

# Morocco

Enquiry: Did tensions over Africa make a European war more likely?

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Morocco is a country in the North-West of Africa. During the Scramble for Africa, Morocco became a source of tension between Germany, Britain, and France. The French had a significant amount of influence in the North of Africa at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, as they were in control of both Algeria and Tunisia. The French aimed to expand westwards into Morocco. After the British and French settled their differences over Egypt in 1904 with the **Entente Cordiale**, Britain had accepted French influence over Morocco. Following this, France and Spain discussed Morocco and divided it into **spheres of influence**. This meant that both France and Spain would both have some power and influence in different parts of Morocco but neither country would be in total control.



The French-Spanish agreement angered the German leader – Kaiser Wilhelm. He argued that the other European powers were going back on a promise made in 1880 to let Morocco be independent. He believed that the other European powers were excluding Germany from decisions made about North Africa and attempting to make themselves more powerful. Since Germany had entered the race for African colonies in 1881, the other European powers had felt threatened by them and tried to block their influence. In particular, Wilhelm was not happy about the close relationship between Britain and France. As a result of this, in 1905 he decided to take action. Kaiser Wilhelm sailed to Tangiers in March 1905, a city in Morocco. He made a famous speech in favour of Moroccan **independence**. He said that the **Sultan** of Morocco was the ruler of a free and independent Empire. He also said that he wanted Germany to have equal trade opportunities in Morocco to all other European nations, something which he expected to discuss with the Sultan directly. This remark was aimed at the French – he was trying to tell them that he did not recognise their control over Morocco.



The French were furious, and the Kaiser's actions pushed them closer to Britain. Britain condemned the Kaiser's aggressive actions against the French. In 1906 an **international conference** was called in Algeciras in Spain to discuss what to do about Morocco. Thirteen nations attended. At the Algeciras conference, Germany found that the other European powers (except Austria-Hungary) supported the French. The conference guaranteed French influence in Morocco, although it did also state that there should be trading opportunities for other countries. Overall, Wilhelm had not achieved his aims and had felt his views excluded by the other European powers. The Algeciras Conference may have temporarily solved the Moroccan Crisis – but it made tensions between some European Powers worse. Britain and France were now firmly allied against Germany. Britain was happy to support the French against the Germans, because the Kaiser had also spoken out against British tactics in Southern Africa. The British were determined to have allies against them in case the Germans threatened their interests there.



These tensions came to a head again in 1911 when there was a second crisis over Morocco. The Algecirias conference in 1906 had guaranteed equal trade in Morocco for European nations. This meant that although France remained politically dominant in Morocco, Germany had been able to continue to trade with Morocco. In 1911, the French invaded Morocco in order to establish full control. They told Germany that they would give them **compensation** for lost trade. The French had claimed to be supporting the Sultan against a rebellion. But to the Germans it looked like the French were simply seeking an opportunity to claim the country for their own and prevent Germany from benefiting from any trade with Morocco.



In response, Germany sent a warship, the Panther, to the Moroccan port of Agadir. This was seen by the French and British as a huge act of aggression. Another conference was called and once again Britain and France allied themselves against Germany. In 1912, France and Spain established a protectorate over Morocco and Germany was compensated with land in central Africa. Once again in the short-term war had been prevented, but the long-term tension remained. By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, Europe was firmly divided into two sets of **alliances**. The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy were set against the Triple Entente: France, Russia, and Great Britain.



# Glossary

**Entente Cordiale:** Agreement between Britain and France, signed in 1904. It brought their countries closer together.

**Spheres of influence:** An area over which a country has informal influence, but is not formally in control of.

**Independence:** When a country runs itself.

**Sultan:** A leader of a Muslim country, in this case - Morocco.

**International Conference:** A meeting where representatives of many different countries come in order to discuss something that is of interest to all of them.

**Compensation:** Being paid for something you have lost.

**Alliances:** Groupings which work together.





## Comprehension questions:

1. Where is Morocco?
2. What had France and Spain discussed?
3. Why was Kaiser Wilhelm II unhappy about European actions in Morocco?
4. What did he decide to do?
5. What happened at the Algeciras conference?
6. What happened in 1911?
7. How was this resolved?

Challenge: What was the long-term impact of tension over Morocco?

Sentence starter: The long-term impact of tension over Morocco was...

For example...

This meant that...





# Extension Question

Did tensions over Africa make a European war more likely?  
Use the sentence starters and key words below to help you

| Sentence starters: | Key words |
|--------------------|-----------|
|                    |           |

