep up the appearance of his authority, rather than out of concern for the political issues at hand, the Chancellor had just begun again to make occasional official appearances in August,[426] and it would not be until October that he fully resumed his duties. His prolonged absence allowed Bülow to dissociate himself from the stalemate his new Secretary of State was facing with regard to Germany's British policy. Rather than owning up to the fallout from his misguided Moroccan policy he was able to deflect the attention away from himself, since foreign affairs were now run by Tschirschky and inspired by the Emperor.

In matters of foreign policy, the Chancellor seemed in no hurry to regain control. In October 1906 Holstein scoffed at Tschirschky being actually treated in the foreign press as the leader of German policy: "the cistern that always used to wait for rain from above now appears as the source"[427]; a few weeks later the retired counsellor wrote in his diary:"Tschirschky is running the Foreign Ministry quite independently from the Chancellor, and is even signing dispatches sent to the Kaiser"[428]; and in May 1907 Holstein complained to his cousin: "Bülow [...] has been virtually eliminated with regard to external affairs, even though he

[426] Lerman, p.152

[427] Holstein to Harden, 21 October 1906, HP vol.4, 996, p. 440,

[428] Diary Entry, 10 November 1906, HP vol. 4, 1003, p. 447

bears, as Chancellor, the sole responsibility. Tschirschky is completely incompetent, has no opinion of his own, just looks up at the Emperor and follows every nod."[429]. Even as late as 15 November 1907 Otto von Hamann observed in his diary: "Bülow's *laisser-aller* in external affairs, his incurable amiability, his shrinking not only from conflicts but also from energetic activity, are not sustainable in the long run."[430]

Contemporary observers as well as some historians have qualified Bülow's passivity after his recovery as a sign of weakness, but it was probably also part of a strategy to recapture his former position of political strength and the favour of his imperial master. Lerman has convincingly demonstrated how Bülow on one occasion exploited his illness for political gain: pursuing a hands-off approach to pending legislation in the Reichstag, he looked on while a bill to reform the colonial department stalled. Bülow then instructed Hamann, the head of the Press Office at the Wilhelmstrasse, to expatiate by all means available and as widely as possible, on how unfavourably this situation compared with the smooth progress which the same bill had made when the Chancellor had been there to lend his support.[431] Thus he set the stage for his return as the "eventual redeemer" (Lerman).

Given that no issue in foreign affairs seemed pressing enough to require immediate attention, he probably calculated that time was working for him. Since credit was hardly to be gained at present from conducting Germany's foreign policy, and the blame for potential failures could safely be placed on others, Bülow focussed his efforts on other aspects of his comeback first.

When Bülow permanently resumed his post after an absence of nearly 6 months, his political standing had undoubtedly suffered and rumours about his imminent fall abounded. Moreover,

[429] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, 19 May 1907, Rogge, Lebensbek., p. 279,

[430] ibid, p. 279, footnote 1

[431] Lerman, pp.150

the Chancellor's return coincided with the culmination of a corruption scandal which would require him to demand the resignation of the Prussian minister of agriculture, General Victor von Podbielski, against the stubborn resistance of the Emperor.[432] The resulting tension between Chancellor and Kaiser caused the press to start giving Bülow the count and speculating about his possible successor. Baroness von Spitzemberg confessed in her diary to having suffered a sleepless night after reading that the evening papers, much to her dismay, named Helmuth von Moltke as a candidate. This indicated the influence of Philipp von Eulenburg, whom the Emperor was presently visiting at his estate in Liebenberg, the Baroness reasoned. Particularly shocking to her was the threatening tone, with which papers of all affiliations condemned the Emperor's "autocratic and retrograde rule".[433] The envoy of Württemberg in Prussia, Spitzemberg's brother Axel von Varnbüler, who had close contacts to the men who would soon become notorious as the "Liebenberg circle", alleged that Bülow might be behind the attacks on 'personal rule': "Axel believed that Bülow had once again been operating very skilfully, but was not sure whether he intended to make himself precious through the fear of an 'imperial' Chancellor or whether the panic had been natural".[434]

If the Chancellor was indeed orchestrating the criticism against the imperial choice of his potential successor, it is likely that he followed the advice of Holstein, whom he continued to meet regularly since his return. In a letter to Pascal David, the editor-in-chief of the Strassburger Post, which was a branch of the national-liberal *Kölnische Zeitung*, Holstein had stressed the need for a press campaign against the irresponsible influences which informed Wilhelm's interventions in politics: "Criticism, in order to be effective, must be outspokenly directed against the Kaiser. Naturally every word must be weighed, but the Kaiser must be

[432] Ibid, pp.155-160

[433] Diary entry, 9 November 1906, Spitzemberg, p. 466

[434] Ibid, 12 November 1906, p. 467,

made to realize that his prestige will suffer if he follows every impulse. [...] Not only abroad but in Germany the fear of personal rule is increasing. And rightly so. The Kaiser has a dramatic but not a political instinct, he considers the momentary effect but not the consequences, and is actually for the most part unpleasantly surprised by them. People are gradually beginning to notice this. Therefore it seems to me that the psychological moment has arrived when the respectable Press can and must support the responsible advisers of the Crown against irresponsible influences".[435]

By deferring the All-highest's decision about his political fate, the public outcry against 'personal rule' seemed, for the moment, to have presented Bülow with some breathing space. His chance to rehabilitate himself at court came shortly afterwards, when the Centre party which formed a key element of the Chancellor's majority in the Reichstag attacked an estimate to finance a colonial railway line and the war against the Hereros in South-West Africa. Being aware that the Kaiser's anger against the Catholic and predominantly South-German Centre had been growing in recent months, because of what the monarch regarded as the party's anti-monarchic and unpatriotic tendencies,[436] the Chancellor decided to dissolve the Reichstag and order new elections. Rather than seeking a compromise, which the leaders of the Centre were prepared to reach[437], Bülow avoided negotiations and allowed the bill to fail in a second reading. To the great surprise of the house he then proceeded to announce the dissolution of the parliament.

[435] Holstein to Pascal David, 13 May 1906, HP vol.4, 980, pp. 424,

[436] Lerman, pp.163

[437] Ibid, p.164

The measure immediately boosted Bülow's popularity[438] and fully reconciled him with the Emperor[439] whose spirit must have been elevated even further when the Social Democrats lost 38 seats in the following elections and Bülow was able to form a new majority without the Centre party. The new coalition became known as the 'Bülow Bloc'. Many commentators at the time denied the political necessity of the dissolution and instead identified the Chancellor's quest for political survival and All-highest favour as the most likely motive.[440]

Once he had recovered his position of strength, Bülow nevertheless refrained from reasserting control over foreign affairs. While it might have been convenient to abstain from holding a portfolio which was best characterised by diplomatic standstill, it was probably the prospect of yet another conflict with the Emperor which he wanted to avoid. After having sacrificed Holstein - his most able advisor and staunchest ally against 'personal rule' - control over the foreign office had passed into the hands of Wilhelm and his favourite Tschirschky. A direct confrontation with the Kaiser so shortly after his rehabilitation would have almost certainly cost Bülow his post. Instead, the Chancellor decided to act covertly and discredit the system of 'personal rule' as a whole. Being a dexterous manipulator of the press, he would unleash a campaign that destroyed the careers of many of his political enemies in the imperial entourage. The extent to which Bülow was involved in the destruction of the group of men with Prince Eulenburg, the Emperor's close friend, at their centre, has been documented elsewhere.[441]

Although some rumours implicated the Chancellor, Bülow took great care to deflect any suspicions of his involvement and to saddle someone else with the blame. For this purpose,

[438] Spitzemberg, pp. 468-70

[439] Lerman, p. 165

[440] Ibid, pp.166

[441] see Winzen, P.: Das Ende der Kaiserherrlichkeit, Köln 2010.

he found a most suitable candidate in his old confidante Holstein, whose public image as a sinister schemer made him the ideal suspect for allegedly pulling the strings behind the unprecedented scandal which unfolded. Bülow's scheme was helped by the fact that Holstein had recently challenged Philipp von Eulenburg to a duel because he – wrongly - blamed the Prince for the loss of his post.[442] When Maximilian Harden, the founder and editor of the weekly *Die Zukunft*, warned Holstein that Bülow had spread the rumour that it was him who had leaked the incriminating material about the so-called Liebenberg circle,[443] Holstein was already suspecting as much.

In a letter he confided to his cousin: "I *had* material, I received it directly from Bülow – and I suspect I received it in order to pass it on to Harden. But this did not suit me, thus I gave him nothing; [Harden] has then received it through a different channel." According to Holstein's account the Chancellor attempted to play on his notoriously suspicious nature by alleging that Eulenburg and his friend Raymond Lecomte, the first secretary of the French embassy, had influenced the Emperor to give in to French demands at Algeciras. "Bülow had told me for instance the whole story of Eulenburg's relations with Lecomte[444] of which I was not aware. Bülow added the remark: 'As far as I now understand the whole issue, I am convinced that these two were the ones who caused the failure of our action in Morocco.' Of course, he said that in order to provoke me. [...] The next time I came to Bülow […] he again began to speak in detail about Eulenburg and Lecomte. I asked, 'well, have you not arranged anything in the press?' to which he replied, 'Hammann said, it could not be done'. Then I understood

[442] Holstein to Eulenburg, 1 May 1906, HP vol. 4, 973, p. 419; see also Spitzemberg, *Tagebuch*, 10 January 1908, pp. 479

[443] Harden to Holstein, 3 May 1907 HP vol. 4, 1024, pp. 463

[444] Count Raymond Lecomte, first secretary of the French embassy in Berlin, whom the Emperor had met during a private dinner party at Eulenburg's castle Schloss Liebenberg. Well informed individuals, such as the banker and Consul General for Britain, Paul von Schwabach, believed that the Kaiser who had suddenly ordered the German diplomats to give in to French demands at the Algeciras conference, had acted under the influence of Eulenburg, who in turn was manipulated by Lecomte. See Spitzemberg, 17 September 1907, p. 475.

immediately that both, B and H, had planned that I should inform Harden about the Lecomte affair [...]. This strengthened my resolve to tell Harden not a word, and I have stuck to it. But this does not prevent the officious press from charging me with everything in order to exculpate Bülow from the suspicion against him."[445]

The Chancellor's success in casting Holstein as the evil genius behind it all is well corroborated by the numerous comments in which the Emperor and his entourage would decry the counsellor until his death in 1909 - and beyond - for the wave of scandals, his pernicious influence on Bülow, and for the sorry state of German diplomacy in general. Baroness von Spitzemberg, by contrast, whose insights were better informed than those of most of her contemporaries, refused to believe these accusations: When she recorded that Albert von Seckendorff, the Lord Stewart, identified Holstein as the author of Eulenburg's disgrace, she doubted that this claim was borne out by the facts.[446] The Baroness remarked in her diary that her brother Axel von Varnbüler, who maintained close ties to the Liebenberg circle and was afraid of losing the All-highest confidence as a result, seemed to regard Bülow as the real culprit.[447]

Holstein complained to his cousin and even to Bülow's mother-in-law that the Chancellor did not move a finger to rein in the accusations against him in the inspired press.[448] He even claimed that the Press Office of the Wilhelmstrasse, as well as Bülow himself, deliberately implicated him[449] and consequently suspended his regular contact with the Chancellor.[450] But

[445] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, 25 November 1907, Rogge, Lebensbek., pp. 297

[446] Diary entry, 16 November 1907, Spitzemberg, p. 477

[447] Diary entry, 22 June 1907, Spitzemberg,p. 473

[448] Holstein to Donna Laura Minghetti, 11 November 1907; Holst. to Ida v. Stuelpnagel, 25 November 1907 Rogge, *Lebensbekenntnis*

[449] Diary entry, 25 October 1907, Spitzemberg, p. 476.

[450] Holstein to Bülow, 11 November 1907. Rogge, *Lebensbekenntnis.*

Bülow, the smooth operator, managed to ensnare the old counsellor with valuable gifts and assurances of his friendship and trust[451]. Baroness Spitzemberg, who witnessed the Chancellor's charm offensive, pondered on his motives: "I believe, Bülow does not only fear Holstein as an enemy, he also misses their dialogue; even if he does not follow the other's counsel, he nonetheless regards it as valuable and reassuring to discuss the political issues with this clever and experienced statesman. And apart from Holstein he has no one else who could be to him and offer him the same."[452] Holstein too may have felt the desire to continue witnessing policy making at the closest possible range; thus, after two months' interruption, he resumed his frequent conversations with the Chancellor. [453]

By incriminating Holstein and thereby providing public opinion with a plausible scapegoat, Bülow succeeded in deflecting the suspicions of most observers from his own, pivotal role in breaking the scandal that had gripped the Imperial court. His stealthy operating mode made it – and still makes it to this day – hard to pin any developments firmly on him. It is, indeed, a hallmark of his wider political manoeuvres, which, among his fellow diplomats, had earned him the nickname "The Eel"[454]. The characteristic ambiguity of his actions and omissions ought to be borne in mind when assessing the wealth of documents that recorded his time in office.

Bülow's campaign to rid himself of potential rivals also extended to the Wilhelmstrasse, where, it may be argued, covering his tracks was facilitated by his recent self-imposed

[451] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, 23 December 1907, Rogge, *Lebensbekenntnis* p. 301

[452] Diary entry, 25 December 1907, Spitzemberg, p. 479. Bülow's fear of Holstein, which is a recurring theme in Spitzemberg's observations, could indicate that Holstein knew of the Chancellor's homosexual disposition which he appears to have lived out in particular during his time as German ambassador to Italy; see Winzen, Berhard Fürst von Buelow, pp. 46.

[453] Holstein to Stuelpnagel, 21 January 1908, Rogge, Lebensbekenntnisse p. 303.

[454] Cecil, L.: *The German Diplomatic Service*, p. 37

absence from foreign policy making. It was common wisdom in informed circles, however, that Heinrich von Tschirschky, the Foreign Secretary, had been appointed by the Emperor against the Chancellor's wishes; and it had also been known for some time that Tschirschky was unhappy in his job. He himself had complained to the British ambassador, "that his health, and especially his eyes, was not equal to the heavy strain involved by the work of the Foreign Office."[455] Moreover, rumours abounded in Parliament that Bülow was curtailing the Foreign Secretary's responsibilities. It has, indeed, been shown that the Chancellor had had Tschirschky 'convinced' not to appear before the Reichstag anymore.[456]

In September 1907, the Foreign Secretary threw in his towel and asked the Emperor to be considered for the post of ambassador instead. The Chancellor gladly supported this move and saw to it that Tschirschky was rewarded with the German Embassy in Vienna[457], where he replaced Count Wedel, who had been appointed Stateholder in Straßburg. Alas, Bülow's hope to finally get his trusted Undersecretary of State Otto von Mühlberg appointed to head the Foreign Office was dashed for a second time, when the Emperor chose yet another of his favourites, Wilhelm von Schoen, for the post instead. While it could be argued on the one hand that the removal of Tschirschky to Vienna may have strengthened the Chancellor's position, the fact that he was denied the successor of his choice did not only deal a symbolic blow to his authority, but also meant the loss of a valued collaborator in foreign affairs in the person of Undersecretary von Mühlberg, who resigned after having been twice passed over.

Bülow's struggle to regain and consolidate his power did not go unnoticed among foreign observers. In a letter to Sir Edward Grey on the German changes of personnel, the British

[455] Lascelles to Grey, 7 October 1907; BD 6; No. 38

[456] Lerman, p. 192

[457] Ibid.

Ambassador observed: "Prince Bülow had never liked the appointment of Herr von Tschirschky whom he had always been jealous of as a possible successor in the Chancellorship; […] The resignation of Herr von Tschirschky is the third incident which has occurred since May whereby Prince Bülow has been relieved of persons whose influence was displeasing to him. By the scandals connected with the disclosures in the *Zukunft* he got rid of the powerful backstairs influence of Prince Eulenburg and his friends, and he utilised this opportunity to secure the retirement of Count Posadowsky whose influential position rendered him a possible candidate for the Chancellorship. By the transference to Vienna of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, it would seem that Prince Bülow has removed from Berlin every member of the Government who might pose as a rival for his post, and he will meet the Reichstag with a subservient Government behind him."[458] A minute from the hand of G. S. Spicer, an assistant clerk at the Foreign Office and until recently Private Secretary to Hardinge, neatly summarises the lessons to be drawn from Lascelles' letter: "This despatch offers a further proof of how important it is for officials who wish to get on in Germany to become personal friends of the Emperor; and this is also the reason […] of the constant intriguing in German official circles."[459]

These struggles over influence, one might add, had repercussions on policy making as well, not least in foreign affairs. Favouritism accounted for two successive courtiers occupying the office of Foreign Secretary, regardless of their suitability. Meanwhile, the Chancellor, who was responsible for the conduct of foreign policy, neglected his duties in his quest to regain the Emperor's trust. Although the diplomatic stalemate with Britain after the Algeciras Conference was influenced by factors beyond the control of German diplomats, the eclectic

[458] Lascelles to Grey, 7 October 1907, BD 6; No. 38

[459] Ibid.; Minutes

and directionless pursuit of bilateral relations during the period covered in the first half of this chapter may have resulted from this lack of effective leadership.

That Bülow had managed to oust a few rivals or otherwise inconvenient personalities does not mean, that he was anywhere near to controlling the Emperor's impulsive meddling in foreign policy making. On the contrary, perhaps discouraged by the appointment of von Schoen as new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, he seemed to continue his hands-off approach to international relations.

An imperial initiative at Windsor Castle

The next occasion to observe 'personal rule' unfettered came when Wilhelm visited King Edward in the autumn of 1907. The visit was in return for the official visit paid by the King to Kiel in 1904. The Moroccan crisis had prevented an invitation at an earlier date, but now, as Edward reminded Hardinge, it was overdue and "neither polite nor politic" to delay any further. The King expressed his hope that it would not only be appreciated by the Emperor and the German people but also improve the relations between the two countries.[460] On June 14th King Edward sent a letter to his nephew inviting him and the empress to a visit at Windsor from the 11th till 18th of November.[461]

Nephew and uncle had a brief encounter at Wilhelmshöhe in Germany on August 14th. On the same evening after dinner the King was scheduled to continue his journey to the Austrian spa of Bad Ischl, where he would meet Franz Joseph of Austria before traveling on to his summer

[460] Hardinge to Grey, April 7, 1907 BD 6; No. 44; Grey and Hardinge reluctantly acquiesced in the King's wish and the demands of dynastic etiquette. (Ibid; p.79)

[461] Metternich to AA, 17 June 1907, Footnote*, GP XXI/2; No. 7221, p.512. For a detailed account of the rather contorted history of the invitation see J. Röhl: *Der Weg in den Abgrund*; pp. 626 – 631

sojourn in Marienbad. Although Edward was accompanied by Hardinge, and Bülow had interrupted his vacation in order to join the men, the political talks that the Chancellor had hoped and prepared for remained vague and superficial.[462] At dinner, during their mutual toasts, both monarchs expressed the desire for the best and most pleasant relations between their countries, and King Edward said he was looking forward to receiving the Emperor in Britain in the autumn.[463] In a letter to Holstein, Bülow recounted that the King had asked Wilhelm to bring General von Einem, the Prussian Minister of War with him on the visit, while Hardinge had been encouraging the Chancellor himself to come as well, since it would delight His Majesty and have a good effect in Britain. This however, Bülow reasoned, would be one person too many.[464]

The Chancellor's assessment was shared by the British Foreign Secretary, who did not hide his dismay when replying to a letter by Lascelles which apparently had raised the question of the size and composition of Wilhelm's entourage for the visit: "What you say about the probability of [the Emperor] being accompanied by Bülow as well as Von Einem appears to me so serious, that I must beg you to do everything that you possibly can to prevent the visit assuming these proportions."[465]

Grey was concerned that the German press could attribute too much political significance to what should be a "purely private affair", if too many members of the German Cabinet accompanied the Emperor on his visit. The Foreign Secretary expressed his fear that this could alienate France as it might be perceived as a rapprochement with Germany: "It will be

[462] Summary by Bülow, August 15, 1907, GP XXIV; No. 8160 & Footnote

[463] Ibid.

[464] Bülow to Holstein, August 18, 1907, in: Rogge, *Lebensbekenntnisse*, pp. 285-287

[465] Grey to Lascelles, September 18, 1907, BD 6, No. 48;

said that it is entirely consistent with the reputation for fickleness which we enjoyed in Europe until quite recent times. And so we shall run the risk of returning to our position of isolation in Europe, and of losing much of our strong position which our recent policy has won for us. Nobody is more anxious than I am that our relations with Germany should be friendly. But they can only be so, as I have said more than once, on the distinct understanding that our friendship with Germany is not at the expense of our friendship with France." The German Chancellor in particular was *non grata* in the eyes of Grey: "Apart from these more general considerations, it is far from desirable that Bülow as an individual should come to this country. It is not forgotten that during the worst period of the South African war he never raised a finger to check the campaign of calumny which was rampant in Germany, and some not very pleasing utterances of his in connection with this may be raked up by our press. It should not be hard to drop a hint that his coming might lead to some unpleasant comments and reminiscences which, however much we regretted them, we should be powerless to prevent, and which might spoil the friendly reception of the German visit."[466]

Bülow, on the other hand, after having been urged yet again - this time by the Duke of Connaught - to accompany Wilhelm to Britain, wrote on October 8th to ask Metternich whether he thought it advisable for him to come.[467] His letter was still on its way, when *The Times* published a leader in which it welcomed the Emperor's visit but greeted the prospect of the Chancellor joining him on his trip in rather acerbic terms. The similarities of the article with Grey's despatch to Lascelles merit quoting some passages at greater length:

"The Chancellor has taken a great deal of trouble for some time past, in very obvious ways, to convey to the general public in this country that he is exceedingly anxious to establish

[466] Ibid.

[467] Metternich to Bülow, October 12, 1907; GP XXIV; No. 8169 Footnote

cordial and intimate relations with us. […] We note the fact, and the further fact that he has not exerted himself quite so actively to create the same impression amongst his own countrymen". The article then went on for some time on this theme of Bülow's duplicity and how Britain's *ententes* with France and Russia had eroded the axioms of German foreign policy, which consequently might have brought about his *volte-face*.[468]

Reminding the readers of the hostility of the German public during the Boer War and hinting at Bülow's 'granite speech' shortly after his last visit to Britain (see chapter 2) the author continued: "We like to think that he regrets it and that he desires by his presence amongst us to efface so far as may be from our minds the recollections of the insults and the calumnies which he allowed to be hurled at us and at our soldiers in the German Parliament without anything more than a formal and fainthearted remonstrance on his part, though he knew at the time from the reports of the German officers with our troops that those charges were as false as they were malignant." Echoing Grey, the leader concluded by stating that fair and good relations between Germany and France are "a condition of any improvement in the public relations between Germany and ourselves."[469]

It seems quite obvious that the article was inspired, if not arranged, by the Foreign Office where, by October, officials must have grown increasingly impatient to prevent the unwanted guest from coming. The timing of the article is also interesting, since it allowed a full month to lapse before the imperial visit was taking place. It thus appears to have been carefully calculated to bring the message across without tarnishing the actual event. In Metternich's unsuspecting assessment, any fallout from the article was going to have time enough to settle:

[468] 'The German Emperor's Visit', *The Times*, October 10, 1907; p. 7

[469] Ibid.

"The bomb in the Times has exploded too early," he reported to Bülow, "it has therefore not caused any damage but encountered universal and sharp condemnation."[470]

The article, however, did the job it was intended for: The Chancellor stayed at home. Informing Otto Hammann, the head of the Press Office at the Wilhelmstrasse, of his decision, he reflected on his original reservations with regard to the opportuneness of accompanying the Emperor. Bülow stressed the parity that ought to prevail between two Great Powers when it came to symbolic gestures. No British Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary had visited Berlin in 29 years, he reasoned, and the King, during his visits to Germany, was always accompanied by ministers of a more junior rank. Therefore, anything that would exaggerate the political weight of the impending visit should be avoided: "We must handle the Emperor's journey to England with the utmost tactfulness. I believe, that the disposition towards us in England has become more favourable and that this journey in particular can contribute to further disperse the clouds between us and England. But this requires preventing anything disruptive or bound to arouse mistrust, and hence exaggerations too."[471]

While Bülow's observations were not unlike those made by Grey on the same subject, the conclusions he drew for practical policy stand out by their passivity. In accordance with his disposition when it came to Anglo-German relations, he recommended an attitude of wait-and-see. Rather than contemplating any constructive gestures towards Britain or France, as the leader in *The Times* had demanded in the place of warm words,[472] Bülow claimed that time would expunge the memory of previous misunderstandings and, by avoiding new

[470] Metternich to Bülow; October 12, 1907, GP XXIV, No. 8169. Metternich reported in an earlier dispatch that the Westminster Gazette in its evening issue condemned the *Times* leader, and the Standard published an article welcoming the visit of both, the Emperor and Bülow. Metternich to AA, 10 October 1907, GP XXIV, 8168

[471] Bülow to Hammann, October 21, 1907, in: Hammann, *Bilder*; p. 49

[472] *The Times*, 10 October 1907; p. 7

irritations, bilateral relations would eventually improve. In respect of France, he instructed Hammann "to vary in our press the thought that Germany not only wishes for good relations with England but also for tranquillity and peace throughout the world."[473] This discrepancy between the Chancellor's words and deeds, which the *Times*' leader had criticized, would become even more striking when considering his conduct after the visit came to an end.

On 11th November the German Emperor and empress arrived in their yacht at Portsmouth, from where the Prince of Wales accompanied them to Windsor Castle.[474] Apart from the members of his personal staff and military cabinet, Wilhelm's entourage eventually comprised General von Einem and the newly appointed Foreign Secretary Wilhelm von Schoen as the representatives of his government, in which capacity they were joined by Ambassador von Metternich. The visit went ahead smoothly and was regarded by contemporary observers on both sides as a great success and an 'effective reconciliation'[475]. Haldane claimed that it even eased relations between both Foreign Offices until 1911. [476]

It is interesting that the Secretary of State for War should have given this verdict in hindsight, despite the fact that shortly afterwards public opinion in both countries would commence agitating for ever higher naval estimates and that the most remarkable political initiative to result during that visit soon came to nothing. Detailed accounts of the Emperor's single-handed attempt to get negotiations about the Baghdad Railway back on track have been

[473] Hammann, Bilder; p. 49

[474] Lee, p. 557

[475] Ibid; also: 20 November, 1907, GP XXIV, No. 8171, pp. 562; &: Röhl, Der Weg in den Abgrund, pp. 631

[476] Haldane, *An Autobiography*, p. 223

provided elsewhere[477]. A brief summary will therefore suffice. The discussion here will focus mainly on how the idea for this initiative may have emerged, and on its aftermath.

When Wilhelm approached the British Secretary for War, to broach the topic of the Baghdad Railway on which bilateral cooperation had stalled since 1903, he had been probably encouraged by a despatch from the German *chargé d'affaires* in London, Wilhelm von Stumm, which he had read in September. In it Stumm reported that the British government was determined that any initiative on the subject should come from Germany. He then referred to a - possibly fictional - anonymous source who had expressed the hope that the Emperor himself would raise the issue during his visit. [478]Although the marginal comments by the Emperor show that he strongly rejected the idea at the time of reading, the message seems to have had the time to trickle in and inspire him to make his move.

Wilhelm was also aware that the German Ambassador had spoken with Haldane in June, when the latter had suggested that the Baghdad Railway might provide an opportunity to demonstrate the improved understanding between both countries. The Secretary for War told Metternich that as a basis for negotiations his government would expect to be granted control of the final section of the Railway, near the Persian Gulf. The All-highest disapproval of this demand was recorded in numerous marginal comments on the report of that meeting.[479]

Nevertheless, in November, when the Emperor asked Haldane at Windsor what Britain wanted in return for cooperation and the latter replied that they wished for a "'gate', to protect India from troops coming down the new railway.", Wilhelm declared: "I will give you

[477] see: Haldane, *Before the War*, pp. 47-52; Lee, *King Edward*, pp. 559-561; and more recently: Röhl, *Der Weg in den Abgrund*, pp. 633-637

[478] Stumm to Bülow, September 14, 1907, GP XXV/1, No. 8666, p. 260

[479] Metternich to Bülow, June 17, 1907, GP XXI/2, No. 7223, pp. 17-21

the 'gate'".[480] The negotiations with the British Secretary for War which ensued over the next few days were presided over by the Emperor in his private rooms and on one occasion lasted well into the small hours.[481] Finding a common basis for further talks proved complicated when Haldane, who had travelled to London to consult on the matter with the British Foreign Secretary, returned with a memorandum which demanded that France and Russia be included in the talks.[482] After some deliberation, Schoen, apparently out of his newly found importance as Foreign Secretary, decreed that this was not an obstacle because, as he claimed, in his previous role as ambassador to Russia he had already discussed the question with Izvolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, and reached an understanding which would facilitate a negotiation *à quatre*. [483]Therefore, the Emperor ordered Schoen to see the British Foreign Secretary in London and formalize the request for negotiations. This was done, and Grey suggested that the next step should be for the German government to invite France and Russia to join the discussions, which Schoen said would be arranged after he had further consulted Izvolsky.[484]

When Bülow learned from his imperial master that preliminary negotiations had begun for a settlement with Britain on the long-stalled question of the Bagdad Railway, and that Wilhelm was leading the way,[485] the German Chancellor, as minister responsible for his country's foreign policy, may have felt uneasy. Seizing the opportunity to not only further the interest of this project of enormous prestige for Germany, but also improve Anglo-German relations

[480] Haldane, Before the War, p. 48

[481] Ibid, p. 50

[482] Note of a private conversation between Sir E. Grey and Mr. Haldane on 14 November 1907, GP XXV/1, No. 8668, p. 263

[483] Schoen an Auswärtiges Amt, 16 November 1907, PA AA R5777; see also: Haldane, *Before the War*, pp. 48-52

[484] Grey to de Salis, 15 November 1907; BD 6, No. 64, p. 98

[485] Bülow to Schoen, 14 November, 1907, GP XXV/1, No. 8667, footnote ***pp. 261

while doing so, sounded appealing; but it also demonstrated his own expendability because it provided further proof that he had lost control over foreign policy making, which was now conducted, quite independently, by the Emperor and his favourites.

As long as the official visit lasted, Bülow had no choice but to await what the Emperor and his Foreign Secretary came up with and to limit himself to articulating his concern about ceding control over the Railway's terminal stretch to Britain. Once Wilhelm had left Windsor, however, and moved on to a private visit at Highcliffe Castle, where he would remain as a guest of Colonel Stuart Wortley until his return to Germany two weeks later[486], the Wilhelmstrasse started to pick the arrangement with Grey apart. Metternich advocated keeping the initiative alive by attempting a preliminary agreement with Russia and thereby facilitating subsequent talks with all parties. He also reminded Bülow that London was now waiting for Germany's move as stipulated in Grey's memorandum.[487] Yet, not even 20 days after its conception, the initiative was dead when Schoen, who appears to have been brought back into line by Bülow, informed Metternich that negotiations were not in Germany's present interest and called talks between all four powers an unreasonable British demand.[488]

The editors of the 'Grosse Politik' document collection had a point when they claimed that any negotiations over the Baghdad Railway, where Germany would have faced the entente powers as a united bloc, had little chance of bearing fruitful results and that Grey had sabotaged the initiative with his demand.[489] Grey himself admitted as much when he confided to Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador to France, that he was sure the Emperor had

[486] It was during this visit that the Emperor, in conversations with his host, made some of the comments which formed part of the *Daily Telegraph* Interview published in the following year.

[487] Metternich to Bülow, 19 November 1907, GP XXV/1, No. 8670, pp. 264-269

[488] Schoen to Metternich, December 7 1907, GP XXV/1, No. 8674, pp. 273-275

[489] Ibid, footnote*, p. 275

acted without having consulted Bülow and that he doubted whether the Chancellor would approve of a discussion *à quatre*.[490] On the other hand, Germany could have played for time and approached such talks without many illusions about their ultimate failure. Meanwhile, it could have demonstrated goodwill towards Britain's partners, and, less benignly, even weakened the *ententes* by playing on the differences between the French and Russian positions and the British interest in the attractive offer of control over a 'gate'. Just burying the initiative in a hurry, however, instead of allowing it to fade out after some initial effort, seemed unwise, as this put the blame for abandoning it squarely on Germany.

A plausible reason for the urgency with which the initiative was quelled could be the negotiations that the German ambassador in Constantinople, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, conducted at the time with the government of Sultan Abdul Hamid. The resulting bilateral agreement of 2 June 1908 would allow for a better financed, speedier and more flexible building of the Orient Express which had hitherto not only suffered from greater financial constraints but also from a geographically rigid approach to construction which did not allow for the completion of potentially more profitable sections of the railway at an earlier stage.[491] The new accord would enable Germany to preserve the German ownership of the project and hence its potential to become "Germany's ticket to world power" (McMeekin). Any parallel negotiations with Britain, France and Russia could have therefore undermined the credibility of Germany in its talks with the Porte and had better be avoided.

[490] Grey to Bertie, November 20, 1907; BD 6, No. 69, p. 102

[491] McMeekin, Berlin-Baghdad Express, p. 48-52

The naval rivalry changes gear

The widely praised goodwill that the imperial visit had generated in Britain was put to an even more severe test when the Chancellor announced before the Reichstag on 19th November that Germany would increase its naval building to four instead of three capital ships per year.[492] The announcement was prepared with a vociferously Anglophobe agitation by General Keim and his Navy League which led Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria to resign his patronage of its Bavarian branch in protest.[493] The effect on British public opinion has been summed up best by the biographer of Edward VII: "Germany had taken full opportunity of the kindly British feeling to snatch a naval advantage. At once, the cordial atmosphere vanished. Even 'little Englanders' now realised that in Germany they had a strong, determined and unscrupulous antagonist – and from that day onwards, the naval rivalry between the two countries grew more and more acute."[494]

Holstein reflected on Bülow's timing and motives: "The tension and mistrust the English feel towards Germany […] has naturally been increased still further by the Navy Bill and the chauvinistic and anti-English conduct of the Navy League. Can it really be coincidence that these two events took place at a time, when the Kaiser was trying, by means of a lengthy visit to England and by countless acts of kindness to people and institutions, to improve German-English relations? Because surely no one can be in any doubt – except perhaps the Kaiser himself – that these two events make all his kindnesses useless and meaningless, and even give them an air of fraud. Who has an interest in the continuation of Anglo-German tension? Prince Bülow, who clearly realizes that he would have to be sacrificed to any real German-

[492] Steinberg, The Novelle of 1908; in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*: The Novelle of 1908, p. 40

[493] Stumm to Bülow, 4 January 1908, GP XXIV, No. 8176, footnote *, p. 27

[494] Lee, p.563

English reconciliation. For the English leave no doubt that they regard the present Chancellor as an enemy and an unreliable character."[495]

While the 'Novelle' of 1908 was contrived and prepared by the Secretary of State of the Naval Office, the historian Volker Berghahn argues that Tirpitz had found in Bülow a staunch and, above all, self-interested ally to push the bill through parliament. The heterogeneous character of the liberal and conservative forces, which formed his new majority in the Reichstag and had replaced the votes of the Centre Party, meant that the Chancellor would have a hard struggle to tackle the growing fiscal deficit by introducing new taxes. But the 'Bülow bloc' was his creation, as seen earlier in this chapter, and therefore his political future was tied up with parliament's successful delivery of a fiscal reform.[496] When Tirpitz visited the Chancellor in Norderney on 21 September 1907 in order to win his support for the naval bill, the head of the Naval Office appears to have insinuated that the 'surplus energies of naval agitation' might be mobilised for the redistribution of financial burdens. By riding on a wave of euphoria about naval expansion, Bülow may thus have hoped to overcome his difficulties and ensure the support from his bloc.[497] But he had yet another political reason to lend his support to the naval bill, since he owed the success of his bloc in the recent elections to the exorbitant agitation by the Naval League among National Liberal members of parliament and to the influence of General Keim, its general secretary. Given Bülow's vulnerable position it was therefore prudent from his perspective not to lose the support of this organisation.[498]

---

[495] Diary entry, 14 December 1907; HP, vol. 4; No. 1067; pp.509

[496] Berghahn, *Der Tirpitz-Plan*, p. 586

[497] Ibid, p.587

[498] Ibid, pp. 588; On the origins of the navy bill of 1908 and the political pitfalls it was facing in parliament, see also: Steinberg, The Novelle of 1908; in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 21 (1979) pp. 25-43

These arguments imply that the Chancellor actually subordinated any considerations about the negative impact of the naval bill on Anglo-German relations to his struggle for political survival. Holstein reasoned along the same lines when he observed: "At this moment, Keim shields Bülow against both possibilities most dangerous to Bülow personally: reconciliation of the Kaiser with England and with the Centre."[499]

In the light of Bülow's actions as well as their perception by observers in both countries, it seems hardly sustainable to blame systemic forces alone for the deterioration of bilateral relations, or to hold that impersonal strategic considerations inexorably moved both powers against each other. Personal agendas and inclinations as well as internecine struggles within the German foreign policy machine seem to have played out against the backdrop of an increasingly restrictive system of international commitments and loyalties, which on many occasions magnified negative impacts and distorted how initiatives were received.

The German navy bill which passed the Reichstag on 27 March 1908 substantially accelerated the arms race with Great Britain: It allowed for the rapid replacement of obsolete warships by modern dreadnoughts and it enabled Germany to build two replacement ships each year in addition to the two new capital ships per annum provided for by the Naval Laws of 1900. This meant that four capital ships would be laid down every fiscal year between 1908 and 1911.[500]

The discrepancy between Germany's ambitious bill and the modest naval programme presented by the British Admiralty in December 1907, which provided for the building of only one dreadnought and one battle cruiser during 1908,[501] soon caught the concerned eye of

[499] Diary entry 17 December 1907; HP, vol. 4, 1068; pp.510

[500] Steinberg, The Novelle of 1908; in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 21 (1979) pp. 25

[501] Steinberg, The Novelle of 1908, p. 40

British politicians, naval planners and public opinion in general. Calls grew louder to match the challenge and come up with an expansion that would safeguard Britain's naval supremacy.[502] The Liberal government, which had been elected on an agenda of social reform, came under pressure to divert the funds already earmarked for its domestic policies to build more capital ships instead; alternatively, it would have to burden society with higher taxes. Numerous accounts have been published over the past century of the efforts by high-ranking members of British society and government to extract assurances from their German counterparts which might have signalled reasonable limits to that country's naval expansion and thus would have allowed Britain to avoid the costs of reciprocating with a naval armament programme of its own. Most prominently among these unsuccessful attempts features the encounter of the Emperor and the British King at Kronberg Castle on 11 August 1908, which had been jointly instigated by the banker Sir Ernst Cassel, a close friend of Edward VII, and by Albert Ballin, a German shipping magnate and friend of the Kaiser.[503] On that occasion, during a conversation between Wilhelm and Undersecretary of State Sir Charles Hardinge, who had accompanied his King to Germany, Hardinge famously demanded that Germany stop building ships or build them more slowly, to which the Emperor, according to his own account, responded: "Then we shall fight for it is a question of national honour and dignity."[504]

As a matter of fact, the Emperor on this occasion merely echoed a statement of his Chancellor, who had issued a decree for the Prussian envoys to the other German capitals in June. In it Bülow outlined the principles of German foreign policy in the face of the recent encounters between the British King and the Russsian Tsar at Reval and the visit to London

[502] Ibid, pp. 40-41

[503] Wilhelm to Bülow 6 July 1908 & Bülow to Wilhelm 15 July 1908, PA AA R5780

[504] Wilhelm to Buelow, 13 August 1908, PA AA R5781; see also GP XXIV No. 8226, pp. 126

of Armand Fallières, the French President, which the German diplomats and public had observed with apprehension. He declared that it was the fear of German strength that deterred other powers from an attack. It was therefore evident, Bülow reasoned, that Germany ought to make its naval and terrestrial forces as awe-inspiring as possible. "Ill feelings, which this might arouse elsewhere, we have to accept without showing excitement. Under no circumstances can we discuss agreements that amount to a limitation of our armed forces. It should be clear to any power which demands such an agreement from us, that this would mean war."[505] The marginal comments on this despatch reveal that Wilhelm had read it and approved of the wording. Moreover, this document proves that in Summer 1908 Bülow was far from advocating negotiations for an agreement with Britain to limit ship building. In a dispatch to Metternich he reiterated his view, that the German people "would unanimously prefer to shoulder any sacrifice, even a war on several fronts, than to tolerate such a violation of its honour and dignity" which the unilateral limitation of Germany's armaments would represent.[506]

A remarkable detail of the encounter between the two monarchs at such a crucial time for Anglo-German relations is thus the absence of the German Chancellor who a year earlier had made it a point to interrupt his holidays and come down from his retreat on the island of Norderney, when Wilhelm and Edward met at Wilhelmshöhe (see above). Later in August Bülow also refused to meet David Lloyd George, Britain's newly appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was touring Austria and Germany to study both countries' labour protection laws and who came to Berlin with the explicit mission of exploring the possibility of some bilateral agreement to slow down shipbuilding and thereby salvage his party's domestic

[505] Bülow to Schlözer, 25 June 1908, GP XXV/2, No. 8820, pp. 474-479

[506] Bülow to Metternich, 5 August 1908, PA AA R5780

agenda of social reform.[507] Such a meeting, Bülow objected, "would awaken hopes in England which could not be fulfilled for the time being".[508] On occasions when he could not avoid the conversation with an official representative of the British government, the Chancellor resorted to airy rhetoric - as was the case when he received the new ambassador Sir Edward Goschen for the first time. Goschen observed in his diary: "I enjoyed the interview but it was rather 'thin' when I came to analyse it. [Bülow] gave me the most charming reception – and talked for an hour without stopping. But in all his talk – there was devilishly little to carry away with one – tho' I faked a long despatch out of it."[509]

The Chancellor tampers with the judgement of history while the navy consolidates its influence over the Wilhelmstrasse

It should be evident from these instances, that Bülow was not particularly worried about Anglo-German relations and did not consider changing one iota of the naval policy he had stood for throughout his Chancellorship. Documentary evidence from the last ten months of Bülow's tenure has nevertheless led some historians to suggest that he became increasingly concerned over the palpable deterioration he witnessed, and therefore sought a reconciliation with Britain.[510] The historian Michael Epkenhans even dedicates a whole chapter of his

[507] Hammann, Bilder, pp. 55-57

[508] Bülow to Foreign Office, 22 August 1908; GP XXIV, No. 8235, p. 139

[509] Diary entry, 13 November 1908, *The Diary of Edward Goschen*, 1900 – 1914, Royal Historical Society, London 1980, p. 180

[510] Röhl, J.: *Der Weg in den Abgrund*; p. 711

seminal study on German naval armaments to Bülow's 'process of rethinking' (*Umdenkungsprozess*)[511].

The official German document collection of 1908/09 is brimming with dispatches from London in which Metternich and Stumm are stressing time and again the adverse impact of the newest German naval bill on bilateral relations; repeatedly they reject Tirpitz's insistence that trade rivalry is to blame for the deterioration.[512] Tirpitz, whom the Chancellor kept in the loop about these reports, must have worried lest the barrage of pessimistic news might soften the determination to see the naval programme through. He even complained to the Emperor that Metternich exaggerated when he reported on the deep concern which prevailed among leading members of the British government that Germany might further accelerate its building of capital ships. Wilhelm responded by ordering Bülow to reprimand the German ambassador for his "constantly erroneous representations" which he made, according to the Kaiser, because he was "fully under the spell of the English scaremongers" and allowed them to influence him too much.[513] The Chancellor defended the ambassador and refused this request during a meeting with Tirpitz; he pointed out that Metternich had fulfilled his duty by truthfully reporting the situation and quipped that neither would it be of any avail to scold the barometer for indicating bad weather.[514]

The frequency with which the State Secretary of the Imperial Naval Office intervened in the diplomatic correspondence of that period reflected not only the growing importance of the naval question for bilateral relations, but also Tirpitz's awareness that the scrutiny under

[511] Epkenhans, M.: *Die wilhelminische Flottenrüstung 1908 – 1914*; pp. 31-51

[512] Metternich to Bülow, 27. November 1908, GP XXVIII, No. 10234

[513] Tirpitz to Wilhelm, 8. March 1909 & Footnote, GP XXVIII, No. 10267

[514] Proceedings of meeting at Reichskanzlerpalais, 3 June 1909, PA AA R5789

which his strategy of naval expansion had come required his active participation in the discussion of Germany's British policy in order to manage dissent and keep his project on track. His self-confidence in taking on the diplomats of the Wilhelmstrasse indicates the importance his opinions had attained for the definition of foreign policy. Otto Hammann, who was well placed to observe the power wielded by Tirpitz, neatly characterised his influence: "Blinded by patriotic fire [Tirpitz] was not capable of recognizing the real political state of affairs and did not objectively appreciate the motives for the English efforts to mutually limit the construction of battleships. Not only in full possession of imperial favour but also conscious that he could count on the larger part of the Bloc's majority [in the Reichstag] as well as that of the Centre Party, he did not need to avoid a conflict with the Chancellor."[515]

While the exchanges between Bülow and Tirpitz were frank and sometimes even fierce, they remained nonetheless purely academic and never revealed any active steps on the Chancellor's part to actually bring about change. Bülow's 'rethinking' appears to have consisted of using the dispatches from the German embassy as the basis for his correspondence with Tirpitz. He confronted the State Secretary with the latest assessments from London and attempted – or pretended - to explore alternatives to the German naval programme, such as reducing the annual number of battleships to be built and spending the thus freed resources on coastal defences, torpedo boats and submarines instead.[516] He also put pressure on Tirpitz to declare whether Germany was ready to sustain a pre-emptive strike by the British navy, which the State Secretary had to deny. In his replies, Tirpitz accused Bülow

[515] Hammann, O.; Bilder, pp. 63

[516] Bülow to Tirpitz, 11 January 1909, GP XXVIII No 10251. The Chancellor may have expected that Tirpitz would reject this proposal, because he had already encountered the State Secretary's resistance to precisely the same proposals before, when he had suggested such measures in 1905 (see Chapter 3).

of wanting to humiliate Germany by proposing to shy away from British threats, to which Bülow in turn retorted by rejecting such imputation and pointing out that Britain had never issued a threat but merely pleaded for a mutual limitation of ship building[517] – these well documented squabbles continued until the very last month of Bülow's tenure.[518] Bülow's focus on words rather than deeds – to paraphrase again the *Times* leader of October 1907 – is put into relief, however, when contrasted with his reluctance - as seen above - to meet leaders of the British government face to face while they visited Germany in order to find a bilateral solution for the naval question. Such encounters could have exposed the contradiction between the German naval policy he backed and the simulated opposition which he cultivated in his exchanges with Tirpitz. Moreover, any interaction with British statesmen to sound out common ground for compromise could have further weakened his standing with the Emperor. This failure to engage in meaningful political dialogue was exacerbated by the competing power centres within the Wilhelmstrasse and, at the time, left foreign observers in Berlin with the impression of a wholly dysfunctional policymaking apparatus. Shortly after he had paid his first visit to the German Chancellor, the new British ambassador talked with his French counterpart Jules Cambon about the character of official communications with the German government. "[Cambon] tells me that now I shan't see Prince Bülow again for ages. In fact, he says this is an impossible place for Diplomatists. One goes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – sees Schön – and if one asks him anything really important – he says he must speak to Bülow – the latter says to Schön probably that he must refer the matter to the Emperor –

[517] Bülow to Tirpitz, 11 January 1909, GP XXVIII No 10251

[518] for an example see: minutes by Vice-Admiral v. Mueller on meeting with Chancellor, 3. June 1909, Dokument VII/10, in Berghahn, V.; Deist, W.: *Rüstung im Zeichen der wilhelminischen Weltpolitik. Grundlegende Dokumente, 1890-1914*. pp. 325-329

and between the three the diplomatists get no answer at all. It is a higgelty-piggelty arrangement [].”[519]

During the same period, the Chancellor covered the margins of his correspondence with elaborate comments which contrast remarkably with his succinct marginalia on earlier despatches and give the impression of having been curated for posterity. Indeed, Bülow’s activities during his last year in office have been described as “his bid to shape the judgements of future generations”.[520] A desire to sway history’s verdict on his Chancellorship would chime well with the aptness that Bülow demonstrated in manipulating his own public image, as has been shown above in the case of the Eulenburg scandal. When Otto von Hammann, who had been Bülow’s spin doctor and one of his closest collaborators[521] at the Wilhelmstrasse, published his account of the Chancellorship in 1922, it was garnished with hitherto unpublished documents, which, alongside the helpful observations by the author, conveyed a picture of Bülow as the reasonable mediator between Germany’s aspiration to become a world power and the need to mend Anglo-German relations, which had suffered under the overzealous pursuit of naval grandeur by the Emperor and Tirpitz. The same impression emerges from volume two of Bülow’s memoirs - see particularly chapters XXI and XXV - which he published in 1930 in the sound knowledge that the archives contained enough material to corroborate his claim that “bringing about a naval agreement between Germany and England is the one question which, more than any other, was close to heart during my last period in office.”[522]

---

[519] Diary entry, 14 November 1908, *The Diary of Edward Goschen,* p. 180

[520] Lerman, p. 211

[521] Anton Count Monts, German Ambassador in Rome 1902-1909, calls Hammann the “propagator of Bülow’s fame” and characterises him as a “connoisseur of every journalistic cesspit, subterfuge and backstairs.” *Erinnerungen und Gedanken des Botschafters Anton Graf Monts*, Berlin 1932, pp. 189

[522] Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, Band 2, p. 427

The reason why such a rapprochement never materialised was, according to Epkenhans, because even those German politicians who tended towards an agreement all shared the theory of 'pressure through the fleet' (*Flottendrucktheorie*) which predicted that British concerns over the development of the German fleet could be used to push for a comprehensive settlement between both countries, just as frictions between Britain and Russia in East-Asia had led to the Anglo-Russian entente[523]. Consequently, during a high-profile meeting in the presence of Bülow, Tirpitz, Schoen, Metternich, Moltke, Vice-Admiral v. Mueller (the chief of the Naval Cabinet), and the State Secretary for the Interior and future Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, the participants agreed that Germany would demand a steep price for a mutual settlement. Any German concessions, such as a reduction of the shipbuilding rate from four to three capital ships per annum, deemed feasible by Tirpitz, would not only depend on a commensurate reduction of British naval building but would also require Britain to take the initiative by coming forward with a wider-ranging proposal.[524] Venting his frustration at the unsatisfying outcome of the meeting, Metternich observed in a letter to Bülow that the decision not to seek an agreement but to wait for Britain to make the first move was owed to Tirpitz's intransigence during the meeting and his refusal to define a bargaining position from which to launch negotiations.[525] During this meeting, the Chancellor's passive approach to improving Anglo-German relations, purportedly so close to

[523] Epkenhans, p. 35

[524] Proceedings of meeting at Reichskanzlerpalais, 3 June 1909, PA AA R5789; During this meeting Bülow and Metternich, as well as probably most of the other participants, also seemed to have learned for the first time that Tirpitz was already preparing a further amendment of the naval law for 1912.

[525] Metternich to Bülow, notes on the meeting at Reichskanzlerpalais, 4 June 1909, PA AA R5789. The ambassador also expressed his anger at having been instructed by the Emperor in the previous year to give assurances to the British government that German naval expansion would strictly follow the letter of the existing naval law. The fact that Tirpitz was already preparing another amendment undermined the credibility of official statements, he argued, and put in question the validity of Wilhelm's word.

his heart, became apparent once again. He could have leveraged Tirpitz's admission that it was possible to reduce the annual number of new ships in order to push the State Secretary for a more detailed scenario of what the Naval Office would have been prepared to sacrifice in the event of Britain seeking negotiations. Thus he could have supported Metternich, who, throughout the meeting, staunchly attempted to obtain precisely that. By not doing so, Bülow de facto gave Tirpitz a free hand to counter any potential British overture with suitable objections, and deprived the German ambassador of the opportunity to seek common ground on naval matters in his conversations with the British government. Such omissions, rather than the elaborate discussions and comments in his correspondence with Tirpitz or with the German embassy in London, more accurately reveal the Chancellor's true intentions.

While the idea of the fleet as a bargaining chip may have distinguished those who saw the naval programme as an end in itself from those who saw it as a means to an end[526], the problem was that no such comprehensive deal to settle bilateral differences was available at a time when Britain anxiously held tight to the *entente cordiale* and therefore carefully avoided anything that could have aroused suspicions on the other side of the Channel, as can be seen throughout this chapter. Bülow was therefore in the comfortable position of being able to advocate change without running the risk of having to implement it. Moreover, as discussed above, for Bülow to remain in office, he had to continue singing from the same hymn-sheet as the parties of his 'Bloc', which remained under the influence of naval agitation. As Epkenhans shows, the building programme was hugely popular in parliament, with only the recently decimated Social Democrats demanding disarmament and some Free Liberals arguing for the desirability of Anglo-German negotiations.[527]

[526] Hammann, p. 59

[527] Epkenhans; p. 46

While Bülow had been instrumental in delivering the latest naval bill, its passage made naval expansion the central feature of Anglo-German relations and thus deprived the Chancellor of the last vestiges of freedom to define Germany's British policy. The centre of gravity had firmly shifted away towards the Emperor and his chief architect of naval expansion, Alfred von Tirpitz.

Nevertheless, it was not this change in the internal balance of power of Germany's foreign policy apparatus that cost Bülow his job. His fall from imperial grace and eventual demise has been widely attributed to his handling of the *Daily Telegraph* Affair in 1908. The details of that crisis have filled many pages of books and articles which cannot be summarized here with sufficient brevity.[528]

What matters for this argument is the consensus that Bülow's actions during the scandal were driven by his desire for political survival, in the interest of which the Chancellor further eroded the already damaged reputation of the German foreign office and sacrificed the trust of the Emperor. This dissertation has attempted to explore how factional rivalries in the German foreign office evolved and how they may explain policy outcomes, as opposed to the prevailing structural accounts.[529] Nonetheless, throughout this chapter it has become apparent that - particularly in Bülow's case - even this level of analysis is sometimes too far removed to account for actions or inactions of individual policy makers. Personal motives as well as power constellations among groups of individuals have in common, however, that they allow the explanation of political decisions without having to resort to the assumption of all-time rational agents whose actions are determined by structural imperatives alone.

[528] For a recent comprehensive account see Winzen, P.: *Das Kaiserreich am Abgrund. Die Daily Telegraph Affäre und das Hale Interview von 1908.*

[529] For examples of structural accounts see: Wehler, H.-U.: *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1914*, pp. 182-192; and: Kennedy, P.: *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*.

Conclusion

The official conduct of Anglo-German relations in the wake of the Algeciras Conference was hampered on the one hand by a power-vacuum at the helm of the Foreign Ministry that emerged after Bülow's collapse in the Reichstag and on the other by the reluctance of the British government to engage in any meaningful dialogue with German diplomats, out of concern that such interactions might endanger the newly strengthened *entente* with France. This diplomatic stand-off allowed the Chancellor, whose public standing had suffered from the unfavourable outcome of the Moroccan Crisis as well as from his continued absence from his duties, to devise a comprehensive campaign for his comeback. During its course, he ousted several potential rivals and consolidated his grip on power by forging a new majority in parliament which earned him the renewed trust of the Emperor. While he continued to be responsible for foreign affairs, Bülow did not manage, however, to regain full control of the foreign office. The Emperor had firmly extended his personal regime into the Wilhelmstraße by appointing two successive favourites to the post of foreign secretary and thereby alienating a more suitable candidate for the job. Moreover, the Chancellor himself had further weakened his own support in the ministry by sacrificing Holstein as a scapegoat for his ill-fated Moroccan policy. Henceforth, he would have to share the conduct of foreign affairs with the Emperor and his entourage, whose initiatives had the potential to complicate Germany's policies, not least vis-à-vis Great Britain. At the same time, Bülow depended for his political survival on the continued course of naval expansion that he had facilitated throughout his tenure. This necessitated a constant alignment of his British policy with the demands of the Imperial Naval Office and its head Alfred von Tirpitz. Particularly after the new navy bill had passed the Reichstag in March 1908, the involvement of Tirpitz in foreign policy making became overbearing, because the Secretary of State of the Naval Office knew that he could count on the Emperor's support. This development was accentuated further

when Bülow's influence on the Emperor weakened as a result of his tactical manoeuvres after the *Daily Telegraph* Affair[530]. Probably with a view to his place in history books, the Chancellor, whose diplomats left him in no doubt that Germany's naval policy was to blame for the deteriorating bilateral relations with Britain, attempted to reconcile preserving his own post with giving the appearance of a reformed thinker. He achieved this by frequently pondering on the necessity to scale back German naval expansion while at the same time refraining from any actions that could potentially induce such a change. His bluff was not called, however, because policy makers agreed that any concessions to reduce shipbuilding required a more comprehensive political settlement with Britain – a deal that was not available at the time.

[530] Hammann, p. 64

Conclusion

The research presented in these pages allows us to confirm the hypothesis formulated at the outset: during the period studied here, the centre of gravity in foreign policy making shifted from an independent-minded set of professional diplomats to individuals who owed their careers to the person of the Emperor and facilitated his interference in foreign affairs. Germany's naval expansion with its impact on Anglo-German relations required, moreover, the frequent consultation of its chief naval planner Alfred von Tirpitz. His influence on decision making would grow until it became a dominant force whose sway was strongly resented by the diplomats and officials at the Foreign Ministry.

Meanwhile, the anti-British policy that Bülow pursued after coming to office, gradually altered bilateral relations from benign neutrality to mutual perceptions of hostile intent. At the beginning of his tenure the Foreign Secretary and later Chancellor suppressed attempts to bring about a far-reaching Anglo-German settlement. By alienating the British proponent of these efforts, Joseph Chamberlain, he made sure that such overtures would not be renewed in the near future. Bülow knew that in order to deliver the necessary majorities for Germany's naval programme in parliament, he had to avoid any commitments with Britain, as they would have made the ambitious plans harder to justify.

When his staff at the Wilhelmstrasse realised the direction of Bülow's course they came up with different strategies to provoke a change of policy. While some attempted to undermine the Chancellor's authority by discrediting him with the Emperor, others resented Wilhelm's interference in foreign affairs even more and ultimately blamed him for the deteriorating bilateral relations. This group undertook to support Bülow against imperial meddling.

Unfazed by the efforts to contain him, the Emperor expanded his hold over the Foreign Ministry by incessantly submitting new initiatives that required an assessment from its experts. Using his prerogative to appoint senior officials, he overrode the explicit wishes of his responsible advisors and installed individuals who were loyal to him rather than the Ministry. The prevailing favouritism, rivalries among those different factions and their resentment of interference by the Kaiser and Tirpitz led to an erratic conduct of foreign affairs which impaired Germany's reputation in the world and limited her available options.

The cut-off event for this thesis is the end of Bülow's Chancellorship. While I have argued that he cannot be said to have dominated the stage he was leaving behind, his policies, and the methods he used to implement them, nevertheless shaped the state of Anglo-German relations and the conditions which his successors would encounter at the Wilhelmstrasse. The new protagonist at the helm of Germany's foreign policy became Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter.

Unlike his predecessor, the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would enjoy a fair degree of independence from the new German Chancellor. It does not lack a certain irony that it was Kiderlen who took over the conduct of external relations. A talented diplomat with a reputation for hard work, he had been Holstein's favourite candidate to become Chancellor in 1897. Instead he became "Bülow's first victim" (Winzen) when the latter intrigued together with his friend Philipp Eulenburg against Kiderlen in order to advance his own bid for the post. Kiderlen, who had been *persona gratissima* with the Emperor, fell from imperial grace and would have to spend ten years as German minister in Bucarest after Eulenburg leaked some of his sketches which mocked Wilhelm II and his entourage.[531]

[531] Winzen, P.; Reichskanzler Bernhard von Bülow. Mit Weltmachtphantasien in den Ersten Weltkrieg. Regensburg 2013, pp. 154-171

The Foreign Secretary's untimely death at the end of 1912 together with his Anglophile outlook and his outspoken opposition to Tirpitz's naval programme, all invite us to engage in counter-factual speculations. Although Kiderlen's name is strongly associated with the Agadir crisis, German naval expansion slackened off in its wake - probably as a direct result of it. Moreover, his expertise in Eastern European and Oriental questions facilitated the launch of the London Conference 1912-1913 which assembled for the first time a few weeks before his demise. It might be a rewarding task to observe how the diverse factions that had influenced the conduct of foreign policy up to 1909 would adjust and change under the new leadership.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Bundesarchiv Berlin, (BA Berlin)

Akten Reichskanzlei

Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, (BA-MA)

Nachlass Alfred von Tirpitz

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, (AA)

Abteilung 1A – Reihe England

Botschaftsarchiv London – Geheimakten

Nachlass Karl von Eisendecher

National Archives (Kew)

Cabinet (CAB)

Foreign Office (FO)

Official Publications/Major Document Collections

Berghahn, V.R., Deist, W.; Rüstung im Zeichen der wilhelminischen Weltpolitik. Grundlegende Dokumente 1890-1914. Düsseldorf 1988.

Ebel, G., Ed.; Botschafter Paul Graf von Hatzfeldt: Nachgelassene Papiere 1838 - 1901 (Boppard am Rhein, 1976).

Great Britain. Foreign Office., G. P. Gooch, et al.; British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. (London, 1927)

Lepsius, J., A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, et al.; Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914 : Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes. (Berlin, 1922).

Rich, N., Ed.; The Holstein Papers. The Memoirs, Diaries and Correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, 1837-1909. (Cambridge, 1955-1963).

Röhl, J. C. G., Ed.; Philipp Eulenburgs politische Korrespondenz. 3 vols. (Boppard am Rhein, 1976-1983).

Other Published Documents

Bernstorff, J. v.; Erinnerungen und Briefe. (Zurich, 1936).

Bethmann Hollweg, T. v.; Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege, 2 vols., Nachdr. der Ausg. Berlin 1919-21, Essen 1989

Bülow, B. Prince von; Memoirs. 4 vols. (London & New York, 1931)

Deuerlein, E., Ed.; Briefwechsel Hertling-Lerchenfeld. (Boppard am Rhein, 1973)

Eckardstein, H. v.; Lebenserinnerungen und Politische Denkwürdigkeiten. (Leipzig, 1920).

Eckardstein, H. v.; Ten Years at the Court of St. James'. (London, 1921)

Epkenhans, M., Ed.; Das ereignisreiche Leben eines Wilhelminers. Tagebücher, Briefe, Aufzeichnungen 1901 bis 1920. Von Albert Hopman. (München, 2004)

Erdmann, K. D., Ed.; Kurt Riezler. Tagebücher-Aufsätze-Dokumente. (Göttingen, 1972)

Fuchs, W. P., Ed.; Grossherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik 1871-1907. (Stuttgart, 1968 -1980)

Garvin, J. L., The Life of Joseph Chamberlain. 6 vols. (London, 1932)

Goerlitz, W., Ed.; Der Kaiser... Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Marinekabinetts Admiral Georg Alexander v. Müller über die Ära Wilhelms II. . (Göttingen, 1965).

Howard, C. H. D., Ed.; The Diary of Edward Goschen 1900-1914. (London, 1980).

Hürter, J., Ed.; Hintze, Paul v., Marineoffizier, Diplomat, Staatssekretär. Dokumente einer Karriere zwischen Militär und Politik, 1903-1918. (München, 1998).

Jaeckh, E., Ed.; Kiderlen-Wächter der Staatsmann und Mensch. Briefwechsel und Nachlass (Stuttgart, Berlin and Leipzig, 1924).

Jagow, G. v.; Die Anklagen des Fürsten Bülow gegen "die Staatsmänner von 1914". Front wider Bülow. Staatsmänner, Diplomaten und Forscher zu seinen Denkwürdigkeiten. F. Thimme. (München, 1931)**:** 210-220.

Kühlmann, R. v.; Erinnerungen. (Heidelberg, 1948).

Kühlmann, R. v.; Gedanken über Deutschland. (Leipzig, 1931).

Lichnowsky, K. M. v.; My Mission to London. 1912-1914. (London, New York, 1918)

Lichnowsky, K. M. v.; Auf dem Wege zum Abgrund. Londoner Berichte, Erinnerungen und sonstige Schriften. . (Dresden, 1927)

Meisner, H. O., Ed.; Denkwürdigkeiten des Generalfeldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee. (Stuttgart, 1922-1925).

Metternich, P. G.; "Meine Denkschrift über die Flottennovelle vom 10. Januar 1912." Europäische Gespräche 4 (1926): 57-76.

Moltke, E. v., Ed.; Helmuth v. Moltke. Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente 1877-1916. Ein Bild vom Kriegsausbruch, erster Kriegsführung und Persönlichkeit des ersten militärischen Führers des Krieges. (Stuttgart, 1922).

Mommsen, W., Ed.; Die Nachlässe in den deutschen Archiven (Mit Ergänzungen aus anderen Beständen). (Boppard am Rhein, 1971/83).

Penzler, J.; Fürst Bülows Reden nebst urkundlichen Beiträgen zu seiner Politik. 3 vols. (Berlin, 1907-09)

Pogge von Strandmann, H., Ed.; Walther Rathenau. Industrialist, Banker, Intellectual, and Politician. Notes and Diaries 1907-1922. (Oxford, 1985).

Rogge, H., Ed.; Lebensbekenntnis in Briefen an eine Frau. Friedrich von Holstein. (Berlin, 1932)

Tirpitz, A. v.; Politische Dokumente, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1924-26)

Tirpitz, A. v.; Erinnerungen. (Leipzig, 1919).

Vierhaus, R., Ed.; Das Tagebuch der Baronin von Spitzemberg 1865-1914. (München, 1979).

Widenmann, W.; Marine-Attache an der kaiserlich-deutschen Botschaft in London 1907-1912. (Göttingen, 1952).

Zanichelli, Nicola, Ed.; Lettres de la Princesse Radziwill au General de Robilant,1889-1914 : Une grande dame d'avant la guerre. 4. vols. (Bologna, 1933-34)

Zedlitz-Trützschler, R. v.; Zwölf Jahre am deutschen Kaiserhof. Aufzeichnungen des Grafen Robert Zedlitz-Trützschler (Stuttgart, 1924)

Secondary Sources

Afflerbach, H.; Falkenhayn : politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich. (München, 1996).

Afflerbach, H.; Der Dreibund : europäische Grossmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. (Wien, 2002).

Afflerbach, H. and D. Stevenson; An improbable war : the outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914. (New York, 2007).

Anderson, P. R.; The Background to Anti-English Feeling in Germany, 1980-1902. (New York, 1969).

Baraclough, G.; From Agadir to Armageddon. Anatomy of a Crisis. (London, 1982)

Berghahn, V. R.; Der Tirpitz-Plan. Genesis und Verfall einer innenpolitischen Krisenstrategie unter Wilhelm II. (Düsseldorf, 1971).

Berghahn, V. R.; Germany and the Approach of War in 1914. (London, 1993).

Bernhardi, F. v.; Germany and the Next War. (London, 1914).

Carlson, A.R.; German Foreign Policy, 1890-1914, and Colonial Policy: a Handbook and Annotated

Bibliography. (Mentuchen, 1970)

Canis, K. Von Bismarck zur Weltpolitik. Deutsche Außenpolitik 1890 bis 1902, Berlin 1997

Craig, G. A.; The politics of the Prussian army 1640-1945. (New York, Oxford, 1964)

Crampton, R. J.; The Hollow Detente. Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911-1914. (London, 1980).

Cecil, L.: The German Diplomatic Service, 1871-1914, Princeton 1976

Davis, A. N. (1918); The Kaiser I Knew: my fourteen years with the Kaiser. London, Hodder and Stoughton.

Deist, W.; Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda: Das Nachrichtenbureau des Reichsmarineamtes 1897-1914. (Stuttgart, 1976).

Deuerlein, E., Ed.; Briefwechsel Hertling-Lerchenfeld. (Boppard am Rhein, 1973).

Dülffer, J. K., Martin; Wippich, Rolf-Harald. Vermiedene Kriege. Deeskalation von Konflikten der Grossmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg (1856-1914). (München, 1997).

Ebel, G., Ed.; Botschafter Paul Graf von Hatzfeldt: Nachgelassene Papiere 1838 - 1901. (Boppard am Rhein, 1976).

Epkenhans, M.; Verlust des Primats der Politik? "Staatskunst" und "Kriegshandwerk" 1890-1914. Otto von Bismarck und Wilhelm II.: Repräsentanten eines Epochenwechsels? L. Gall. Ed. (Paderborn, 2000).

Epkenhans, M.; Die wilhelminische Flottenrüstung 1908-1914. Weltmachtstreben, industrieller Fortschritt, soziale Integration. München 1991

Erdmann, K. D., Ed.; Kurt Riezler. Tagebücher-Aufsätze-Dokumente. (Göttingen, 1972).

Ferguson, N.; "Public Finance and National Security: The Domestic Origins of the First World War Revisited." Past and Present CXLII (1994): 725-52.

Ferguson, N.; The Pity of War. (London, 1998).

Fischer, F.; Krieg der Illusionen: Die deutsche Politik von 1911 bis 1914. (Düsseldorf, 1969).

Fischer, F.; Juli 1914: Wir sind nicht hineingeschlittert. Das Staatsgeheimnis um die Riezler-Tagebücher. (Reinbek, 1983).

Fischer, F.; Exzesse der Autokratie. Das Hale-Interview Wilhelms II. vom 19. Juli 1908. Deutschlands Sonderung von Europa 1862-1945. W. Alff, Ed. (Frankfurt a. M., 1984)

Fischer, F.; Die Aussenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland und der Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs. Flucht in den Krieg? Die Aussenpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland. G. Schöllgen, Ed. (Darmstadt, 1991)**;** 25-67.

Fischer, J.-U.; Admiral des Kaisers. Georg Alexander von Müller als Chef des Marinekabinetts Wilhelm II. . (Frankfurt a. M., 1992)

Förster, S.; Der doppelte Militarismus. Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik zwischen Status-Quo-Sicherung und Aggression 1890-1913. (Wiesbaden, 1985).

Förster, S.; "Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges, 1871-1914." Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen LIV(1995): 61-95.

Forsbach, R.; Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter. 1852-1912. Ein Diplomatenleben im Kaiserreich. (Göttingen, 1997)

Gade, C.; Gleichgewichtspolitik oder Bündnispflege? Maximen britischer Aussenpolitik (1909 - 1914). (Göttingen, Zürich, 1997).

Geppert, D.; Pressekriege. Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen 1896-1912. (München, 2007).

Giessler, K.-V.; Die Institution des Marineattaches im Kaiserreich. (Boppard, 1976).

Gooch, G. P.; Germany. (London, 1925).

Gooch, G. P.; Recent revelations of European diplomacy : third impression, with a supplementary chapter on the revelations of 1927. (London, 1928)

Gooch, G. P.; Before the War: studies in diplomacy, vol.2, The Coming of the Storm. (London, 1938).

Gooch, G. P.; Courts and cabinets. (London, 1944).

Granier, G.; "Deutsche Rüstungspolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. General Franz Wandels Tagebuchaufzeichnungen aus dem preussischen Kriegsministerium." Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen 38 (1985): 123-162.

Grenville, J. A. S.; Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: the Close of the Nineteenth Century. (London, 1964).

Gründer, H.; Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien (Paderborn, 1995).

Hall, R. C.; The Balkan Wars 1912-1913. Prelude to the First World War. (London, New York, 2000).

Hampe, K.-A.; Das Auswärtige Amt in Wilhelminischer Zeit. (Münster, 2001).

Helbing, G.; Die deutsche Marinepolitik 1908-12 im Spiegel der östereichisch-ungarischen Diplomatie. (Berlin, 1961).

Herwig, H. H.; "Clio Deceived. Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War." International Security XII(2) (1987): 5-44.

Hewitson, M.; Germany and the causes of the First World War. (Oxford, New York, 2004).

Hildebrand, K.; Das vergangene Reich. Deutsche Aussenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler, 1871 - 1945. (München, 2008).

Hull, I. V.; The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918. (Cambridge, 1982)

Hull, I. V.; Absolute destruction : military culture and the practices of war in Imperial Germany. (Ithaca, 2005)

Jarausch, K. H.; "The Illusion of Limited War: Chancellor Bethmann Hollwegs Calculated Risk." Central European History II(1969): 48-76.

Jarausch, K. H.; The Enigmatic Chancellor. Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany. (New Haven, London, 1973).

Kaiser, D.; "Germany and the Origins of the First World War." Journal of Modern History LV(1983): 442-74.

Kann, R.; "Emperor William II and Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Their Correspondence." American Historical Review LVII(1952): 345-6.

Keiger, J.: Sir Edward Grey, France, and the Entente: How to Catch the Perfect Angler? in: The International History Review, 2016 VOL. 38, NO. 2, pp. 285-300

Keiger, J.: Jules Cambon and Franco-German Détente, 1907-1914, The Historical Journal, Sep., 1983, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Sep., 1983), pp. 641-659

Keiger, J.: France and the Origins of the First World War. London 1983.

Kehr, E.; Englandhass und Weltpolitik. Eine Studie über die innenpolitischen und sozialen Grundlangen der deutschen Aussenpolitik um die Jahrhundertwende. Grundfragen der deutschen Aussenpolitik seit 1871. G. Ziebura. Ed. (Darmstadt, 1928)

Kennedy, P. M.; The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery. (London, 1976).

Kennedy, P. M.; The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860 -1914. (New York, 1980).

Kennedy, P. M.; The Kaiser and German Weltpolitik. Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations. J. C. G. S. Röhl, et al. (Cambridge, 1982)**:** 143-168.

Kiessling, F.; Gegen den grossen Krieg. Entspannung in den internationalen Beziehungen 1911 - 1914. (München, 2002).

Kiessling, F.; Unfought Wars: The Effect of Detente before World War I. An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914

H. S. Afflerbach, David Stevenson (New York, Oxford, 2007)

Kohut, T. A.; Wilhelm II and the Germans : a study in leadership. (New York, 1991).

Lamar, C.; The German Diplomatic Service. (Princeton, 1976).

Lambi, I. N.; The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862-1914. (Boston, 1984).

Langer, W. L.; The diplomacy of imperialism : 1890-1902 : with supplementary bibliographies. (New York, 1951).

Langhorne, R. T. B.; "The Naval Question in Anglo-German Relations, 1912-1914." Historical Journal 14(1971): 359-370.

Langhorne, R. T. B.; "Anglo-German Negotiations concerning the Future of the Portuguese Colonies, 1911 - 1914." Historical Journal 16(1973): 361-387.

Langhorne, R. T. B.; Great Britain and Germany, 1911-1914. British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey. F. H. Hinsley. (Cambridge, 1977).

Lerman, K. A.; The Chancellor as Courtier. Bernhard von Bülow and the Governance of Germany 1900-1909. (Cambridge, 1990).

Massie, R. K.; Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War. (London, 2007).

Meisner, H. O.; Militärattaches und Militärbevollmächtigte; in Preussen und im Deutschen Reich. (Berlin, 1957)

McLean, R. R.; Monarchy and Diplomacy in Europe, 1900 - 1910, DPhil thesis. (University of Sussex, 1996)

Meinecke, F.; Geschichte des deutsch-englischen Bündnisproblems 1890-1901. (München, 1927).

Meyer, T.; "Endlich eine Tat, eine befreiende Tat..." Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächters "Panthersprung nach Agadir" unter dem Druck der öffentlichen Meinung, Husum 1996. (Husum, 1996).

Mösslang, M. R., T. Riotte, Ed. The Diplomats' World. (Oxford, 2008).

Mombauer, A.: A Reluctant Military Leader? Helmuth von Moltke and the July Crisis of 1914, War in History , November 1999, Vol. 6, No. 4 (November 1999)

Mombauer, A.; The origins of the First World War : controversies and consensus. (Harlow, 2002)

Mombauer, A.; Helmuth von Moltke and the origins of the First World War. (Cambridge, 2005)

Mombauer, A. and W. Deist; The Kaiser : new research on Wilhelm II's role in Imperial Germany. (Cambridge, 2003)

Mommsen, W., Ed.; Die Nachlässe in den deutschen Archiven (Mit Ergänzungen aus anderen Beständen). (Boppard am Rhein, 1971/83)

Mommsen, W. (1981). The Topos of Inevitable War in Germany in the Decade before 1914. Germany in the Age of Total War. V. R. K. Berghahn, Martin. London.

Mommsen, W.; War der Kaiser an allem Schuld? Wilhelm II. und die preussisch-deutschen Machteliten. (München, 2002).

Mommsen, W. J.; Max Weber und die deutsche Politik, 1890-1920. (Tübingen, 1974).

Mommsen, W. J.; Two centuries of Anglo-German relations : a reappraisal. (London, 1984).

Mommsen, W. J.; Grossmachtstellung und Weltpolitik : die Aussenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1870 bis 1914. (Frankfurt am Main, 1993).

Mommsen, W. J. and R. Deveson; Imperial Germany, 1867-1918 : politics, culture and society in an authoritarian state. (London, 1995).

Neitzel, S.; Weltmacht oder Untergang. Die Weltreichslehre im Zeitalter des Imperialismus. (Paderborn, 2000).

Nipperdey, T.; Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918. (München, 1991-1992).

Otte, T.G.: Personalities and Impersonal Forces in History; in: Otte, T.G. and Pagedas, C.A. (eds.): *Personalities, War and Diplomacy. Essays in International History*; London 1997, pp. 1-9

Otte, T. G.; The China question : great power rivalry and British isolation, 1894-1905

(Oxford; New York, 2007)

Otte, T. G.; The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865 – 1914, Cambridge 2011

Pohl, K. H.; "Die "Krisenkonferenz" vom 8. Dezember 1912." Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 45 (1994): 91-104.

Pohl, K. H.; Von Stambul nach Bagdad. Die Geschichte einer berühmten Eisenbahn. München, (Zürich, 1999).

Rich, N.; Friedrich von Holstein. Politics and Diplomacy in the Era of Bismarck and Wilhelm II. (Cambridge, 1965).

Röhl, J. C. G.; "Admiral v. Müller and the Approach of War, 1911-1914." Historical Journal 12(1969): 651-673.

Röhl, J. C. G.; "An der Schwelle zum Weltkrieg. Eine Dokumentation über den "Kriegsrat" vom 8. Dezember 1912." Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen 21(1977): 77-134.

Röhl, J. C. G. S., N. Sombart, Ed.; Kaiser Wilhelm II. New Interpretations. (Cambridge, 1982).

Röhl, J. C. G.; Wilhelm II, 3 vols. (München, 1993-2008); for this thesis: Volume 3, Der Weg in den Abgrund, 1900-1941

Röhl, J. C. G.; Germany without Bismarck : the crisis of government in the Second Reich, 1890-1900. (Berkeley, 1967).

Röhl, J. C. G.; Kaiser, Hof und Staat : Wilhelm II. und die deutsche Politik. (München, 1988).

Röhl, J. C. G.; The Kaiser and his court : Wilhelm II and the government of Germany. (Cambridge, 1995)

Röhl, J. C. G. and S. De Bellaigue; Wilhelm II : the Kaiser's personal monarchy, 1888-1900. (Cambridge, 2004).

Röhl, J. C. G.;1914, delusion or design? : the testimony of two German diplomats. (London, 1973),

Röhl, J. C. G. and N. Sombart; Kaiser Wilhelm II, new interpretations : the Corfu papers. (Cambridge 1982).

Rogge, H.; Holstein und Harden. Politisch-publizistisches Zusammenspiel zweier Aussenseiter des wilhelminischen Reichs. (München, 1959).

Rose, A.: Zwischen Empire und Kontinent. Britische Außenpolitik vor dem ersten Weltkrieg; München 2011

Rüger, J.: The Great Naval Game. Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire. Cambridge 2007

Rüger, J.: Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism. The Journal of Modern History 83, September 2011, pp. 579-617

Schmidt, R. F., H.-H. Brandt; Deutschland und Europa : aussenpolitische Grundlinien zwischen Reichsgründung und Erstem Weltkrieg : Festgabe für Harm-Hinrich Brandt zum siebzigsten Geburtstag. (Stuttgart, 2004)

Schöllgen, G.; "Die Unbotmässigen? Des Kaisers Londoner Botschafter." Neue Politische Literatur 24 (1979): 384-397.

Schöllgen, G.; Richard von Kühlmann und das deutsch-englische Verhältnis 1912-1914. Zur Bedeutung der Peripherie in der europäischen Vorkriegspolitik, Historische Zeitschrift 230 (1980), p. 293

Schöllgen, G.; "Wer machte im Kaiserreich Politik? Zwischen "persönlichem Regiment" und "polykratischem Chaos". Neue Politische Literatur 25 (1980).

Schöllgen, G.; Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht. (München, 1984).

Schüssler, W.; Die Daily-Telegraph-Affaire. Fürst Bülow, Kaiser Wilhelm und die Krise des Zweiten Reiches 1908. (Göttingen, 1952).

Schulte, B.-F.; Die Verfälschung der Riezler-Tagebücher. Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der 50er und 60er Jahre. (Frankfurt a. M., 1985).

Schwertfeger, B.; Zur europäischen Politik, 1897-1914 : unveröffentliche Dokumente, in amtlichem Auftrage herausgegeben. (Berlin, 1919)

Schwertfeger, B.; Die diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes, 1871-1914 : Ein Wegweiser durch das grosse Aktenwerk der deutschen Regierung. (Berlin, 1924).

Schwertfeger, B.; Dokumentatium zur Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges, 1871-1914. (Berlin, 1928).

Seligmann, M. S.; "Germany and the Origins of the First World War in the Eyes of the American Diplomatic Establishment." German History XV(1997).

Seligmann, M. S.; Spies in uniform : British military and naval intelligence on the eve of the First World War. (Oxford, 2006)

Seligmann, M. S.; and Navy Records Society. Eds.. Naval intelligence from Germany : the reports of the British naval attachés in Berlin, 1906-1914. (Aldershot, 2007).

Seligmann, M. S. M., Roderick R.; Germany from Reich to Republic, 1871-1918. (London, 2000)

Steinberg, J.: The Novelle of 1908: Necessities and Choices in the Anglo-German Naval Arms Race, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. Read: 13 February 1970.

Steiner, Z. S.; The Foreign Office and foreign policy, 1898-1914. (London, 1969)

Steiner, Z. S.; Britain and the origins of the First World War. (Basingstoke, 2002).

Stevenson, D.; Armaments and the coming of war: Europe, 1904-1914. (Oxford, 1996)

Stone, N.; Moltke-Conrad: Relations between the Austro-Hungarian and German General Staffs 1909-14. Historical Journal IX (1966): 201-28.

Taylor, A. J. P.; The struggle for mastery in Europe, 1848-1918, (Oxford, 1954)

Taylor, A. J. P.; The course of German history : a survey of the development of German history since 1815. (London, 2001).

The American Historical Association. Committee for the Study of War Documents, Ed.; A Catalogue of Files and Microfilms of the German Foreign Ministry Archives 1867-1920. (Oxford, 1959).

Vierhaus, R., Ed.; Das Tagebuch der Baronin von Spitzemberg 1865-1914. (München,1979).

Wehler, H.-U.; Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871 - 1918. (Göttingen, 1994)

Wilson, K. M.; The Invention of Germany The Policy of the Entente. Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy. K. M. Wilson. (Cambridge, 1985).

Winzen, P.; Die Englandpolitik Friedrich von Holsteins 1895-1901. Phil.Diss. (Köln, 1975).

Winzen, P.; Bülows Weltmachtkonzept: Untersuchungen zur Frühphase seiner Aussenpolitik 1897-1901. (Boppard am Rhein, 1977).

Winzen, P.; Der Krieg in Bülows Kalkül: Katastrophe der Diplomatie oder Chance zur Machtexpansion? Bereit zum Krieg. Kriegsmentalität im wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890 - 1914. (Göttingen, 1986).

Winzen, P.; Das Kaiserreich am Abgrund. Die Daily-Telegraph-Affäre und das Hale-Interview von 1908. (Stuttgart, 2002).

Winzen, P.; Reichskanzler Bernhard von Bülow. Mit Weltmachtphantasien in den Ersten Weltkrieg. (Regensburg 2013).