

*The Cornell International Affairs Society  
Proudly Presents...*



**The Cornell International Affairs Conference XIV**

**Kidnapping of Ion Perdicaris**  
**Background Guide**

October 19-22, 2023  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY



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## I. Letter from the Crisis Director

Hello Delegates! My name is Eddie, and I am thrilled to be serving as your Crisis Director at CIAC this year!! I have been involved in Model United Nations since my freshman year of high school, which means that I am entering my sixth year, five of which have been spent helping to run conferences. I have staffed, chaired, USG'd, and, of course, been a delegate at a number of conferences, including chairing at CIAC last year, and at Cornell's high-school conference, CMUNC.

Outside of MUN, I am involved in POLIS (Cornell's pre-professional government fraternity), the Cornell Historical Society, and work at the library and as a teaching assistant for an introductory computer science course. When not avoiding schoolwork with these groups I like to play spikeball, pickleball, and bowl with my friends.

Finally, as your crisis director, I (along with the rest of your fantastic staff) am here to make *your* experience the best it can be! We are committed to succeeding in this challenge. That means if there is anything we can do to help or questions we can answer, be it before or during the conference, don't hesitate to reach out. We will get you the answer, or put you in touch with someone who can. Because this committee has delegates from several nations, there will be an increased emphasis on Joint Crisis notes as ways for delegates to work in their nation's interest without the whole committee learning their doings. Think about what is viable for more committee-wide directives.

Historical crises are fantastic ways to ask "what if?" and think about why the world is the way it is today. I can't wait to see the innovative ways you all tackle the challenges of yesterday. Think outside the box! Try something different! Good luck!!

Warmest regards,



Eddie Elliott

[eme58@cornell.edu](mailto:eme58@cornell.edu)

## II. Letter from the Chair

Hello Delegates, my name is Rachel and I am so excited to be your chair for the Kidnapping of Ion Perdicaris crisis committee! I cannot wait to see what you guys come up with!

I am a second year student originally from the Boston area majoring in Industrial and Labor Relations and minoring in Public Policy here at Cornell. Outside of Model UN I am a member of the Office of Student Government Relations, the People's Organizing Collective, Mafia Club, and a Sensory Descriptive Analysis Panelist in addition to working as a Resident Advisor. In addition to all of that I enjoy trivia, all types of games, talking about history or politics, traveling, and of course spending time with friends.

I have been a part of Model UN starting in 8th grade. Since then I have played numerous roles staffing conferences and of course, being a delegate. Most recently I vice chaired a committee for Cornell's high school conference, CMUNC.

Finally, to echo our Crisis Director Eddie's comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to help.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Marcus', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Marcus

[ram499@cornell.edu](mailto:ram499@cornell.edu)

### III. Introduction

On May 18, 1904, wealthy Greek-American Ion Perdicaris and his stepson were kidnapped from their mansion outside of Tangier. The kidnappers, led by Ahmed al-Raisuni, soon presented the US with a lengthy list of demands. The US, led by Theodore Roosevelt and wary of setting a dangerous precedent– yet also conscious of an upcoming presidential election, responded by dispatching a large fleet to Morocco. This in turn spiked European fears of undue American influence in the Mediterranean, who also sent forces to the region. As a member of the American cabinet or a European diplomat, you face competing crises: How will war be prevented? How can your nation preserve its power in the region? How can public opinion be shaped? And how do you balance the value of one man’s life with broader geopolitical concerns?

### IV. Background:

Throughout the second half of the 19th century, global affairs were increasingly characterized by a complex network of competing and shifting alliances, especially among European nations. They soon set their sights on exploiting Africa, approaching the continent as a land with resources for the taking, inhabitants to be ‘civilized’, and empires to be imposed. Completely ignoring civilizations and populations that already existed on the continent, a “Scramble for Africa” quickly emerged in full-swing.

In this global game of strategy, North Africa is especially important, because of its location on the other side of the Mediterranean Ocean, which is ideally situated to function as a gateway between Europe and the rest of Africa, and to control trade from the Mediterranean to the rest of the world. Additionally, the region holds vast riches in untapped (and largely unmapped) mineral and ore deposits.<sup>1</sup> In 1880, a Madrid Convention was signed in which European nations agreed to respect and protect Moroccan independence. <sup>2</sup> At the 1884 Berlin Conference, European nations had met

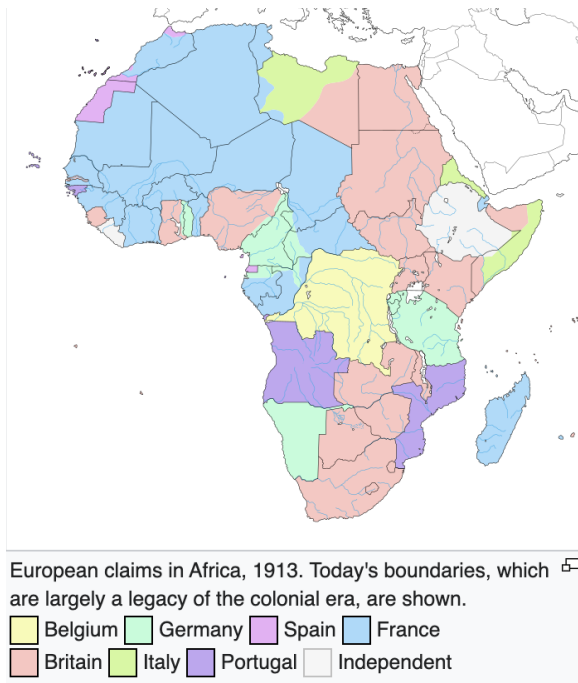
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.springerprofessional.de/en/mineral-deposits-of-north-africa/10277104>

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, 126

among themselves and divided the continent. This agreement did not consider existing tribal or ethnic divisions (see *Fig. 1*).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1:**



Source: [Wikimedia Commons User Sting \(Eric Gaba\)](#), licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0.

### *The Situation in Morocco*

Morocco, which had had its own ruling monarchy for centuries, saw decades of conflict with Western Europe in the 19th century. This included conflict with France in the 1840s and with Spain in the 1860s. Defeats in these conflicts contributed to the decline of Moroccan power and placed additional strain on the nation's efforts to retain independence, and upon the ruling sultan's efforts to hold his diverse country together. Sultans in the 1870s and 1880s tried and failed to modernize the nation's army, and it increasingly seemed that the nation would not itself remain independent.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110685015/html?lang=en> p 74

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/217909.pdf>  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Morocco/Decline-of-traditional-government-1830-1912#ref487937>

Sultan Abd al-Aziz sought to cooperate with Europe after gaining the sultanate in 1894.<sup>3</sup> Compounding the crisis the nation was facing, Morocco's economy suffered at the turn of the twentieth century, and it faced an increasing trade deficit. One of the Sultan's early policies was a modern land-taxation system, which was poorly executed and unpopular. His attempts at rapprochement with Europe and modernization angered many within Morocco, and by 1904 Abd al-Aziz was facing rebellion from tribes within his own borders.<sup>5</sup>

European powers recognized the instability within Morocco and sought to capitalize on this through expanding their influence and holdings in the region. In 1901, France annexed Tuat, a desert region in central Algeria, which was then part of Morocco. Two years later, France began to advance toward Morocco, capturing the cities of Bechar and Tindouf.<sup>4</sup> In April 1904, Britain made an agreement with France where they would retract their neutrality on Morocco's conflict with France in exchange for France not interfering with Britain's campaign in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> While this agreement and others nominally claimed to favor respecting Morocco's territorial integrity, the Sultan must have drawn little comfort from the words, seeing the growing threats on every side. By May 1904, there were competing European interests in the region: both Europe and Spain had tangible territorial claims in the region and sought to expand their spheres of influence while pushing the other nation out. Germany, while they had no territorial claims, had vast economic and strategic interest in North Africa, and sought to preserve Moroccan 'independence', which would be more favorable to the nation than another European nation holding power.<sup>7</sup> And, while Great Britain and Italy had recently signed agreements recognizing French influence, they were no doubt waiting for the slightest sign of weakness to play towards their advantage. And right around the turn of the century, into this tangled web of competing national concerns, came a new player, a young upstart led by an equally young and ambitious president: the United States.

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<sup>5</sup> Britannica

<sup>6</sup> [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/entecord.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/entecord.asp)

<sup>7</sup> <https://watermark.silverchair.com/141785787.pdf>

*Enter: United States*

By 1904, the US had been allies with Morocco for over a century, after the two nations signed the Moroccan-American Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1786. This agreement was the longest unbroken treaty in US history.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Morocco was the first nation to recognize its independence after the American Revolutionary War in 1777. In 1865, the US, along with nine other European nations, signed the Cape Spartel Lighthouse Treaty, an agreement that would protect an important navigational light house on the Strait of Gibraltar by making it neutral territory during times of war. This further strengthened ties between the two nations. The US, along with Britain, France, and Spain, helped finance the lighthouse's construction from 1861 to 1864. Additionally, the US and the other signing nations helped finance the maintenance of the lighthouse as part of the agreement.<sup>9</sup> As European nations, such as France and Spain, began to look towards exerting their colonial interests in Morocco towards the end of the nineteenth century, the US continued to defend its sovereignty, most notably at the 1880 Madrid Conference.<sup>10</sup>

In the 19th century, American foreign policy was largely non-interventionist, and the nation did not play a large role on the world stage. However, since 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt has been increasingly asserting American power on the world stage, especially in Latin America. Though he has held office since 1901, he is campaigning for his first elected term this year, supported by a talented team of advisors— all of whom have their own ambitions and concerns.

*Ion Perdicaris*

Ion Perdicaris was an Greek-American author, professor, and human rights activist born in Athens, Greece on April 1, 1840. While his family originally emigrated from Greece to the United States in the 1820s, Perdicaris was born and briefly lived in

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/#:~:text=U.S.%2DMOROCCO%2ORELATIONS&text=Morocco%20formally%20recognized%20the%20United,diplomatic%20relations%20began%20in%201905.>

<sup>9</sup> <https://thetimestream.wordpress.com/2013/09/19/historical-oddities-the-cape-spartel-lighthouse/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20051026151806/http://www.moroccanamericantrade.com/relations.cfm>



Athens as his father, Gregory Anthony Perdicaris, served as the United States Council to Greece. Once he finished his post in 1845, the family moved back to the US and settled in Trenton, New Jersey. From an early age, Perdicaris was a proficient essayist, and as a result was accepted to Harvard University. However, after sophomore year he dropped out to pursue painting in England, where he met and married his wife, Ellen Varley, in 1872. After the American Civil War, Perdicaris and Varley returned to the US. However, Perdicaris decided to build two summer homes in Morocco, *Aidonia*, a castle-like mansion in the countryside of Tangier, and *El Minzah*, a city-home in Tangier.

After the completion of these homes, Perdicaris and Varley lived full time in Morocco up until his kidnapping. In Morocco, Perdicaris lived a politically active life. Perdicaris engaged himself in local politics, having helped create the Tangier Hygienic Commission and becoming its vice-president. He advocated for Tangier to serve as an open port. In addition, he advocated for debt forgiveness for the poor. In fact, in 1886 he was arrested by Morocco's American Council for bringing about a formal investigation against him.

## V. Crisis Overview:

In May 1904, during a family dinner at their Tangier villa, Ion Perdicaris was suddenly interrupted by a commotion from the servants' quarters. Mistakenly believing the noise to be a domestic dispute, they went to investigate but were swiftly attacked by armed men who bound them and forcefully took them from the house at gunpoint. Shortly after the kidnapping, American consul-general Samuel Gummere was informed. Sherif Mulai Ahmed ibn-Muhammed er Raisuli (or Raisuni) had kidnapped one of the wealthiest foreigners in the nation. Who else could be at risk?<sup>11</sup>

It is now May 19, 1904. America has already sent four warships to Morocco in an unprecedented display of force. European nations have responded in kind. The unrest in Morocco has come to a head. Competing interests could spell war, but one thing is

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.americanheritage.com/perdicaris-alive-or-raisuli-dead>

certain: the status quo is unsustainable, and there will be winners and losers. To address the crisis, many of the most powerful figures from these nations have come together.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can national interests be protected while ensuring the safety of foreign citizens in Morocco?
2. Should Moroccan independence be preserved, and how can spheres of influence/power be maintained?
3. (*for American delegates*), How can popular opinion be balanced against geopolitical concerns? How can Roosevelt's reelection be ensured (or, how is it threatened by this crisis)?
4. (*for European delegates*), How should American attempts at increasing their influence in North Africa/other regions be handled?

## **VI. Position List:**

Samuel Gummeré -- American diplomat: Is working tirelessly to secure the release of a fellow American citizen through negotiations with Moroccan authorities.

Émile Loubet -- President of France: Is focused on preserving French interests in North Africa while cooperating with the United States in resolving the Perdicaris incident diplomatically.

Edward VII -- King of the United Kingdom: Is actively safeguarding British interests in the region while assisting diplomatic efforts to resolve the Perdicaris incident.

John Hay -- U.S. Secretary of State: Is approaching the Perdicaris incident from a diplomatic standpoint, working to negotiate a peaceful resolution with the Moroccan government while safeguarding American interests.

Théophile Delcassé -- French Minister of Foreign Affairs: Is instrumental in coordinating France's diplomatic efforts with the United States and other European powers to secure a peaceful resolution.

Victor Emmanuel III -- King of Italy: Is focused on safeguarding Italian interests and citizens in Morocco while supporting diplomatic efforts to resolve the incident.

Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne -- British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Is coordinating the British government's response to the incident and working closely with the United States.

Charles Camille Pelletan -- French Minister of Marine: Is ensuring the French navy is prepared for any potential involvement in the crisis, especially if it escalates.

Philander C. Knox -- U.S. Attorney General: Is assessing the legal aspects of the incident, considering where law fits in with the issue.

Louis André -- French Minister of Foreign Affairs: Is shaping France's diplomatic response to the Perdicaris incident, ensuring it aligns with France's strategic interests.

John Twiggs Myers -- American military officer: Is assessing the military options available to the United States if a military intervention becomes necessary to secure Perdicaris' release.

William Howard Taft -- U.S. Secretary of War: Is focusing on the military and strategic aspects of the situation, considering options for military intervention if diplomacy fails to secure Perdicaris' release.

William H. Moody -- U.S. Secretary of the Navy: Is ensuring the readiness of the U.S. Navy in case a naval response is necessary during the Perdicaris incident.

Ettore Pedotti -- Italian diplomat: Is working to ensure that Italy's interests are protected and its citizens in Morocco are safe during the Perdicaris incident, possibly coordinating with American and French officials.

Ethan A. Hitchcock -- U.S. Secretary of the Interior: Is considering the potential implications for American interests in natural resources or land rights in Morocco.

James Wilson -- U.S. Secretary of Agriculture: Is evaluating the impact of the incident on agricultural trade and exports to Morocco.

George B. Cortelyou -- U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Labor: Is assessing the potential economic consequences of the Perdicaris incident on American businesses and labor.

L.M. Shaw -- U.S. Secretary of the Treasury: Is concerned about the financial implications of the incident, considering its impact on the U.S. economy and government finances.

Henry C. Payne -- U.S. Postmaster General: Is evaluating how the incident could affect postal and communication services between the United States and Morocco, what the impact on political opinion could be domestically.

William Palmer, 2nd Earl of Selborne -- British Secretary of State for the Colonies: Is assessing the potential impact of the incident on British colonial interests in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Giovanni Giolitti -- Prime Minister of Italy: Is considering the protection of Italian citizens in Morocco and maintaining relations with both France and the United States during the crisis.