



# The Royal Visit to Paris and the Presidential Visit to London in 1903 – An Icebreaker of the Public Opinion or a Milestone in the History of the Entente Cordiale?

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## ABSTRACT

The presented article deals with the royal visit of Edward VII to Paris in May 1903 and the presidential visit of Émile Loubet to London in July 1903 and their importance for the Entente Cordiale. The Anglo-French relations were slightly improving since the French unconditional withdrawal from Fashoda in 1898, but there were still signs of persisting animosity. In the early spring 1903, a new factor occurred — the Anglo-German relationship worsened a lot. When the King Edward VII visited Paris in May 1903, he was able to gain the public opinion on his side, and the main result was the shift in the rhetoric of both English and French press towards the entente. His visit therefore contributed to the rapprochement between France and England, which resulted later in 1904 in signing of the Entente Cordiale. What was the main reason for this to happen? Were there other factors too? The aim of this article is to reveal the preconditions for the rapprochement of Paris and London.

## KEYWORDS

Edward VII; Théophile Delcassé; Émile Loubet; Eugène Étienne; Anglo-French rapprochement; Entente Cordiale

One of the important factors leading to the signing of the Entente Cordiale was the change in the public opinion and social climate in Britain and in France. One of many steps that allowed the above-mentioned changes was the royal visit to Paris in May 1903. This visit was just one among many other state visits that Edward VII made during his life, but it stays the most famous and certainly the most discussed one.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article is to reveal the preconditions for the rapprochement of Paris and London. For example, the reasons why King's visit to Paris brought the mutual relations of both countries to another level and other factors that also influenced the Anglo-French rapprochement.

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2 M. GLENCROSS, *The State Visits of Edward VII*, London 2015, p. 87.



Since the Fashoda Crisis, there was a permanent tension in the Anglo-French relations, and although there was a relief when the French accepted the unconditional withdrawal and abandoned their positions on the Upper Nile, the relations were far from being ideal. The incident showed the British that a small and relatively insignificant dispute over territorial claims in Africa could have alarming diplomatic consequences.<sup>3</sup> A year after Fashoda, the Boer War began and the French press initiated another campaign against the British, since the Boer victories from the beginning were celebrated by the French press. Léandre Affair followed in January 1900, the Queen felt personally offended and considered Edmund Monson's withdrawal from Paris.<sup>4</sup> In November, Marseille greeted the Boer president Kruger of the Transvaal, who was then received by the president and the Foreign Minister. Another détente followed then, but even at the beginning of 1903, there were still signs of persisting animosity. Even though all these above-mentioned events and the sharp press campaigns left deep scars, from the general point of view the Anglo-French relations were improving step by step.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, Queen Victoria passed away and her eldest son Edward became the King Edward VII on 22 January 1901. He quickly became involved in the matters of foreign policy, preferring those over domestic affairs. On one hand, the monarch took a deep interest in the foreign affairs, but on the other hand he never made any formal steps to involve himself actively in the diplomatic negotiations. Both Balfour and Lansdowne denied he would make any important suggestions. With Edward VII on the throne and in the aftermath of the Boer War, the Britain now mattered having no diplomatic allies. Apparently, the time had come to change the paradigm of diplomatic perspectives and to end the era of splendid isolation. The British have seen there was a change in the state of Anglo-French relations.<sup>6</sup>

While the relations between London and Paris were slightly improving by the turn of 1902 and 1903, the Anglo-German relations were continually strained, and this was one of the principal causes, which made the later Anglo-French rapprochement possible. The Anglo-German intervention (or precisely a debt collecting expedition) in Venezuela left the relations between London and Berlin seriously damaged. Due to many disagreements that occurred during the military action in South America, the British press initiated a sharp anti-German campaign. Despite the fact that the Venezuela issue was settled in the mid of February 1903, the English hostility<sup>7</sup> towards

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3 Ibidem, p. 96.

4 A Paris newspaper *Le Rire* published a cartoon revealing exposed limbs of Queen Victoria who was hiding Joseph Chamberlain under her skirts. The French minister of Fine Arts decorated the cartoonist, Lucien Léandre with Legion of Honour. Queen was personally offended and English ambassador to Paris Edmund Monson had to leave Paris for Cannes. By March 1900 the affair was over and another détente in the mutual relations followed.

5 C. ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale: A Reappraisal of French Foreign Policy 1898–1905*, London 1968, p. 201.

6 GLENCROSS, p. 96.

7 There were people, notably around King Edward VII and in the City of London, who still favoured the Anglo-German entente. Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris (further only AMAE), Papiers d'agents, Archive Privé (further only PA AP), T. 14, Cambon to Delcassé, London 9 May 1903, ff. 31–32.



Germany in Britain not only persisted, but it was worse than ever before.<sup>8</sup> According to Paul Cambon, French ambassador to London, the English press reflected the actual temper and feelings of the English society. However the question is, whether this was not just a wishful thinking of the French diplomat.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand the British ambassador to Paris Edmund Monson reported on 13 March 1903 that he witnessed growing French sympathies towards England.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the French and the English press, the situation was similar; on both sides there were first hesitant signs of growing mutual sympathies. According to *The Times*: “During the South African war many of the leading journals of Paris re-echoed the calumnies as to the part alleged to have been played by Mr Chamberlain in the events that preceded hostilities which were to be read at that time in almost the entire Continental Press. They originated chiefly in Berlin. [...] Since his arrival in South Africa and yet it would be vain to seek any of the more respectable newspapers a trace of what vituperation without which his very name was but two years ago seldom pronounced on the Continent. This indicates more than a mere change of opinion as regards the Colonial Secretary. It amounts to a significant sign of times, inasmuch as it corresponds with a tendency on the part of many French politicians to return to a more reasonable and just estimate of the old ally of their country”.<sup>11</sup>

According to Christopher Andrew, by the beginning of 1903 “only a minority of French newspapers had openly begun to advocate a rapprochement with England, French public opinion as a whole had come to the conclusion, that France’s differences with England were less basic and less deep-seated than those with Germany. During the early months of 1903 the growing evidence of English antagonism towards Germany did much to persuade Frenchmen that France and England shared a common interest”.<sup>12</sup> The moment when England realized, that the Gaelic cock is not her eternal enemy, and moreover, that France could possibly help to face up the Germans, was indeed a matter of primary importance. The press and the public opinion in Britain were already moving in favour of a diplomatic understanding with France by the beginning of 1903, but there was not yet any discussion of the idea of “an agreement based on an exchange of interests in Egypt and Morocco”.<sup>13</sup>

Besides diplomats, the majority of the supporters of the rapprochement of both countries originated from business, trade and commerce, so from the branches, which did not suffer due to the South African war — therefore it is not surprising that one of the most ardent supporters of the entente was an English businessman Thomas Barclay, who presided over the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, and who made “tremendous efforts to convince his fellow-countrymen that the French would make excellent business partners — and diplomatic partners too”.<sup>14</sup> Barkley’s aim was to

8 ANDREW, p. 205.

9 AMAE, PA AP, T. 14, Cambon to Delcassé, London 9 May 1903, f. 31.

10 The National Archives, London-Kew, (further only TNA), Foreign Office (further only FO) 800/125, Monson to Lansdowne, 13 March 1903, f. 251, *Le Gaulois*, 12 March 1903, p. 1.

11 AMAE, PA AP, T. 14, *The Times*, 16 January 1903, f. 195.

12 ANDREW, p. 205.

13 *Ibidem*, pp. 205–206.

14 P. M. H. BELL, *France and Britain, 1900–1940: Entente and Estrangement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., London — New York 2013, p. 33.

promote trade and he made his best to do so. For instance, in 1900, during the Paris Exhibition, he persuaded about 500 British businessmen to visit Paris. His efforts finally resulted in signing of the Anglo-French Arbitration Treaty in 1903.<sup>15</sup>

What was the main reason of the change of attitude on both sides of the Channel? While the principal condition of the shift of the British opinion can be seen in the experience of the Boer War, the French motivation had different roots. The French had their own traumatic experience from 1898, when their Russian ally turned a deaf ear to them and let the French understand, that Russia will certainly not go to war for such a cause as Fashoda. The French were in diplomatic isolation, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Théophile Delcassé, who had taken over the office in June 1898, just three months before Marchand and Kitchener met in Fashoda, was well aware, that without a previous understanding with London, the French cannot pursue any ambitious imperial policy.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand the Great Britain suffered a very traumatic experience in South Africa and the isolation in which British found themselves because of the Boer War led the authorities in London to understand that an ambitious imperial policy could not be pursued without finding a partner among the Powers. Even Paul Cambon confirmed this right after the conclusion of the Entente, when he stated: “*Without the South African War which bled Great Britain and made her wiser, the Anglo-French agreement would have been impossible*”.<sup>17</sup> But the Boer War lesson was only one side of the coin; the other one was the growing tension of Berlin and London. While the Anglo-German relations worsened, the Anglo-French relations could slowly improve. When all patient negotiations between Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Germany regarding the Baghdad Railway issue collapsed, the Anglo-French rapprochement could finally appear as a good-looking and even a desirable alternative.<sup>18</sup>

In this context it should be looked at the activities of another ardent supporter of the cause of the Anglo-French understanding, Pierre Paul Cambon, who had decided to put the things in motion and to act on his own.<sup>19</sup> He therefore called on Morton Fullerton, *The Times* correspondent. On 2 February 1903 the journal published a report, that since the end of the last summer France and the Great Britain have

15 BELL, p. 33; T. BARCLAY, *Thirty Years of Anglo-French Reminiscences*, London 1914, pp. 182–183; ANDREW, p. 202.

16 M. HENNLICHOVÁ, *Entente Cordiale. The Development of the British-French Relations on the Way to the Entente Cordiale, 1898–1904*, PhD Thesis, Prague 2018, pp. 10, 195.

17 ANDREW, p. 203.

18 T. G. OTTE, *The Elusive Balance: British Foreign Policy and the French Entente Before the First World War*, in: A. SHARP — G. A. STONE (Eds.), *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Cooperation*, London 2002, p. 15.

19 Cambon was well known for this among the English diplomats — Edmund Monson complained repeatedly, that Cambon was acting on his own without instructions from Quai d’Orsay. M. B. HAYNE, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War 1898–1914*, Oxford 1993, p. 81, TNA, FO 800/125, Monson to Lansdowne, Paris 31 December 1902, f. 214, University of Oxford, Bodleian Libraries (Weston Library), Monson Papers (further only MP), MSS Eng. hist. c. 595, Lansdowne to Monson, Foreign Office 2 January 1902, ff. 50–52.



been discussing the question of Morocco and have been considering what is nowadays known as the barter of Egypt for Morocco. Morton Fullerton informed, that the British, who were occupied with the war in South Africa and with the Anglo-German intervention in Venezuela, decided to postpone the negotiations for the time when both South African war and the South American issue were settled. Since the report looked like being a leak from *Quai d'Orsay*, it created a stir in Britain.<sup>20</sup> The report gained the attention of Lord Cromer, and that was crucial, since he became one of the main supporters of the entente among the British politicians. His motivations were various — the aim to reform Egyptian finances, the aim to reach an understanding with Russia through the French bridge etc.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Edmund Monson, British ambassador to Paris, believed that the character of the report released by *The Times* on the account of Anglo-French negotiations is false, and he was blaming *Quai d'Orsay* for playing a game.<sup>22</sup>

Later in spring 1903 Cambon wrote to Delcassé: *"I am not making any secret from the fact that we are profiting from the irritation caused by the Venezuelan incident. The English public opinion is having a very severe grudge against Germany and I do not think that the situation should be any better in the nearest future [...]"*.<sup>23</sup> The Germans were quite aware that their disagreements with Britain will have other effects, such as *"the Anglo-French rapprochement"*, which was according to the German ambassador in London *"the product of a common aversion to Germany. [...] Without the estrangement of England and Germany a mood of Anglophilia would have been impossible in France"*.<sup>24</sup>

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20 However odd this may look, the efforts to influence the public opinion throughout the press was very typical for the French. While in the Great Britain there has always been a distance between the Foreign Office and press, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was usually neither trying to establish any connexions with the representatives of the journals, nor influencing the public opinion through the press, in France the situation was different. The influence of the French press was furthermore strengthened by a mere fact, that more than half of the French Foreign Ministers of the époque of the Third Republic were originally journalists or novelists. Being a journalist in France was a usual stepping-stone towards a later political career. The Foreign Ministers inclined to confine their opinions rather to their former colleagues of the press than to their colleagues from the Government. Théophile Delcassé was a very special case, he was *"too conscious of the power of the press to neglect to use it when he became foreign minister. Each evening he dictated to Robert de Billy, head of his press office, items to appear in the following day's press, taking special care to vary his style according to the newspaper concerned. Le Temps and the Journal des Débats both consistently supported official French foreign policy and took regular inspiration from the Quai d'Orsay. So too did the Figaro until Delcassé quarrelled with its editor in 1903. Delcassé was in particularly close touch with Eugène Lautier, the editor of Le Temps. Even more important than Delcassé's influence of the semi-official press were his links with Le Matin and La Dépêche de Toulouse, which lacked the official tone and he therefore preferred to use it for his ballons d'essai."* For more details see HAYNE, pp. 43, 48; ANDREW, p. 67.

21 TNA, FO 800/124, Cromer to Lansdowne, Cairo 21 February 1903, f. 17, TNA, FO 633/6, Cromer to Balfour, 15 October 1903, No. 2, p. 350.

22 TNA, FO 800/125, Monson to Lansdowne, Paris 6 February 1903, f. 237.

23 Documents Diplomatiques Français (further only DDF), Série II, T. III, Cambon to Delcassé, London 23 April 1903, No. 192, p. 259.

24 ANDREW, p. 205.



The French ambassador notified French Minister of Foreign affairs about the opinions presented by one of the British journals, *Statist*, according to which: “Everybody feels the necessity to leave the isolation in which the England was held by the other European Powers due to the South African war and the expressions of cordiality between England and France, in particular, seemed to be the right means to achieve it. There is also a group [of politicians in the Great Britain — M. H.] that wishes to improve the relations between England and Russia, and they believe, that France could help them to do so.” According to another important journal, *The Spectator*, France was never really unpopular in Britain, and therefore it was quite natural, that both powers started to get closer. On the other hand, *The Times* warned, that the planned royal visit to Paris will be nothing else but mere act of cordiality, and no real commitments will follow. Therefore, the visit of Edward VII to Paris was to be a mere manifestation of good relations between France and Great Britain. The other journals conclusions were that the royal visit was just a sentimental display and that the splendid isolation is certainly not a thing of the past.<sup>25</sup>

By 1903, the Anglo-French negotiations for an understanding, which had started in the previous year, were in a complete deadlock. According to American historian Matthew Glencross, the British had soon “came to the conclusion that talks would have to be abandoned, and this conclusion framed the decision of Edward VII to undertake a state visit to France. [...] Edward realised that a major diplomatic gesture was needed if the negotiations were to continue, and he probably felt that as a head of state it was his responsibility to make this step.”<sup>26</sup>

Since March 1903, both English ambassador to Paris Edmund Monson and French ambassador to London Paul Cambon had the information about the planned royal cruise to the Mediterranean in April 1903, during which Edward VII was supposed to visit Paris as well, where he had a scheduled meeting with the French president Loubet.<sup>27</sup> On 14 March 1903 Cambon informed Delcassé about an impending state visit of Edward VII to France. “Though the press had for some time been advocating better relations between France and England, it was the success of Edward’s visit which encouraged us to think in practical terms of ways to resolve outstanding differences between the two countries”, concluded English historian and Delcassé’s biographer Christopher Andrew. What was the visit about and what happened during the King’s stay in Paris that such a conclusion could be made?

The idea of a state visit came from the King, who planned a Mediterranean cruise on board of his royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* to improve his health. Edward VII had already visited France several times before, as a prince of Wales, and he enjoyed a considerable popularity in Paris, and he had acquired many friends during his numerous visits.<sup>28</sup>

25 DDF II, T. III, Cambon to Delcassé, London 23 April 1903, No. 192, pp. 259–260; AMAE, PA AP 211, Cambon to Delcassé, London 9 May 1903, f. 31.

26 GLENCROSS, p. 99.

27 Loubet had to cut his visit to Algiers to return back to Paris early enough to meet Edward VII MP, Ms. Eng. his. c. 595, Lansdowne to Monson, Foreign Office 11 March 1903, ff. 75–76; AMAE, PA AP 211, T. 14, Cambon to Delcassé, London 25 March 1903, f. 23.

28 TNA, FO 800/125, Monson to Lansdowne, Paris 13 March 1903, ff. 257–258. T. W. L., NEWTON, *Lord Lansdowne. A Biography*, London 1929, p. 275; J. J. MATHEWS, *Egypt and the Formation of the Anglo-French Entente of 1904*, London 1939, p. 53.



According to the French ambassador in Russia Maurice Bompard: *“Never has England had a King, who had a better understanding of the French nor had so deep a sympathy with them. Being sure of his ground he did not hesitate to announce his official visit to Paris. It was on his part a bold, not to say reckless decision, for twenty years of disagreement between the two countries could not have failed to impress upon the French at that time a turn of mind that was not exactly favourable to England.”*<sup>29</sup>

Edward VII and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, lord Lansdowne, had a very complicated relationship at least since August 1902. It was for this reason that the English sovereign had planned his journey to Paris without the involvement of lord Lansdowne. According to the Assistant Private Secretary of the King, Frederick Ponsonby, the King had the whole arrangement in his hands and *“most of the arrangements were kept dead secret and most of his suite had no idea where they were going”*.<sup>30</sup>

The King not only had not notified his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs about the fact that during his cruise in the Mediterranean he planned to make a stop in Paris, but despite the customs, he had completely excluded the minister from the participation on the journey. Instead, he took Charles Harding, who was a *“rising man in diplomacy”*.<sup>31</sup> According to historian Ian Dunlop, this was *“almost irresistible combination. The King would pave the way by creating a favourable impression and Hardinge would follow up with conversations on detailed points”*.<sup>32</sup> When Lansdowne found out that something was going on in early March 1903, he informed Paul Cambon about the plans of the English monarch, because the King’s journey could serve the Anglo-French rapprochement very well. Despite the fact Paul Cambon had nothing to do with the idea, the Spanish ambassador in Paris believed, that Cambon himself was the architect of the plan of the royal visit to Paris. The Parisian stay was preceded by the cruise of the royal yacht through the Mediterranean, and Edward VII visited Lisbon, where he paid a return visit to the king Don Carlos, then he made a stop at Gibraltar, Malta, Naples and Rome. From the Italian metropole the English King continued by train, and on 1 May 1901 he reached Dijon in the heart of French Burgundy. In Dijon the King was awaited and welcomed by the English ambassador to Paris Edmund Monson, who then accompanied the sovereign to the French capital.<sup>33</sup>

When the royal guest arrived to Paris, the impressions from his reception and welcome on the very first day were contradictory, but later on during his stay in Paris the King was cheered and greeted by the Parisian crowds.<sup>34</sup> Right after his arrival to Paris

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29 Quoted in I. DUNLOP, *Edward VII and the Entente Cordiale*, London 2004, p. 195.

30 Quoted in GLENCROSS, p. 100.

31 DUNLOP, p. 196.

32 Ibidem.

33 C. GEOFFROY, *Les Coulisses de l’Entente Cordiale*, Paris 2004, p. 229; TNA, FO 800/126. Private Offices: Various Ministers’ and Officials’ Papers. Lansdowne, Marquess of. France. Monson to Lansdowne, Paris 13 June 1903, f. 13.

34 On the arrival to Dijon, there were shout of joy as well as shout of disfavour, as *“Vivent les Boers!”*, *“Vive la Russie!”*, *“Vive Marchand!”*, *“Vive Fashoda!”* or *“Vive Jeanne d’Arc!”*, but on the last day of the King’s stay in Paris it was evident that the French public is on his side. English diplomat in Paris Hugh O’Beirne observed that one violent Anglophobe had said: *“I can’t think what has come over the population of Paris. The first day they behaved well, the second day they merely displayed interest (that isn’t at all true); but the third day c’était attristant,*



King visited President and his wife, Madame Loubet, and a visit of British Chamber of Commerce followed then. In the evening he dined at the British Embassy and attended a performance at the *Théâtre Français*, where he was received rather coldly, but due to his personal charm he was able to win the hearts of the Frenchmen. After seeing the play, King walked up to the famous and popular actress Jean Granier and said in French: “*Mademoiselle, I remember applauding you in London where you represented all the grace and spirit of France*”.<sup>35</sup> This story became publicly known quite quickly, and the other day, on 2 May 1903, when the King attended a military parade in Versailles, he was enthusiastically greeted by the crowd. Edward then continued with making more spontaneous speeches in French at various occasions without mentioning politics. He focused on the shared Anglo-French cultural heritage and did not omit to mention his personal affection for the French people. As a result, on 4 May 1903, the last day of his visit, as he drove to the railroad station, the crowds shouted “*Vive notre roi!*”.<sup>36</sup> When the British sovereign was leaving, no one could deny that he had gained the sympathies of the majority of Frenchmen.

But not everybody shared the enthusiasm about the royal visit. *L'Écho de Paris* has written on 4 May 1903: “*The cordialities exchanged between Edward VII and Loubet does not change anything about the diplomatic relations of France and Great Britain. [...] The royal visit is nothing but mere expression of cordiality*”, while *La Patrie*, a right-wing journal, presented on the very same day an article concluding that between France and Great Britain “*could hardly exist anything more but mutual antipathy*” and finished with a declaration “*Vivent les Boers!*”.<sup>37</sup>

During the state visit to Paris, Edward had proven his real talent for diplomacy. He was not involved in making the documents and policy developments, he rather focused on winning over the foreign people’s hearts while expressing the appreciation of their culture, food, landscapes and personalities. He knew he had charm and he used it during the royal visits.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that the King had visited Paris and that he was received so enthusiastically caused much displeasure in Berlin in particular. The French chargé d’affaires Prinet had informed Delcassé about substantial concern caused by the royal visit to Paris. The German press had informed about the event with much acidity and sarcasm, and it was clear that the main reason for German anxiety was that an alliance could possibly be set up between Paris, London and St. Petersburg. Berlin was worried that if such an alliance would occur, it could be directed against Germany.<sup>39</sup> Another reason of Germany’s discontent about the King’s visit to Paris was the fact that Edward was Kaiser’s uncle and he hasn’t paid any official visit to Berlin since the time of his

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*ils ont acclamé le Roi. This is testimony from a very hostile witness.*” TNA, FO 800/126, Hugh James O’Beirne to Mallet, Paris 20 May 1903, ff. 5–6.

35 P. J. V. ROLO, *Entente Cordiale: The Origins and the Negotiations of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904*, London 1969, p. 165.

36 K. EUBANK, *Paul Cambon: Master Diplomatist*, Westport 1978, p. 81; GLENCROSS, pp. 104–105.

37 *L'Écho de Paris*, le 4 mai 1903, p. 1; *La Patrie*, 4 May 1903, p. 1.

38 GLENCROSS, p. 105.

39 DDF II, T. III, Prinet to Delcassé, Berlin 26 April 1903, No. 201, p. 277.





coronation. According to Prinnet this was one of the reasons, why Berlin disliked the idea of Edward's state visit to Paris. German ambassador to London Count Metternich wrote to the Chancellor Bülow later in June 1903 that "*The Anglo-French rapprochement is a product of the general dislike of Germany. [...] Without the Anglo-German estrangement an Anglophile feeling would not have been possible in France and [...] without the feeling against Germany the British Press would not have been working for months in favour of a reconciliation with France*".<sup>40</sup>

The royal visit to Paris got a lot of attention and had an excellent effect on French public opinion. The King was able to plant a seed of Anglophilia in France, since his visit shifted the republic closer to Britain and helped to change the social climate in France, which has finally left behind the idea of Britain as "*Perfide Albion*" and "*Eternal Enemy*".<sup>41</sup> In France particularly the visit was perceived not only as a demonstration of cordiality, but as an event of crucial importance, since the majority of French politicians believed, that the English foreign policy was exclusively in hands of three men — King Edward VII, Minister of Colonies Joseph Chamberlain and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, lord Lansdowne. Camille Barrère, the French ambassador to Rome and close friend of Paul Cambon and Théophile Delcassé even believed that the English foreign policy was guided solely by the King. Later on, the majority of Frenchmen believed, that the King personally was the conceiver of the idea of the Entente Cordiale, though this believe was incorrect, as well as the conviction of the French politicians, including Camille Barrère, about the men who were supposed to be the leaders of the English foreign policy.<sup>42</sup>

Equally, we should refuse the idea presented in some of the older monographies, that the King Edward VII played a crucial role in the political level of rapprochement of the Great Britain and France. For example, a French historian André Tardieu thought that the King himself was the originator of the Anglo-French rapprochement and the American historian Muriel Chambers believed that the King was the most important political player in the making of the Entente Cordiale. In fact, as illustrated above, the main contribution of Edward VII to the entente was, that he was able to successfully pave the way for it. It was the King's merit, that the public in both countries accepted the result of the subsequent negotiations of Paul Cambon, lord Lansdowne and Théophile Delcassé with sympathies. We can definitely agree with the statement of Matthew Glencross, who sees the King's visit to France as a catalyst and "*possibly even a new chemical, in the reaction between the two countries*".<sup>43</sup> Therefore the statement of another American historian, Philip Michael Hett Bell, that the King was "*the right men in the right place*", and that he was the real master of manipulation with the public opinion, seems fitting.<sup>44</sup>

We do not know much of Edward's talks with Loubet and Delcassé during his stay in Paris, but "*it seems clear that the King considerably exceeded the role of a constitutional*

40 MATHEWS, pp. 49–50.

41 M. P. CHAMBERS, *Origins of the Entente Cordiale*, PhD Thesis, Boston 1928, p. 89; A. TARDIEU, *France and the Alliances*, New York 1908, p. 60.

42 ANDREW, p. 195.

43 GLENCROSS, p. 88.

44 BELL, p. 34.

monarch. In a discussion with Loubet, Edward expressed complete agreement with the detailed views advanced by the President on the role which presented itself for France in Morocco. In his conversations with Delcassé the King warned him not to trust the Kaiser, whom he called at the same time mad and malicious. A few days after Edward left Paris his intimate friend, Soveral, called on Delcassé and reaffirmed both the King's desire for a rapprochement with France and Russia and his dislike of German policy [...].<sup>45</sup>

The visit and the news of Edward's success overseas also helped to increase his own popularity in Britain. Furthermore, Edward was proud of his own success and thus the visit and its effect helped to the growth of King's own confidence in his diplomatic abilities which later on caused his ministers many troubles.<sup>46</sup> The King contributed to the warming of mutual relations, because he demonstrated that "if people could put aside the old feeling of animosity, they, too, could realise many things that they had always liked about France and French as well". His stance had also helped the French to think in similar ways about the British and their culture.<sup>47</sup>

The visit had caused a crucial change in the public opinion on both sides of the Channel. The attitude of both English and French press was one of the chief contributing factors to the rapprochement of London and Paris.<sup>48</sup> It must be admitted, that the majority of British journalist were motivated by the hostility towards Germany in suggesting the approaching to the French. According to Paul Cambon, who carefully studied the British press, "the English people were approaching France at the same rate that they were drawing away from Germany".<sup>49</sup> Cambon equally notified Delcassé that *The Times* usually represent the official rhetoric and the public opinion, and according to Mathews *The Times* were, as far as it concerns the foreign affairs, indisputably the leading English daily. Together with *Daily Mail*, *Spectator* and *National Review* these were the most Germanophobe journals in Great Britain. German ambassador at London Count von Metternich felt that "*The Times* was chiefly responsible for the hatred between Germany and England" and he indicated that "those especially responsible [were] the Berlin and Vienna correspondents", and the successor of the Paris correspondent M. de Blowitz, M. Lavino, was equally working to foster better Anglo-French relations.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand the liberal papers, were almost all without exception more friendly towards France than to Germany.

Thus, the main result of the royal visit to Paris was the shift in the rhetoric of the British press, which openly started to support the idea of Anglo-French entente. Regarding the French press, there were journals which remained quite hostile to England even after the King's visit to Paris, as for instance *L'Autorité*, *La Patrie* or *L'Intransigeant*. *La Patrie* was a journal of Ligue des Patriotes, nationalist league founded in

45 ANDREW, p. 209.

46 GLENCROSS, p. 106.

47 Ibidem.

48 MATHEWS, p. 49.

49 DDF II, T. III, Cambon to Delcassé, London 13 March 1903, No. 137, pp. 184–185.

50 MATHEWS, p. 50; J. LEPSIUS — A. MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY, — F. THIMME (Eds.), *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (further only GP), Bd. 17, Berlin 1924. Count von Metternich to Chancellor von Bülow, London 15 June 1903, Nr. 5083, pp. 210–211.



1882 by Paul Déroulède, who devoted his life to revanche and revision. Therefore, his articles published by *La Patrie* were favouring the entente, while to the contrary the articles by its editor Lucien Milevoye, were directed against Great Britain.<sup>51</sup> The only one exception among the French journals was *Le Siècle*, which consistently supported the idea of Anglo-French rapprochement. *Le Temps*, *Le Journal des Débats* and *Le Figaro* were the moderate ones, and they advocated the idea of Anglo-French entente too.<sup>52</sup>

Even before the King's visit to Paris, the preparations were begun for the state visit of president Loubet to London. At the end of May 1903, it was publicly announced that such a visit will take place. It was Loubet's initiative to return the visit to the King, who at the beginning was not very happy about the proposal and wanted to avoid the meeting. Luckily for the Entente, the King had finally reconsidered the question and had changed his mind. Finally, he was even urging Edmund Monson to prepare everything so the visit could be done during the present summer, because "if the visit was to be delayed the effect might be less good [sic]".<sup>53</sup> The King as well insisted that Loubet will visit the Windsor Castle and he will see "the most intimate chambers of the King", which was an important personal gesture of friendship.

The British politicians had no illusions about the significance of the royal and presidential visits. Thomas Sanderson wrote to Edmund Monson: "These things are always much more difficult and tiresome than the most complicated diplomatic or political questions — mainly because they are almost entirely matters of sentiment and have not au fond any other importance or standard by which they can be estimated".<sup>54</sup> According to Monson, "the visit had been a success more complete than the most sanguine optimist could have foreseen".<sup>55</sup>

The question remains, whether the King's support to the French aspirations in Morocco, which he openly expressed during his stay in Paris, was the key factor which made the French Foreign Minister Delcassé think, that the British desire the entente. It was under this impression that Delcassé accompanied the French president Loubet to London in July 1903 and opened the negotiations for the entente with the English Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, lord Lansdowne.

Regarding the influence of the President on the French foreign policy, it was limited and rather sporadic. Émile Loubet appeared to be less willing to exercise presidential prerogative in matters of foreign policy, "he allowed Delcassé to follow an independent course of policy and even to compose a number of his speeches", something that his predecessor Félix Faure would have hardly accepted. According to Paul Cambon the Loubet's presidency was "hardly more than a mere decoration which is of no real use".<sup>56</sup> Very similar statement could be made about the role of the Prime minister on the French foreign policy. According to Hayne, "it was a common occurrence for the Foreign Ministry to keep the Prime minister in the dark. It is unlikely that some French premiers,

51 MATHEWS, p. 51 ; For more details about Déroulède see B. JOLY, *Paul Déroulède, l'inventeur du nationalisme français*, Paris 1998.

52 MATHEWS, p. 51.

53 MP, MSS Eng. hist. c. 595, Lansdowne to Monson, Foreign Office 19 May 1903, ff. 81–82.

54 Ibid, Sanderson to Monson, Foreign Office 19 June 1903, ff. 105–106.

55 ANDREW, p. 208.

56 Quoted in HAYNE, p. 30.

even if they had been more fully informed, would have involved themselves more actively in the making of the foreign policy".<sup>57</sup> The cabinet was even less informed about the French foreign policy, since the "cabinets were the product of coalitions, and their members were much concerned with the surveillance of their colleagues and with putting a break on governmental action".<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the individuals often became the ministers because of their technical competences and expertise, but they sometimes were not really in sympathy with the government's aims. According to Hayne, "the breakdown of a cabinet, far from being viewed as the possible termination of an individual's ministerial career, was regarded instead as a stepping-stone to higher office".<sup>59</sup> The conduct of foreign policy and the international relations were therefore regarded as a delicate business, which could be easily abused for the internal domestic political aims. It was for this reason that the conduct of Foreign policy was entirely in the competence of Quai d'Orsay. Between 1898 and 1905 the French foreign policy was completely conducted by Théophile Delcassé, and for the above mentioned reasons the French cabinet did not have much information about the negotiations leading to the signature of the Entente Cordiale.<sup>60</sup>

However, the presidential return visit to the King took place at the beginning of July 1903. Émile Loubet arrived in London on 6 July and stayed for 3 days, accompanied by Théophile Delcassé. Even before their arrival to London, Delcassé had come to a conviction, that the entente with Great Britain on the affairs of Egypt and Morocco is not only desirable, but an urgent matter, since he was afraid of a new German rivalry in Morocco. It seems that Delcassé was worried that Germany may finally intervene in Morocco. Although the Germans were declaring at the very beginning of 1903, that they do not have any interests in Morocco, in February 1903 a Moroccan Association was founded in Berlin with Pan-German and colonial support. Its main goal was to support the German government in seizing a foothold in Morocco. By the end of 1903 Morocco became the goal and the main preoccupation of the Pan-German League (*All-deutscher Verband*).<sup>61</sup> "Like most French colonialists, Delcassé believed that the Pan-German designs on Morocco reflected, or at least anticipated, the official policy of German government", and therefore when he arrived to London at the beginning of July 1903, his ultimate aim was to open the negotiations leading towards the entente with England.<sup>62</sup>

A few days prior to Delcassé and Loubet's arrival to London another important player of French colonial lobby decided to take over the activity in the English capital too. Eugène Étienne, one of the most powerful deputies, the leader of an important pressure group, Colonial Party in the French Parliament<sup>63</sup> and one of the founding

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57 Ibidem, p. 32.

58 Ibidem, p. 33.

59 Ibidem.

60 Ibidem, p. 34; For more details about the factors influencing the French foreign policy see B. A. LEAMAN, *The Influence of Domestic Policy on Foreign Affairs in France, 1898-1905*, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 14, 1942, No. 4, pp. 449-479.

61 ANDREW, p. 210.

62 Ibidem.

63 Colonial Party had its special parliamentary section called *Groupe Colonial de la Chambre*, and its membership amounted to almost 200 deputies in 1902, which was equal to one



members of *Comité de l'Afrique Française*, arrived in London and asked for an audience at the Foreign Office, where he was accepted on 2 July 1903 by Lord Lansdowne. On the very same day he was received in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister Lord Balfour, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and other members of the Parliament.

During the meeting with Lansdowne, Étienne aimed to persuade the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs about the necessity and desirability of Anglo-French entente and agreement over the affairs of Morocco and Egypt. Étienne insisted that France has a preponderant position in Algiers and therefore she should have an exclusivity in Morocco too. Lansdowne reported that: "I told M. Étienne that we had never failed to recognise the special interests which France, as the owner of Algeria, had in that part of Morocco which adjoined her possessions."<sup>64</sup> At the end of their meeting, Étienne concluded that: "The most serious menace to the peace of Europe lay in Germany, [and] that a good understanding between France and England was the only means of holding German designs in check, and if such an understanding could be arrived at, England would find that France would be able to exercise a salutary influence over Russia and thereby relieve us [Great Britain] from many of our troubles with that country."<sup>65</sup>

Lansdowne invited him for a private meeting during a private dinner, which took place later on 8 July 1903.<sup>66</sup> Étienne's own account on both meetings of 2 July 1903 states: "While I have been in London [...] I had added a little piece to the construction and today it stands in front of you. I have spoken to English politicians, I have discussed step by step with many members of the Cabinet, as well as with Mr Balfour and with Mr. Chamberlain, with Lord Lansdowne too, I have told them in my own name that my only interest is the entente of the two countries."<sup>67</sup>

According to an American historian Joseph J. Mathews, Étienne's journey to London had only one goal — to find out whether the Englishmen are ready for opening of the negotiations about the entente, so he could inform Delcassé in time. This looks logical but neither in the archival sources nor in the edited documents is there any support to this claim. On the contrary, it looks that Delcassé did not know about Étienne's journey to London, or at least that the journey was not his initiative, because it was Paul Cambon, French ambassador to London, who on 2 July informed Delcassé about the fact, that Étienne was in London. It was Cambon again, who notified Delcassé about Étienne's planned audition in the House of Commons and at the

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third of the Chamber. It was a powerful pressure group, which contributed a lot to the Entente Cordiale, but was not responsible for its achievement. HAYNE, p. 55; For more details see C. ANDREW — A. S. KANYA-FORSTNER, *The French 'Colonial Party'. Its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914*, in: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 14, March 1971, No. 1, pp. 99-128.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, FO 633/17, Lansdowne to Monson, 2 July 1903, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> For more details see viz TNA, FO 633/17. Records of Private Office and Private Papers. Cromer Papers. Papers Relating to the Anglo-French Agreement of 8 April 1904. Lansdowne to Monson, Foreign Office 2 July 1903, p. 1; AMAE, NS, Grande Bretagne, T. 13; Cambon to Delcassé, London 2 July 1903, f. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in: H. SIEBERG, *Eugène Étienne und die Französische Kolonialpolitik (1887-1904)*, Opladen 1968, pp. 131-132.

Foreign Office. Étienne tried to call on Paul Cambon at the French Embassy in London on 1 July 1903, but he was not successful, and on the next day, he had the meeting with Lansdowne, so Cambon could not meet him again.<sup>68</sup>

We already know that by January 1904 Delcassé had not discussed and had not consulted any of his political steps with any other member of the French government. The only man who was well informed was his friend Paul Cambon. On the other hand, there is no doubt, that Étienne was a very important figure in the French colonial lobby, and that his influence over Delcassé and on French colonial policy in general was extraordinary. Even Delcassé's private secretary, Albéric Neton, noted down in the spring 1903, that "Étienne has in his hands the fate of the cabinet. His group has the power which is indispensable for any cabinet to survive".<sup>69</sup> According to Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, "The strength of Étienne's parliamentary position gave him a decisive voice in the formulation of foreign policy", and therefore it is reasonable to suppose, that Étienne's influence was at least partly reflected in Delcassé's decision to seek an agreement with England over the questions of Egypt and Morocco.<sup>70</sup>

Christopher Andrew offers another explanation of Étienne's journey to London, according to him, Étienne and Delcassé resumed regular meetings throughout 1902 and 1903, and they discussed the situation in Morocco, although their relations were rather cool. Étienne "considered that the time had come to make public the solution to the Moroccan question which he had been privately urging to Delcassé. In May, *La Dépêche Coloniale*, now generally recognised as Étienne's mouthpiece, carried two articles which caused a considerable stir in both France and England, advocating a settlement of all outstanding differences between the two countries based on an exchange of interest in Egypt and Morocco. Étienne followed this by an article of his own in the *English National Review* proposing a similar agreement, and was persuaded by its editor to visit England early in July to discuss his ideas with Lansdowne, Chamberlain, Balfour, and other English politicians."<sup>71</sup>

And what was Étienne's aim during the negotiations? The colonial group wanted to push through the diplomatic solution that Colonial Party agreed on — the exchange of Egypt for Morocco.<sup>72</sup> As Étienne had previously emphasized on several occasions, he believed that France was entitled to claim the position of preponderant power in Maghrib, including Morocco.<sup>73</sup>

68 MATHEWS, p. 68; AMAE, NS, Grande Bretagne, T. 14, Cambon à Delcassé, Cambon to Delcassé, London 2 July 1903, f. 4; P. CAMBON, *Correspondance 1870-1924* (furthermore only CC), 1898-1911, Tome II, Paris 1940, Cambon to Delcassé, London 2 July 1903, p. 96.

69 According to Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, Étienne's influence on Delcassé reached its peak during the Combs ministry, from May 1902 to January 1905. ANDREW — KANYA-FORSTNER, p. 114; For more details about Étienne and his influence on the French colonial policy see H. SIEBERG, *Eugène Étienne und die Französische Kolonialpolitik (1887-1904)*, Opladen 1968.

70 ANDREW — KANYA-FORSTNER, p. 115.

71 See ANDREW, pp. 199; 212; Étienne's article from the *National Review* was equally published in French in *La Dépêche Coloniale*. AMAE, NS, Grande Bretagne, T. 14, *La Dépêche Coloniale*, 1 July 1903, ff. 1-2.

72 ANDREW — KANYA-FORSTNER, p. 114.

73 SIEBERG, pp. 127-128.





After his arrival back to Paris Étienne exerted pressure on both Delcassé and Loubet to continue the negotiations he had previously informally initiated in London, and he lobbied at the benefit of Anglo-French entente. This is probably the reason why *The Times* paid a special attention to Étienne in July 1903: “M. Étienne is one of the most prominent personalities in French politics, and has perhaps greater authority in colonial questions than any living Frenchman.” Another article, published in *The Times* on the day of Étienne’s meeting with Lansdowne, described Étienne as follows: “M. Étienne speaks on colonial matters in France with an authority which can only be compared to that of Mr. Chamberlain in England, and his views on such subjects are generally endorsed by all parties in the country.”<sup>74</sup>

On 2 July 1903 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs wrote to the English Ambassador to Paris Monson: “M. Étienne called upon me at the Foreign Office today, and spoke to me at some length and with a great freedom in regard to the political relations of France and Great Britain. He told me that he was paying a short visit to this country in the hopes of promoting a good understanding between the two Governments. [...] I thought it inadvisable to express during the above conversation any definite ideas of my own as to the manner in which the different questions upon which M. Étienne had touched might be treated. I told him, however, that nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to promote a reasonable “give and take” arrangement between the two Governments, and that if the French Government would put their cards upon the table and say what they wished to obtain, and what they were prepared to concede with that object, we should be ready to meet them in a similar spirit.”<sup>75</sup>

According to the available documents this was probably the first mention of the fact that the Government of Great Britain was ready to open the negotiations which would finally lead to a settlement of the questions of dispute between France and Great Britain.<sup>76</sup> The French delegation arrived to Dover in the afternoon of 6 July 1903, where it was warmly welcomed.<sup>77</sup> An official dinner at the French Embassy in London followed that evening. Étienne was invited as well, and he was seated between the president Loubet’s personal secretary Abel Combarieu, and Paul Cambon.<sup>78</sup> There is no doubt that Étienne had informed Delcassé about the course of his meeting with Lansdowne before the official beginning of the dinner, so Delcassé could then confidently open the negotiations with the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with the knowledge that the other side is ready to negotiate about the entente. Paul Cambon wanted to use the opportunity and insisted that Delcassé was seated between Joseph Chamberlain and lord Lansdowne, although it was against the protocol which “had to be sacrificed for the purposes of the politics”.<sup>79</sup>

In a letter to Delcassé Cambon characterized Joseph Chamberlain as “the incarnation of pride” and suggested that “He is the English Government at the moment and I believe that thanks to his disgust of the Germans he wishes to turn to our side. [...] About

74 *The Times*, 21 April 1903, p. 10; *The Times*, 2 July 1903, p. 5.

75 TNA, FO 633/17, Lansdowne to Monson, 2 July 1903, p. 2.

76 MATHEWS, p. 68.

77 AMAE, PA AP 211, T. 14, Cambon to Delcassé, London 31 July 1903, f. 33.

78 AMAE, NS, Grande Bretagne, T. 14, Delcassé to Cambon, Paris 3 July 1903, f. 13

79 CC, Cambon to Delcassé, London 1 July 1903, p. 95.

*the necessity of an alliance between England and Germany he was persuaded after mere quarter of an hour of the conversation with the Kaiser, who showered him with compliments. I believe that you will be able to use the conversation with him more successfully than the German Kaiser.”*<sup>80</sup>

In the above mentioned context we must see the Delcassé’s statement during his meeting with lord Lansdowne on 7 July 1903, that he “*was entirely in favour of a comprehensive settlement, and that the Egyptian question formed part of the larger African question which could, he felt sure, be disposed of satisfactorily if only we could come to an agreement as to the position of France in Morocco*”.<sup>81</sup> The bargaining could thus begin. At the beginning of July 1903, Delcassé and Lansdowne had started a series of discussions, which eventually, after nine long months, led to the signature of series of treaties, which are known as the Entente Cordiale. Since the above-mentioned meeting of 7 July 1903, we can start talking about the real origins of the Entente Cordiale.

## CONCLUSION

As it was illustrated, the royal visit to Paris in early May 1903 had very important consequences. The role of Edward VII, who had already been very popular in France as Prince of Wales, was to do what he could do best — influence the public opinion in France and persuade the Frenchmen that the time had come to initiate a rapprochement. Without the King’s visit to Paris, the entente would still be possible, but it would probably take more time than just a couple of months for both England and France to arrive to and, in particular, for their public opinions to accept such an arrangement as was the Entente Cordiale. On the other hand, the presidential return visit to London, and most importantly the presence of French minister of foreign affairs Delcassé, was the real commencement of the bargaining between London and Paris. Even though the negotiations were protracted by many questions at issue, the core, the exchange of Morocco and Egypt, was successfully concluded mainly because the public opinion in both countries was ready to accept such an important deal. Without the royal visit to Paris, this would hardly be possible in April 1904.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>81</sup> ANDREW, p. 211.