THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE VIEWS AND THE MAKING
OF THE 1907 ANGLO-RUSSIAN ENTENTE, FROM
THE 1890s THROUGH AUGUST 1907

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Jeff T. Blevins, B.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1998
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 31 August 1907 Great Britain and Russia signed an agreement regulating their spheres of respective interest in the Middle East. That agreement, the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 transformed, albeit temporarily, a nineteenth-century relationship characterized by hostility and bitterness into one of precarious respect. At the same time, the agreement committed Britain more closely to the side of the Franco-Russian Alliance. What were the reasons that led British Foreign Office officials to agree to an accord with its traditional enemy over issues that for the previous half-century and more had driven the two countries apart?

This study will examine the changing attitudes and policies on the creation of the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 by members of the British Foreign Office. Attention will focus also on the major policy-makers in both the Unionist and Liberal parties, and how the diplomatic, political, and military events of the time, as much as the respective personalities, influenced the British decision to seek a Russian agreement. Immediately following the turn of the century, some members of parliament, namely Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from November 1900 to December 1905, and Sir Edward Grey, who followed Lord Lansdowne as British foreign secretary from December 1905 to 1916, recognized the importance of an agreement with Russia. Before any treaty with Russia
was considered, however, the political situation pushed British Foreign Office officials to sign agreements with Japan in 1902, and two years later one with France, the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. It was only after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 and the concurrent internal problems of Russia that the climate was right for an agreement between Great Britain and Russia.

Most historical investigations have concluded that Great Britain’s imperialistic aims and the maintenance of the balance of power in a changing continent were the two primary, but not exclusive, reasons for wanting the agreement. Additionally, some studies have argued that British Foreign Office officials courted Russia more from fear of Russian territorial encroachment in Central Asia than any other reason. Historian Keith Neilson has argued that perhaps the only fear that did exist was that “reactionary” Russia would gain an advantage over Great Britain in the Middle East and promote an alliance with Germany. Members of both nations’ governments, in time, desired the 1907 agreement, but their reasons were different.

Under Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902 and his own foreign secretary from 1895 to 1900, and Arthur Balfour, British prime minister from 1902 to 1905, British Foreign Office officials structured foreign policy debate more

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3 Keith Neilson, “Wishful Thinking: The Foreign Office and Russia, 1907-1917,” in *Shadow And Substance In British Foreign Policy 1895-1939*, B.J.C. McKercher and D.J. Moss, eds. (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), 175.
towards colonial responsibilities than towards the rapidly changing face of Europe. On the one hand, the government's concern was with the maintenance and consolidation of Great Britain's global position for the sole purpose of a peaceful environment in which its commerce would continue to flourish.\(^4\) Historians such as George Monger have gone as far as labeling the Conservatives' imperial interests as a "preoccupation".\(^5\)

Some members of the Foreign Office were concerned with Russian expansion into Central Asia; therefore, the continued protection of India and other Central Asian possessions necessitated a move towards an agreement of some sort with Russia.\(^6\) On the other hand, some Foreign Office members recognized that Europe was becoming divided between two camps: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary, and the Dual Alliance of France and Russia. Before the resignation of Arthur Balfour as British prime minister in December 1905, a shift of Foreign Office priorities and emphasis occurred from the British Empire to a new focus on European affairs.

The closing years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century had witnessed a gradual change in the European balance of power. In 1894 the Franco-Russian alliance was created essentially as a defensive reaction to the Bismarckian system of alliances. This formation of alliances resulted in power struggles, which, in turn, left Great Britain no longer only as a spectator in European affairs, but a participant.\(^7\) Despite the pacifistic


\(^7\) Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 438.
intentions of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who took office as British prime minister in December 1905, any semblance of "splendid isolation" that he struggled to retain yielded to a new European competition for armaments and economic expansion.

Historian Zara Steiner has argued that the purpose of a Russian agreement was not exclusively imperial.\(^8\) Rumblings from Europe, in particular from Germany, were catching the attention of some members of the British Foreign Office. Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy was being dictated by continental events and directed more towards checking Germany. Although some members of the British Foreign Office recognized Germany as a potential threat before 1906, it was the Liberals who felt forced to place European affairs in general, and Germany's economic and military expansion in particular, at the forefront of foreign policy. This study will attempt to show that, notwithstanding Great Britain's commercial, colonial, and imperial aims, it was the affairs of Europe, especially Germany's bid for continental hegemony, that influenced key British policy-makers and led to the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907.

Sources for this examination include the Cabinet Papers and British Foreign Office documents, as well as the letters of the prime ministers to King Edward VII.\(^9\) The importance of the continued correspondence during the negotiations between Russian diplomats and key British diplomats from both the Unionist Government before the

\(^8\) Zara Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 82.

\(^9\) Sources include: Great Britain, Public Record Office, Cabinet Papers, 1901-1908, CAB 37, PRO, and Reports by prime ministers to the sovereign; Cabinet Papers, CAB 41, PRO.
December 1905 election and the Liberal Government afterwards cannot be
overemphasized.\textsuperscript{10} This study rests on the memoirs and private papers, both published
and archival, of Lord Lansdowne, Sir Edward Grey, Sir Arthur Nicolson, and others.\textsuperscript{11}

This thesis opens with an examination of Anglo-Russia relations from the late
1890s up to and including the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. To understand fully the
political atmosphere and conditions that brought about the Anglo-Russian Entente, it is
necessary to explore this relationship, not only the internal circumstances in each nation,
but also how external events affected the negotiations. British public opinion towards
Russia in the 1890s up to 1902 mirrored that of the government; it was one of watchful
apprehension concerning Russian actions. As historian William L. Langer explains,

"Suspicion of Russian designs had been deeply rooted in the mind of the average
Englishman ever since the Crimean War."\textsuperscript{12} Generally speaking, there were two main
centers of conflict in the nineteenth century, the Straits and Central Asia, although
problems in the Far East began to figure in events towards the latter half of the 1890s and
into the new century. This second chapter will focus upon the power struggles in Central
Asia, as they related to the protection of India and to the Russian menace to Persia and
Afghanistan. The basic source of discord between the two nations was conflicting

\textsuperscript{10} G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, eds. \textit{British Documents on the Origins of the War,
\textsuperscript{11} Great Britain, PRO, FO 800, Public Record Office, London. Papers for Lord
Lansdowne, FO 800/115-46; Sir Edward Grey, FO 800/35-113; Sir Arthur Nicolson,
FO 800/336-81 and PRO 30/81/1-17; Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, FO 800/241-42.
\textsuperscript{12} William L. Langer, "Russia, the Straits Question, and the European Powers, 1904-
policies and objectives. British officials were greatly concerned with Russian political and military influence in Persia. The immediate consequences of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 had far reaching importance. Chapter 2 concludes with an investigation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, Lord Lansdowne’s role in negotiating the agreement, and how that treaty affected Anglo-Russian relations.

Chapter 3 focuses on British diplomacy as it relates to Russia, from the latter part of Lord Salisbury’s administration up to the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. The views of Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, as well as his own foreign secretary from 1895 to 1900, were significant in the formation of British policy towards Russia. The views and tactics of Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from 1900 to 1905, and Sir Arthur Balfour, British prime minister from 1902 to 1905, are examined with respect to Russia as the first hints of a future entente begin to appear. A review of these two policy makers is necessary because their views on Russia affected the shape of the ultimate agreement. This chapter examines the diplomatic and political pressures the Conservatives faced, including British Foreign Office officials’ reactions to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. The importance of the French agreement, as historian Keith Wilson argues, is that it prepared the groundwork for the agreement with Russia. Chapter 3 ends with the views of King Edward VII. A look at the King’s correspondence leaves no doubt of his desire for cordial relations.

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13 Wilson, The Policy of the Entente, 3.
between the two nations and his determination to overcome mutual tension to achieve an
Anglo-Russian entente.

After the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, Britain could no longer
maintain the traditional policy of "splendid isolation". The passing of Britain's isolation
and the last days of the Unionist government were important events in the Edwardian era.
Great Britain's policy makers were focussing more upon the continent. Chapter 4 opens
with an examination into the effects of the passing of isolation as well as the role played
by German diplomacy with respect to Anglo-Russian relations. One of the driving forces
behind Lord Lansdowne's search for a European diplomatic arrangement was German
actions. Chapter 4 looks at the Moroccan Crisis of 1905; an event which created concern
in the British Foreign Office. German diplomacy during this time played a large part in
drawing Britain and Russia closer. The chapter continues with an examination into
Russia's domestic unrest and how this turmoil affected British diplomacy towards the
Tsarist nation. Chapter 4 concludes with a look at the attitudes of the dissenters, namely
Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, first secretary of the St. Petersburg embassy from 1903 to 1906
and British minister at Teheran from 1906 to 1908, and Lord George Nathaniel Curzon,
British Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905.

Chapter 5 examines the Liberals after the December 1905 elections. The roles
played by Sir Charles Hardinge, British ambassador to St. Petersburg from 1904 to 1906
and permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs from 1906 to 1910, Sir Arthur
Nicolson, later (Lord Carnock), British ambassador to St. Petersburg from 1906 to 1910,
and Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary from 1905 to 1916, all were instrumental in the formation of the entente, as well as to foreign policy in general, during the crucial years between 1905 and August 1907. Special focus is on Nicolson’s role in the Algeciras conference in the spring of 1906, as well as an in depth examination into Sir Edward Grey’s diplomacy. Grey’s impressions of Germany’s expansionist aims are significant because it was Germany’s political, diplomatic, and military maneuvering which pushed Great Britain towards the continent in general and the Russian Entente in particular. British Foreign Office officials viewed the efforts of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and the German government to expand their naval construction as a direct threat to Britain’s security. Modern historians have argued whether Germany was merely increasing its defenses or if this expansion marked the beginning of a search for mastery on the high seas. The importance of which lies not so much in the German government designs as in what Britain officials believed these aims to be. These three Foreign Office members, Nicolson, Hardinge, and Grey, were united in their desire for productive Anglo-Russian relations.

Chapter 6 examines Foreign Office correspondence during the making of the entente. The speed at which Sir Edward Grey initiated talks with the Russian government, especially during the time of Russia’s internal unrest, illustrated his desire for a quick Anglo-Russian understanding.

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14 Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War, 42-8; and Wilson, The Policy of the Entente, 104.
Finally, the thesis concludes that it is difficult, almost impossible, to give one exclusive reason for the desire of Great Britain's Foreign Office officials to reach a settlement with its traditional enemy. Individual decisions were influenced by both time and events. Time creates change, which has an effect upon personalities and policies. Opinions regarding a future Anglo-Russia Entente in a 1902 parliamentary debate, for instance, would be different than foreign policy discussion after the change in government. This study will conclude that, taken as a whole, there was not one single factor which persuaded English diplomats to seek a Russian agreement. A growing Germany within a changing Europe, however, was the main one.
To understand the relations between Great Britain and Russia at the turn of the century fully, it is necessary to reflect briefly upon their late nineteenth-century relationship. The two countries, like many countries in Europe at the time, were joined together through royal bloodlines. Queen Victoria’s son, King Edward VII, was the uncle of both Nicholas II’s wife, Alexandra, and the German emperor William II. Consanguinity, however, did not always lead to smooth diplomacy. The relationship between Great Britain and Russia, prior to the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente, was one characterized by suspicion, hostility, and animosity. It was only after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and Great Britain’s change to a Liberal Government that the two countries set aside their mutual antagonism long enough to work towards the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. This chapter will focus upon the key British policy makers up to 1902, specifically Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, and his own foreign secretary from 1895 to 1900, and Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from 1900 to 1905, and the major events that affected the relationship between Britain
and Russia from the end of the nineteenth century, up to and including the Anglo-
Japanese Alliance of 1902.

Since 1815, British Foreign Office officials regarded Russia as their most serious
potential enemy.¹ There existed, what historian Keith Neilson has labeled, “a deep
reservoir of Russophobia in Britain.”² The source for this animosity, which left behind a
nineteenth-century legacy of discord, was conflicting policies and objectives primarily in
the regions of Central Asia, Europe, and later China.³ British Foreign Office officials and
diplomats possessed a keen apprehension concerning Russia’s expansionist aims.⁴
Russian policy-makers justified their push into various unconquered territories ostensibly
in the interests of commerce. Conversely, members of Great Britain’s Foreign Office
looked at the diplomatic maneuverings by Russian policy makers with concern. It was
imperative for British officials to maintain a constant watch over all the Empire’s
interests, and they took any foreign disturbance seriously. Each nation launched an effort
to curtail the achievements of the other, whether in Central Asia, Europe, or the Far East.

A look at a map of Central Asia clearly illustrates why British diplomats were
concerned with the Russian threat to India. (see Map 1). In the 1890s, the Indian Empire
and the British spheres of influence in the Persian Gulf were separated from the Russian

¹ C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951 (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.,
1966), 47.
² Keith Neilson, “Wishful Thinking: The Foreign Office and Russia 1907-1917,” in
Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy 1895-1939, B.J.C. McKercher and D.J.
Moss, eds. (Edmonton: the University of Alberta Press, 1984), 152.
³ Rogers Platt Churchill, The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (Cedar Rapids: The
⁴ See chapters 3 and 4 for individual views of respective diplomats and foreign officials.
Map 1. Central Asia
Empire by a wide belt of independent but weakly governed territories stretching from Constantinople to the eastern confines of Tibet. Russia bordered Persia directly to the north and Indian defense planners viewed with alarm any threatening Russian activity through Persia towards India. From the end of the Crimean war to the turn of the century, members of Britain’s Foreign Office consistently placed the safety of India at the forefront of their defense planning. Russian expansion into Central Asia toward India’s geographical frontier, therefore, was a threat to Britain’s “Crown Jewel”. If Russian military forces, driving southward, succeeded in absorbing the buffer states of Persia, Afghanistan, or Tibet, it would face British forces all along the many thousand miles of the Indian Empire frontier. Protection of the entire Gulf-Tibet crescent was a priority for British foreign policy-makers.

With the turn of the century, the “Persian Question”, where tension between Britain and Russia proved the greatest, was already an accepted factor in Near East diplomacy. George Nathaniel Curzon, Under-Secretary for India in 1891 to 1892, and later, British Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, had completed a close study of the geography of Asia and its commercial and political problems. Additionally, Curzon possessed the keenest interest in Indian affairs and was highly schooled in the frontier and its turbulent inhabitants. In his opinion, the British were steadily losing ground to the

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5 George Monger, The End of Isolation (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1963), 95.
Russians in the Persian Gulf. In his 1892 study on the “Persian Question”, Curzon explained the disadvantages of a Russian acquired port in the Persian Gulf:

A Russian port in the Persian Gulf, that dear dream of so many a patriot from the Neva or the Volga, would, even in times of peace, import an element of unrest into the life of the Gulf that would shake the delicate equilibrium so laboriously established, would wreck a commerce that is valued at many millions sterling, and would let loose again the passions of jarring nationalities only too ready to fly at each other’s throats. Let Great Britain and Russia fight their battles or compose their differences elsewhere.  

Curzon’s view differed greatly with that of Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, and Curzon spent the majority of his tenure as Viceroy of India by criticizing the cabinet. The Viceroy complained that Lord Salisbury had done nothing to meet the obvious dangers from a Russian advance in Persia. Lord Curzon did not believe in Persia as a buffer state. He was obsessed with the danger from Russia and thus advocated a militant, forward policy in Persia, Tibet, and Afghanistan.  

Lord Curzon, therefore, made it his mission to shake British Central Asian policy from a dormancy that, he believed, had existed under Lord Salisbury. The Anglo-Russian struggle for concessions, and, perhaps more importantly, political influence, in a weak and corrupt Persia, was in full progress and only eased with the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05.  

Although Russia maintained a strong foothold in north Persia, British officials, as Lord

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8 Lord Curzon’s views on Russia and the Russian threat will be explained in chapter 4.
Curzon had hoped, would not relinquish control of Persia, especially if that control included access to the Persian Gulf. British policy-makers were particularly concerned with Russian expansion by way of rail communication with the interior and Russia. Russian newspapers were already writing about the building of a railway from the Russo-Persian border to Teheran.\textsuperscript{11}

Russia’s policy-makers aimed at complete political and economic domination of north Persia and the acquisition of a port in the Persian Gulf by pressure in the south. In the spring of 1901, the St. Petersburg government established consulates at Bagdad and Bunder Abbas on the Persian Gulf. These Russian actions did not go unnoticed by British officials. Sir Charles Hardinge, secretary of embassy in St. Petersburg from 1898 to 1903, summed up what he believed Russian Middle East policy to be: “To the Russians, Persia was merely a gate through which they wished to pass in order to obtain the key to the door which [the British] held in the Persian Gulf. They scorned the idea at that time of the demarcation of British and Russian spheres of influence in Persia, they aspired to the whole.”\textsuperscript{12}

Russia’s territorial expansion was not the only factor which occupied British officials. In addition, members of the British Foreign Office were concerned with


\textsuperscript{12} Sir Charles Hardinge, Old Diplomacy: The Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst (London: John Murray, 1947), 70. Hardinge’s work, although replete with questionable assertions, is, nonetheless, significant because it represents his opinions. (The importance of various British officials’ comments, with respect to this thesis, lies more with their personal beliefs, whether right or wrong, than factual evidence.)
Russian loans to the Shah of Persia. Some loans amounted to over three million pounds, although Russia was in dire straits for money.\textsuperscript{13} A Russian loan to Persia was secured through Russian control of customs in the north and concessions for eventual railway construction into north Persia. Russian expansion and their loan to Persia both contributed to British defense planners' concerns regarding the north-west frontier. Additionally, the extension of the Indian empire brought Afghanistan into contact with both Great Britain and Russia. Conflicts were, therefore, inevitable as a result of the British advance from the south and the Russian advances from the north.

Detailed defense planning and logistics lies outside the scope of this study, but suffice it to say that the situation confronting British foreign policy planners regarding Russian territorial expansion became problematic, if for no other reason, because of the lack of definitive British and Russia frontiers. Prior to the early twentieth century, Russia transported troops and supplies across the Middle East by way of primitive roads or across the Caspian.\textsuperscript{14} Shortly after the turn of the century, however, the growth of European Russia's railway system helped to solve Russian logistical problems. The Russians penetrated Persia through the establishment in Russia of Persian cossacks under Russian officers, and through control of a number of telegraph lines. Improved Russian communications combined with rapidly improving transportation facilities, heightened an already acute British awareness for the continued safety of India.\textsuperscript{15} A weakening

\textsuperscript{13} Beryl J. Williams, "The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907," \textit{The Historical Journal} 9 (1966): 361.
\textsuperscript{14} Monger, \textit{The End of Isolation}, 4.
Persia combined with Tibet, which was gradually falling under Russian influence, provided the Russian Empire with ample opportunities to exact political and economic pressure on two fronts.\(^\text{16}\) British actions in Tibet concerned Russian officials. The Russians also feared that the British were counseling the Japanese towards aggression against Russia.\(^\text{17}\) It goes without saying that British officials were alarmed by Russian diplomatic and military initiatives in Persia.

Friction in Central Asia, specifically the north-west frontier, had increased the already existing tension between Great Britain and Russia, and dealing with this friction marked out one of the most important political questions requiring British government attention in the years prior to, and immediately after, the turn of the century.\(^\text{18}\) In those years, the majority of British defense spending centered around the safety of India. Yet Great Britain's scheme of defense against Russian expansion in Central Asia was settled by diplomats, not by military strategists. India, unguarded, with its mountain passes of the northwest unsecured, became an attractive prey for Russia foreign policy planners. In an attempt to create a buffer against Russia, members of the British government decided to build up a strong and united Afghanistan. By means of gifts of arms and annual subsidies, they attempted to form a closer alliance with the Amir of Afghanistan. As a result, British Foreign Office officials looked to secure Afghanistan as a buffer state.


\(^{17}\) Ibid.

between Great Britain’s imperialism and Russian aggrandizement.¹⁹ Still, it was all too clear to the British that if Russian troops threatened the safety of India, Great Britain was powerless militarily to attack the Russian forces.²⁰ Events were shifting focus, however, from Central Asia to the Far East, and one event, in particular, provided Britain with greater bargaining power.

In 1894-95, Japan defeated China in a war that exposed the military weakness of the Chinese empire. Count Sergei Witte, Russian minister of finance from 1893 to 1903, advocated a cautious policy with respect to China, and, immediately after the war, he strove to maintain that country’s independence. In July 1895, Witte helped to secure French financial backing (France had recently become Russia’s ally) for a loan to China when the Chinese government needed funds to pay Japan the first installment of the war indemnity. Russia, by appearing as China’s ally, could obtain valuable commercial, industrial, and railway concessions which would enable the Russians to carry the Trans-Siberian railway forward through Manchuria to Mukden and Vladivostok.²¹ By the turn of the century, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, and France all envisioned gaining a share of China’s vast untapped natural resources.²² Russia’s expansion into China, however, presented problems for members of the British Foreign Office.

²⁰ Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 140.
²¹ For an excellent account of Far Eastern developments, as well as British foreign policy in general during the late 1890s, see Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century, 130-47.
²² Monger, The End of Isolation, 6.
Under Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, friction between Great Britain and Russia in Central Asia still existed, but it was in the Far East that Russia exercised its ambitions. With the conclusion of the 1894 Franco-Russian Alliance and the economic and military growth of Germany, members of the British Cabinet were also concerned with Russia's territorial expansion in the Far East. Russia's ambitious designs that would alter (or disturb) the balance of power in the Far East kept the country in conflict with Britain, not to mention Japan. Since France, Germany, and Russia in 1894 had combined to limit the extent of Japan's victory over China, Britain remained, as before, without any European allies. Great Britain's precarious position was difficult since, at this time, Britain was attempting to limit Russian advances in Korea and the Liaotung peninsula.

In 1898, the Russians occupied parts of Manchuria much to the horror of British foreign policy planners. Members of the British government looked to Manchuria to maintain Britain's favored nation treatment as a means of preventing the breakup of China. The Russian advance towards the north Yellow Sea was significant because if Russia secured a foothold in the Gulf of Chihli and the Liaotung Peninsula, it would counter British business interests in Tientsin and Newchwang. The idea of a possible Russian occupation of Manchuria, coupled with the fact that Russia was already established with a large naval outlet into the Sea of Japan, greatly concerned British Foreign Office officials. Lord Salisbury believed, with the Russian dispatch of warships

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to Port Arthur, that he was left with no other option but to come to terms with Russia diplomatically. In a letter to Queen Victoria on 23 January 1898, Lord Salisbury, with an eye to the bigger picture, reiterated the importance of open negotiations towards an agreement:

... at the same time [in the Cabinet] the larger question was very fully discussed which has been [tried?] in some recent telegrams to and from St. Petersberg— namely, whether it is not possible to come to some understanding with Russia regard[ing] Chinese questions generally, and possibly upon Persia. The advantages to such an arrangement were fully discussed by the Cabinet."

The letter illustrates the prime minister's awareness of Central Asian and Far Eastern tension and the importance of a mutual understanding to eliminate possible conflict. Against this background, Salisbury opened negotiations with Russia.25

Shortly after Salisbury came to power, he and Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary from 1895-1903, set out to make a Russian agreement. In January 1898, Salisbury submitted a detailed offer to St. Petersburg with a proposal that the two countries should come to an agreement with regard to China.26 The proposal essentially allowed Great Britain to carve out spheres of influence and still maintain Chinese independence. In turn, Russian interests would predominate in the region north of the Yellow River. Salisbury's correspondence illustrates that he knew the difficulty of negotiating with the Tsarist Empire but, nonetheless, desired to work with Russia, "if we

24 Lord Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 23 January 1898, CAB 41/24/25, PRO.
25 How long Russian forces were to remain in Port Arthur was a matter of debate among British officials. Russia's occupation was in response to a German naval squadron's seizure of Kiaochow. See Ward and Gooch, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy: 1783-1919, 3: 231-33.
26 Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, 130-47.
could regard her as willing to work with us." In a telegram of 25 January 1898 to Sir Nicholas O’Conor, the British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, Salisbury reiterated the importance of working through the friction in the Far East in order to "remove or lessen this evil that we have thought that an understanding might benefit both nations."

Unfortunately, Salisbury’s efforts met with little favorable response. It is not necessary to detail the failed Anglo-Russian negotiations of 1898 save to note that the Russian determination to maintain Port Arthur and Talienwan frustrated the British Cabinet and prompted Salisbury to comment that the Russians “[were] insincere and their language is ambiguous.”

Salisbury’s efforts to reach an understanding with Russia illustrated his determination to keep the country as ally, not enemy. In addition, British diplomacy during this time, it should be noted, was already weakened by the South African involvement. But Salisbury never lost sight of the larger issue. Notwithstanding some diplomatic and political frustrations, he understood the significance of working with Russia to achieve a semblance of cordiality on which to build future harmonious relations. Also, and perhaps more importantly, Lord Salisbury understood the significance of an Anglo-Russian agreement with respect to the changing face of Europe.

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28 Lord Salisbury to Sir Nicholas O’Conor, 25 January 1898, B.D., 1: 8.
29 B.D., 1: 11.
In a letter written in the fall of 1901, Salisbury, as prime minister but no longer foreign secretary, suggested what an Anglo-Russian understanding would mean to other nations, "Other statesmen are acutely watching the Chess-Board of Europe: and they perfectly know that a real sympathy between Russia and England would place the other Great Powers in a very inferior position."³⁰

In a later debate on the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention in the House of Lords, Viscount Midleton (formerly, St. John Brodrick) remembered that "in 1898 the mind of the late Lord Salisbury was much set on coming to some arrangement with the Russian government with regard to Asia."³¹ Although Salisbury strongly believed in "splendid isolation," he recognized that Central Asian peace could more easily be achieved through closer Anglo-Russian relations.

In addition to British Foreign Office officials' concern with Russian Far Eastern activities, members of the Japanese government looked uneasily at a Russian advance. Situated between the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea was Korea. (see Map. 2). Since the Rosen-Nissi Agreement of April 1898, the Japanese had been spreading themselves in Korea, establishing concessions and commercial settlements. Japanese foreign policy planners recognized the importance of maintaining good relations with Korea.³² Korea served as an outlet for Japan's surplus population and as a future market for its commerce. Russian naval authorities, for their part, had designs on the acquisition of a

³¹ Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 4th ser., 183 (1908), 1312.
³² Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 2: 689-91.
Map 2. The Far East
base in southeast Korea for the control of the all-important straits between Japan and Korea. Japanese Foreign Office officials wavered between making peace with Russia or forging a European alliance against them. Meanwhile, members of the British Foreign Office were beginning to look to Japan.\textsuperscript{33} British Foreign Office officials, after repeated attempts from 1898-1901 to reach agreements with either Russia or Germany, turned to Japan, and, with the help of Lord Lansdowne, negotiated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902.

Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from 1900 to 1905, answered the Far Eastern question in general, and Russia's march into China in particular, with negotiations that culminated in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902.\textsuperscript{34} One significance of the alliance, at least from a diplomatic perspective, is that it marked Britain's first step away from isolation.\textsuperscript{35} At the time, the treaty represented a sharp departure in British policy. Britain had relinquished its fixed policy of not making alliances.\textsuperscript{36} Lansdowne was influential in leading British foreign policy in a new direction. Global developments in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, forced Lord Lansdowne to equate British security in terms of alliances and European agreements. As historian Zara Steiner remarks, Lansdowne strove to admonish his fellow diplomats to

\textsuperscript{34} For a full text of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, see B. D., 2: 115-20.
forget old-fashioned superstitions about the desirability and advantages of a policy of isolation.  

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the product of an acknowledged British weakness in the Far East and a reconsideration of British foreign policy. The main purpose that British Foreign Office officials had in negotiating the agreement was to improve Britain's bargaining position in the Far East. The alliance provided Britain with a cheap and effective means of countering Russian expansion in the Far East.  

In the autumn of 1901, Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, sent a memorandum to Lansdowne which indicated Britain's battleship deficiency in that region. The majority of the Cabinet agreed that some sort of Anglo-Japanese combination was essential for a measure of superiority against any potential threat. After the attempt to reach a diplomatic agreement with Germany had failed, Lansdowne turned, like Salisbury before him, to Russia. Russian Foreign Minister, Count Vladimir Nikolaevich Lamsdorf, however, brusquely refused any attempt at an agreement because, in his opinion, Britain could not effectively dispute Russian expansion in the Far East.

The Japanese remained. The British and Japanese military and naval authorities engaged in plans of action which could be implemented upon the outbreak of Russian hostilities in China. These plans were Britain's first step along the road to accepting an external military commitment. Lord Lansdowne concluded the Anglo-Japanese treaty, it

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38 Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 369.  
39 Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, 402.
bears repeating, with Russia in mind, and although Lansdowne may not have believed the British could reach a settlement with Russia, he did not want to close the door to the possibility of an amicable understanding in the future. Russia still remained, as Zara Steiner argues, Britain’s primary focus with regards to strategic planning. Lansdowne understood well that the agreement provided a possible barrier against Russia advancement, and British naval forces in other waters would not have to be sent to the Far East. The foreign secretary did not, however, intend the Japanese alliance to lead to a showdown with Russia. On the contrary, he believed the alliance would increase the chances of preserving peace.

British officials, after signing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, were more confident regarding their participation in Far Eastern developments. The alliance played an important role in influencing the course of diplomacy which shaped future Anglo-Russian relations. The agreement, while bringing a new member, Japan, into the circles of European diplomacy, also affected the policies of other nations. British policy-makers’ larger purpose for signing the agreement was to secure peace in the Far East by strengthening the barrier against any further Russian advance in that area.

Britain’s benefits from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were not immediately apparent. Initially, some parts of the treaty were precautionary: to steady Japanese policy

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40 Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War, 28.
42 For a full text of the alliance see B.D. 2: 115-20.
43 Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 400.
towards Russia and to forestall a Russo-Japanese rapprochement.\textsuperscript{44} An agreement between Japan and Russia would have rendered Great Britain’s political position in the Far East almost hopeless.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover, the treaty served as the prelude to a number of events which culminated in the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente.\textsuperscript{46} Since the alliance was designed, in part, to provide the conditions necessary to enable Japan to confront Russia, the agreement was a significant factor in making the Russo-Japanese war possible. Without the agreement, Japanese policy-makers might not have risked a war with Russia in 1904. The treaty provided for Great Britain and Japan, to “communicate with one another fully and frankly” when the interests of either were in jeopardy, and “not to make arrangements with the Powers to the prejudice of their agreement without consulting one another.”\textsuperscript{47} So, in retrospect, the important thing for British officials was not what was in the alliance, but the fact that there was an alliance.

The Anglo-Russian relationship from the end of Lord Salisbury’s administration to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 was characterized by conflicting policies and objectives mainly in Central Asia and the Far East. Lord Salisbury, however, recognized that Central Asian and Far Eastern peace, despite his strong belief in “splendid isolation”, could more easily be achieved through closer Anglo-Russian relations. Although Lord Salisbury’s government did not directly contribute to the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907,

\textsuperscript{45} Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 783.
\textsuperscript{46} Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951, 14.
\textsuperscript{47} Article VI of Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, 30 January 1902, B.D. 2: 118.
it went far in shaping future Foreign Office thinking. Salisbury's successor as foreign 
secretary, Lord Lansdowne, would take the prime minister's efforts one step farther in his 
negotiations with Russia.
CHAPTER 3

THE UNIONIST VIEW OF RUSSIA AND ANGLO-RUSSIAN
RELATIONS FROM 1902 AND SIR ARTHUR
BALFOUR'S ADMINISTRATION TO THE
ANGLO-FRENCH ENTENTE OF 1904

The period from mid-1895 to the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente in August 1907 was divided between two governments: the ten years of Unionist rule from 1895 to December 1905, and the two years of Liberal government to 1907 (which, incidentally would extend to the spring of 1915).¹ Those who directed pre-war British foreign policy were confined to a relatively small group, what historian Zara Steiner has labeled, "the tiny elite."² At the center was the prime minister and foreign secretary. Some prime ministers, like Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, doubled as their own foreign secretaries. Others, like Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Liberal prime minister from December 1905 to 1908, were more involved with domestic responsibilities, and left greater control of foreign policy to the foreign secretary, in this

instance, Sir Edward Grey.\(^3\) From 1902 to the end of 1905, British foreign policy was the primary, but not exclusive, responsibility of two men: Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from November 1900 to December 1905, and Sir Arthur Balfour, British prime minister from July 1902 to December 1905. The perceptions of these men, along with those of a few secondary figures, are central to a complete understanding of Anglo-Russian relations prior to the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement. This chapter will examine the Anglo-Russian relationship during the last three years of the Unionist government, the period from the signing of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance up to the transition to Liberal rule in December 1905. Attention will be on the major events of the time, such as the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. The chapter concludes with an examination of the ideas King Edward VII held.

Unionists, for the most part, were concerned with maintaining their nation as the world’s foremost power. After the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, British Foreign Office officials found it to their nation’s advantage to approach Russian officials, but, since many British interests still clashed with many of Russia’s, any agreement at this time proved difficult. One British Foreign Office official who worked assiduously towards achieving an Anglo-Russian agreement, despite the countries’ differences, was Lord Lansdowne.

Lord Lansdowne’s tenure as foreign secretary from November 1900 to December 1905 was instrumental in paving the way for the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. His five

\(^3\) Sir Edward Grey and the Liberal Government’s views on Anglo-Russian relations and the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente will be examined in Chapters 5 and 6.
years in office witnessed, among other events, a Japanese alliance and a French entente, both skillfully accomplished without ostracizing Russia.\textsuperscript{4} Lansdowne’s diplomacy played a crucial role in the formative years leading up to the 1907 agreement, and he, perhaps next to Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary from December 1905 through the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 up to 1916, may be recognized as the leading proponent of better Anglo-Russian relations.

Lansdowne inherited two difficulties from Lord Salisbury, with respect to British relations with Russia: the continuing Far Eastern conflict, and Persia, where Russian attempts to gain predominance threatened the Indian frontier.\textsuperscript{5} How he would eventually handle both centers of friction served as a prelude to the negotiations of the 1907 agreement. Lansdowne, after five years at the War Office prior to becoming foreign secretary, was convinced that Britain’s military weakness necessitated the abandonment of its traditional policy of eschewing alliances during peacetime. The effects of the Boer war and consequent European reaction influenced Lansdowne’s thinking.

The Boer war, as Lansdowne had learned at the War Office, reinforced Britain’s isolation.\textsuperscript{6} The continental powers were united in their wish to remain outside the South African conflict, and, in large measure, with their sympathy towards the Boers. France and Germany’s sentiments were more in line with the Boers with the knowledge that

\textsuperscript{4} See Chapter 2 for the significance of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance to Anglo-Russian relations.

\textsuperscript{5} See Chapter 2 for the background to Anglo-Russian problems in the Far East and Central Asia.

some members of the British government, such as Sir Arthur Balfour, were, in fact, "pro-Boer." Russian policy-makers took advantage of Britain's involvement in the war by increasing Russian penetration of northern Persia and putting pressure on the Amir of Afghanistan. Lansdowne's foreign policy from 1900 to 1902, therefore, was structured towards the need to concentrate British resources, and the desirability of securing the military assistance of a great power in the event of war with Russia.\(^7\)

The events of the first months of 1903 in Central Asia and Persia served to convince Lansdowne that an agreement with Russia was both feasible and desirable.\(^8\) Sir Arthur Balfour, now prime minister, instructed Lansdowne at this time "to see whether some 'modus vivendi' could not be arrived at which would diminish this perpetual friction between the two Powers in Central Asia."\(^9\) Russia's expansion into Tibet and Afghanistan, as well as its rumblings in Persia, heightened a conciliatory firmness in Lansdowne that it would be to both countries' advantage to search for an agreement instead of a confrontation. In a letter to the British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, Sir Charles Scott, the foreign secretary was "extremely anxious to convince the Russian Government that we cannot deal with these [disturbances] as if they were isolated incidents. If we are to come to some understanding it should have reference to Tibet, Afghanistan, . . . and Persia generally."\(^10\) Lansdowne consistently maintained hope that

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\(^9\) Lord Balfour to King Edward VII, 19 February 1903, Cabinet 41/28/2 PRO.

\(^10\) Lord Lansdowne to Sir Charles Scott, 23 March 1903, as quoted in Monger, *End of*
the disturbances could be shelved and a compromise reached. On 12 April 1903, the foreign secretary wrote to Balfour, that “I don’t despair of finding a reasonable solution of the Russo-Afghan difficulty and perhaps of other tiresome questions which concern Russia and us.”

Lansdowne desired an Anglo-Russian agreement and was a strong proponent of open negotiations, but not at the expense of British trading interests. In his “Persian Gulf Declaration” to the House of Lords on 5 May 1903, the foreign secretary revealed his government’s position on the protection and promotion of British trade in the Persian Gulf; however he, “regard[ed] the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests and [will be resisted] with all the means at our disposal.” This was the warning to Russia (and, it should be noted, to Germany) that Britain would not compromise its commercial interests. Lansdowne, although astute enough to understand the benefits of cordial relations with Russia, left no doubt upon where he stood.

In the spring of 1903 Far Eastern events resurfaced once again. The Russian military, by stepping up efforts to penetrate Korea and by refusing to withdraw from Manchuria, created problems in the Far East for both Japan and Britain. The Russians were due to evacuate Manchuria in April 1903, according to an agreement that they had

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11 Lord Lansdowne to Sir Arthur Balfour, 12 April 1903, as quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 118.
12 Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 4th ser., 121 (1903); 1348.
made with China the year before.\textsuperscript{13} Manchuria, in spite of the agreement, remained under Russian occupation. Lansdowne recognized the implications of Russian actions not only with respect to the difficulties of the Far Eastern question but, perhaps more importantly, Britain, as a result of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, was now tied to Japan. A possible Russo-Japanese conflict, therefore, left Britain in an unenviable position.\textsuperscript{14}

An event which influenced greatly the course of Anglo-Russian relations was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.\textsuperscript{15} The war, as historian Keith Neilson argues, was the single most significant factor in deciding the direction of Anglo-Russian relations between 1894-1914.\textsuperscript{16} On 8 February 1904, the Japanese launched a naval attack upon Port Arthur, which forever transformed Britain's international position. Before the war, the Russians had repeatedly rejected British overtures for a general agreement. British Foreign Office officials feared a Japanese defeat because a victorious Russia could stir up Central Asian friction. Most members of the British Foreign Office had resigned themselves to Russia's influence in Persia as long as it was minimal, not dominating. They recognized Russia's superior interests in northern Persia and had no objection to Russia's having a commercial outlet on the Gulf. British officials stopped short of allowing Russia to acquire a naval or military station on the Persian Gulf. Additionally,

\textsuperscript{14} Monger, \textit{End of Isolation}, 127.
\textsuperscript{15} For an excellent account of the diplomacy leading to the Russo-Japanese war, see I. Nish, \textit{The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War} (London: Longman, 1985).
\textsuperscript{16} Neilson, \textit{Britain and the Last Tsar}, 238.
British Foreign Office officials harbored the continuous fear that a stronger Russia would try to invade India.

The history of Russia, as historian William Langer concludes, furnishes countless examples of the way in which one conquest leads to another. "The new territory must be protected, it must be developed, it must be linked up with the homeland." After the Russo-Japanese war, Russian policy-makers, as a result of military defeat and internal unrest, turned full-circle from aggression to an attempt to accommodate the Great Powers. Simultaneously, Britain’s bargaining position improved. The Russian military defeat at Tsushima on 27 May 1905 brought to an end decade-long quarrels in the Far East. The Anglo-Russian Entente was the end result.

The path to better relations between Britain and Russia was beginning to be a reality, save for one event that occurred during the Russo-Japanese conflict: The Dogger Bank incident. The Dogger Bank incident brought Great Britain and Russia to the brink of war. Boats of the Russian Baltic fleet mistakenly fired upon British fishing vessels off the Dogger Bank on 21 October 1904 killing two British fishermen and wounding others. This incident precipitated a serious crisis in Anglo-Russian relations. Russian expressions of regret and promises of compensation failed to satisfy members of the Foreign Office. Many citizens and some government officials were outraged and

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18 Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 264.
19 Ibid. , 255.
demanded forceful action. An agreement was reached to refer the matter to an international commission of inquiry at the Hague, with a guarantee that any person found guilty would be punished adequately. In addition, the Russian government undertook to issue instructions which would prevent the recurrence of such incidents. Skilled diplomacy, coupled with a Russian apology, brought about a peaceful settlement.

The crisis was probably less dangerous than it seemed at the time. Historian A.J.P. Taylor argues that neither the British nor the Russians desired conflict. The British wanted to keep separate from the Far Eastern conflict but still maintain a close relationship with France, Russia’s ally. Additionally, the Japanese defeat of the Russian navy eliminated one of the components of the two-power standard. The diminished Russian strength combined with that nation’s military setbacks, meant that threats to India, while still likely to occur, had less force behind them. As a result, the British were becoming more confident in Persia and Afghanistan, and did not want to risk their nation’s growing influential position.

In July 1905, foreign ministers from both Russia and Japan accepted the United States’ offer of mediation and on 12 August signed a peace treaty at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The end of the Russo-Japanese war forced Russian policy-makers to issue a complete comprehensive reassessment of their foreign policy. The Russian empire’s

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21 Taylor, Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 424.
22 Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 264.
23 For an excellent account of the Portsmouth peace conference, see Raymond A. Esthus, Double Eagle and Rising Sun (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988).
disastrous defeat at the hands of the Japanese coincided with the beginning of major Russian internal difficulties, which, in turn, slowed British policy towards the Tsarist Empire, as well as Russian foreign policy in general.

On 28 December 1904, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to promise reforms. The peoples' discontent was signaled by “Bloody Sunday” on 22 January 1905, and, unrest grew until it reached the dimensions of a revolution. The difficulties facing the Russian government were serious. To continue the war, the Russian government had to allocate enormous sums of money and a large number of men would have to be re-enlisted. Sergei Witte, Russian minister of finance from 1893 to 1903, argued that it would be to Russia's advantage to open peace talks. Witte was convinced that both military and financial considerations dictated peace. This belief was reinforced by a talk Witte had at this time with Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, who had presided over a meeting of Russian military leaders. The Russian army, although sufficiently strong, would require a year's time to become effective, a billion rubles, and 200,000 to 500,000 soldiers would be wounded or killed. Witte, as Russia's chief delegate at the Portsmouth peace conference, knew that neither foreign nor domestic loans could cover this expense and proposed peace.

Japan's victory over Russia relieved pressure at Whitehall. The war altered the balance of power in the Far East by averting a conflict between the respective coalitions of Britain-Japan and Russia-France. France was deprived of its principal European

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24 Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, 64-5.
support which led it to refocus on Great Britain's friendship. Further, and perhaps more importantly, Britain and Russia, aside from a tumultuous two week interval during the Dogger Bank affair, never became diplomatically isolated from one another. Now better relations appeared to be more easily attainable.

The Russian actions of 1903 which precipitated the Russo-Japanese war, also opened a new phase in British-French negotiations. British Foreign Office officials negotiated with Russia's ally because, initially, many Cabinet members did not particularly like Japan's chances for victory in a Russo-Japanese conflict. Lord Lansdowne turned to France to prevent from being drawn into a conflict on behalf of a weak ally over issues that were not of primary importance. Events in the Far East, then, redirected British attention to the continent, which would seem to confirm A.J.P. Taylor's succinct conclusion that it was the Far East, and the Far East alone, which caused the 1904 Anglo-French entente.25

The Anglo-French Entente of 1904, like the Anglo-Japanese Alliance before it, was crucial for diplomacy not so much for its content, but for the signatures.26 The entente was similar to the Anglo-Russian agreement that would be signed three years later, not merely by being a settlement of colonial differences but, in fact, for providing an arrangement for general diplomatic cooperation. In the summer and autumn of 1903,

25 Taylor, Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 417.
Great Britain had sought a settlement with France because relations between England and Russia, and Japan and Russia continued to deteriorate. The agreement was a type of insurance enabling British diplomats, by proxy, to check Russian policy-makers while lessening the danger of being dragged into the war.27

The April 1904 Anglo-French Entente was created from a changing international situation. The threat of war acted as a catalyst on Lansdowne's policy. If war came, Lansdowne felt that the removal of long-standing causes of friction between Britain and France would neutralize the danger that the two powers would be forced to support their allies. In fact, the Far Eastern crisis forced a reconsideration of Lansdowne's policy.28

Towards the end of 1903, the foreign secretary was urging Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, to do what he could to moderate Russia's attitude.29 On 10 September, Lansdowne circulated a memorandum pressing the entente upon the Cabinet. In the letter, he explains not only Great Britain's dire predicament, but the importance of the Anglo-French Entente as a stepping-stone to a future Russian agreement. "A good understanding with France," Lansdowne wrote, "would not improbably be the precursor of a better understanding with Russia, and I need not insist upon the improvement... which, in view of our present relations with Germany as well as Russia, I cannot regard with satisfaction."30

28 Taylor, Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 412.
29 Lord Lansdowne to Sir E. Monson, 26 October 1903, B.D. 2: 217-18.
30 Memorandum by Lord Lansdowne, 10 September 1903, as quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 134.
In the winter of 1903, during the negotiations leading to the Anglo-French Entente, some British policy-makers, such as Lord Cromer, the consul-general in Cairo, had envisioned Great Britain’s place in the European balance of power. Cromer understood the necessity of Russia’s friendship, as Lansdowne had desired, to counter any possible German government actions. On 12 December 1903, he remarked that, “one of the main attractions in the whole business [of the Anglo-French entente] is the hope of leading up to an Anglo-Russian arrangement, and thus isolating Germany.”

Russia’s expansion into Central Asia and the Far East greatly concerned Lansdowne, but he was never overawed by the Tsarist Empire’s strength. While it is evident that some officials may have feared Russian actions in Central Asia, there is little evidence to support any Russophobia in the British policy making elite. If anything, as historian Keith Neilson argues, some members of the Foreign Office were concerned that a “reactionary” Russia would promote an alliance with Germany. There was fear, however, that Great Britain would be isolated, as it had been in the 1890s under different circumstances, and have its interests threatened. Historian Keith Wilson has attributed the foreign policy of Sir Edward Grey, Lansdowne’s successor as foreign secretary, to one principle, specifically this avoidance of isolation. In January 1903, Grey, was

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31 1st Earl of Cromer to Lord Lansdowne, 12 December 1903, quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 145.
32 Neilson, “Wishful Thinking,” in McKercher and Moss, eds., Shadow and Substance, 175.
33 Keith Wilson, British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: Crimean War to First World War (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 178.
already viewing Germany as Great Britain’s emerging menace. “. . . I believe the policy of Germany,” he wrote, “to be that of using us: keeping us isolated.”34

Lord Lansdowne, however, maintained a show of political toughness towards Russia to better achieve a diplomatic reconciliation. This firmness was his attitude as he approached the problems between the two nations towards the end of 1904. When the problems were over, Lansdowne noted, “I do not, however, at all regret that we should have succeeded in irritating them [specifically, by Lord Curzon’s demonstration in the Persian Gulf and Britain’s purchase of Chilian ironclads] and I feel pretty sure that we shall not thereby have at all diminished the prospects of an agreement.”35

Lord Lansdowne never lost sight of his ultimate goal, namely, an agreement with Russia. Both the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 resulted from an unstable international situation, but the Foreign Secretary left no doubt that the negotiations which led to both agreements were conducted with Russia in mind. Lansdowne thought in terms of the balance of power. Without military assistance, he feared that Britain could not effectively oppose Russia in Asia. The threat of war acted as the catalyst on the Foreign Secretary’s policy; a policy characterized, during the last half of his term, by an appeal to France and a firmness towards Russia. He maintained his strictness while never closing the door to a Russian agreement. Unfortunately,

34 Grey to Newbolt, 5 January 1903, as quoted in Robbins, Sir Edward Grey, 131.
35 Newton, Lord Lansdowne, 287.
Lansdowne, towards the close of his tenure, would at last be faced with war, the crisis which, since 1900, he had been trying to avoid.\textsuperscript{36}

In sum, one of the most powerful reasons for which members of the British Foreign Office courted the French was that France was Russia’s ally. While the British did not negotiate the Anglo-French Entente solely to mark its impact on Anglo-Russian relations, nonetheless, the agreement was used as a starting point to approach Russia.\textsuperscript{37} French officials, for their part, felt impelled to sign an agreement with England, Japan’s ally. French diplomats desired a quick resolution to the Russo-Japanese war because the continued success of Japanese military forces was weakening France’s only European ally. Since the Russians did not intend to evacuate Manchuria, the British diplomats believed that the removal of long-standing friction between Britain and France would neutralize the danger that the two powers would be drawn into the war on opposing sides.\textsuperscript{38} To a point this strategy succeeded because the Russian leaders came to believe that the Entente Cordiale meant that France would no longer support Russia on issues which might irritate Britain.\textsuperscript{39}

In July 1902, Arthur James Balfour had succeeded Lord Salisbury as British prime minister. Balfour’s impact on British policy towards Russia is best considered in context with his relationship to his Foreign Secretary, Lansdowne. In Salisbury’s first five years in office, he served as his own Foreign Secretary. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman,

\textsuperscript{36} Monger, \textit{End of Isolation}, 146.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{38} Edwards, “The Japanese Alliance,” 23.
\textsuperscript{39} Neilson, \textit{Britain and the Last Tsar}, 249.
British prime minister from December 1905 to 1908, in contrast, left foreign policy to Sir Edward Grey and never possessed a great interest in foreign affairs. Balfour and Lansdowne, however, in addition to their political relationship of prime minister to Foreign Secretary, were close friends and had attended Eton together. The two carried on long disquisitions concerning both the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Britain’s possible involvement in the Russo-Japanese war. Balfour’s decisions, therefore, must be considered, to an extent, with Lansdowne’s.\textsuperscript{40} The prime minister maintained the continental policy of placing Russia as the potential enemy-in-chief, but, unlike Lansdowne, he preferred to block Russia where he could, rather than negotiate.\textsuperscript{41}

The negotiations which culminated in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 offer a clear example of Balfour’s dissenting views, but reveal little of his desire for a future understanding. Balfour had previously informed Lansdowne that he much preferred Britain’s entry into the Triple Alliance, and he remained the only member of the Cabinet to deplore the choice of Japan over Germany.\textsuperscript{42} His misgivings about the alliance were put forth in a letter to Lansdowne prior to the signing of the agreement. “We may find ourselves fighting for our existence in every part of the globe against Russia and France because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russo-Japanese quarrel in Corea.” In addition, the correspondence illustrates not only Balfour’s preference of

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{42} Monger, \textit{End of Isolation}, 58.
joining the Triple Alliance, it also reveals his concern for Indian defense as a priority over Far Eastern events:

By the Japanese Treaty the only admitted causes of quarrel are confined in the Eastern seas. Our interests there are of course important but they are not vital. I do not think that this is the case with regard to war in which the Triple Alliance was involved. It is a matter of supreme moment to us that Italy should not be crushed, that Austria should not be dismembered and, as I think, that Germany should not be squeezed to death between the hammer of Russia and the anvil of France.

[Also] The weakest spot in the Empire is... the Indian frontier. In a war with Russia our military resources would be strained to the utmost to protect it. A quarrel with Russia anywhere, about anything, means the invasion of India and, if England were without allies, I doubt whether it would be possible for the French to resist joining in the fray. Our position would then be perilous.

I conclude therefore that the dangers are less and the gains are greater from joining the Triple Alliance than would follow from pursuing a similar course with regard to Japan.\(^{43}\)

In 1902, Balfour had already envisioned the 1907 agreement. During his first two years as prime minister, Balfour was consumed with the protection of the Indian frontier. In a letter to his Foreign Secretary regarding Persia, Balfour, albeit somewhat skeptical, illustrated his desire for a future agreement, "No doubt it is possible, not, I hope, probable, that the presence of Russian and English troops in the same country [Persia] might end in collision between the two Powers. It will, I imagine, most likely end in some kind of arrangement."\(^{44}\) As for the entente itself, Balfour welcomed it and recognized the substantial advantages more from a strategic than a diplomatic or commercial perspective. The prime minister understood that conditions in Persia rendered some agreement necessary if friction was to be avoided. The strategic position

\(^{43}\) Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 December 1901, quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 64.
\(^{44}\) Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 September 1902, quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 90.
made the entente essential, and the key to the strategic problem, according to Balfour, was Seistan. Seistan’s position on the northwest boundary of India and proximity to the Indian Ocean made Russian exclusion vital.  

Balfour’s coming to power meant that matters concerning defense took on a higher priority, for he held a strong interest in the subject. In addition, Britain’s military and naval position underwent a thorough reexamination, centered on Russia. His letter to Lansdowne, quoted above, illustrates Balfour’s complete rejection from his uncle’s isolationism and his desire for the general security that only an alliance could provide. Throughout the nine months of the deliberations over the Anglo-French Agreement, Balfour viewed Russia as Britain’s chief threat. In January 1904, he maintained that “we must see Russia as a) the ally of France b) the invader of India c) the dominating influence in Persia d) the possible disturber of European peace.” Balfour and Lansdowne shared the same desire with respect to the necessity of an alliance. But unlike Lansdowne, the prime minister attached less importance to the Far East and more to

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India, and showed a greater concern for the balance of power in Europe which was rare among British statesmen at that time.

Finally, the views of King Edward VII need to be examined with respect to Russia, in general, and the 1907 entente, in particular. In 1894, Nicholas II, Queen Alexandra's nephew, ascended the Russian throne and proceeded to marry a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. On the surface, as Sir Sidney Lee explains, this blood relationship would appear to offer a new and more promising occasion for bringing the two countries into lines of cordial and enduring amity. The contrary proved correct. The respective foreign offices were pessimistic, however, regarding it as inevitable that the interests of the two empires should be antagonistic. Despite his friendship with the Tsar, King Edward VII still possessed hostility specifically aimed at Russia's expansion into China. In March 1901, he wrote to Lansdowne, "The state of affairs in China regarding the position of the Russian and our troops seem to me to be very grave, and as if conflict was imminent."

The king desired that whoever succeeded the popular Russian Ambassador, Baron de Staal, that person, like de Staal, must work towards minimizing the points of difference between the two Powers. In a letter to the Foreign Secretary on the last day of 1902, the king succinctly summed up his views on Anglo-Russian relations with an optimistic spirit of cooperation. Despite the fact that, "there is hardly a country that exists


50 Lee, King Edward VII, 279.
concerning which England and Russia hold similar views . . . I feel convinced that Count
Beckendorff [the Russian Ambassador to London and successor to de Staal] will
endeavour to be most friendly and amiable and make a good impression. I ardently trust
that he will succeed.»51

As 1903 was coming to a close, King Edward maintained the hope of a
reconciliation between the two nations despite numerous obstacles that stood in the way.
Russian diplomats still frowned upon last year’s Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the
growing tension between Russia and Japan was (temporarily) obstructing an Anglo-
Russian entente. 52 But British Foreign Office members’ desire for an agreement
withstood the outbreak of war, and diplomats from both countries recognized that the
proposed Anglo-French Entente required for its full effect cordial relations between
Britain and Russia. The king, in fact, was “very pleased with the French entente and
determined to bring off a similar arrangement with Russia.”53 During a visit to
Copenhagen in April 1904, the king told Alexander Isvolsky, the Russian Foreign
Minister, “I confess . . . my only object being if possible to find the means of paving the
way towards a better understanding with Russia, and, if possible, in time to have
‘pourparlers’ on the vexed questions pending between the two countries.”54 King Edward
had taken a definite step towards the promotion of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement.

51 Ibid., 280.
52 For the effects of the Russo-Japanese war upon Anglo-Russian relations, see above, pp.
31-5.
53 Sir Charles Hardinge to Sir Francis Bertie, 22 April 1904, quoted in Monger, End of
Isolation, 160.
54 Lansdowne to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, 22 April 1904, B.D. 4, 188; and Lee, King
King Edward VII possessed a genuine desire to overcome Anglo-Russian tension through a proposed Anglo-Russian entente. Since the early days of 1904, he had been keen to consolidate the Anglo-French Entente by an agreement with Russia. Like Lord Lansdowne and Sir Arthur Balfour, King Edward realized that there could be no permanent security as long as Russian and Britain designs were in conflict in Persia, Afghanistan, and China. He lost no opportunity, therefore, of furthering a cordial understanding on these three important questions. In a letter of 21 October 1905 to Sir Charles Hardinge, the British Ambassador, the king expressed that he relate to the emperor “[his] earnest desire that the best and most durable relations should be established between the two countries, and that all important points should be discussed in the most amicable spirit and arranged as soon as possible.”

King Edward VII’s reign saw a British alliance with Japan and agreements with both France and Russia. His overall influence in the formations of these agreements, however, was minimal. The great diplomatic developments of his reign were negotiated by his ministers. No doubt King Edward desired a Russian entente, but his own views were too personal and impulsive for him to be a successful diplomat.

British Foreign Office policy towards Russia from the end of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance up to the December 1905 change to a Liberal Government illustrated a gradual shift in focus. Imperial considerations most predominate under Lord Salisbury’s administration were giving way to a greater concern for Europe and the balance of

Edward VII, 284-87.
55 Lansdowne to Bertie, 24 May 1906, B.D. 4, 217.
power. Sir Arthur Balfour, although he maintained the policy of seeing Russia as the chief enemy, welcomed a Russian entente with respect to the protection of India. Lord Lansdowne was the first diplomat to truly abandon the policy of isolation and look to the continent for more cordial Anglo-Russian relations. His memorandum of 10 September 1903 illustrated how he envisioned the Anglo-French entente as the first step towards an Anglo-Russian agreement. Lansdowne also recognized Britain's military weakness as a justification to abandon isolation. Upon reviewing the attitudes and decisions of Balfour, Lansdowne, and even King Edward VII, it is important to keep the larger picture in mind. British foreign policy-makers looked upon Russia differently. Russia was the enigma. Historian Keith Wilson argues that the number one priority of British foreign policy from 1894 to 1907 was a Russian agreement, and attempts to accomplish this agreement, as Balfour well understood in 1902, proved significant in laying the foundation for future Russian policy. An agreement with Russia may have been cloaked in a settlement of colonial disputes, especially before the rise of Lansdowne, but it was much more than that. The balance of power taking shape in Europe dictated British Foreign Office attention and diplomatic response. A future Anglo-Russian entente carried with it a European side and the new Liberal cabinet under Sir Edward Grey had to face that reality.

56 Wilson, Policy of the Entente, 71.
CHAPTER 4

THE LAST DAYS OF THE UNIONISTS FROM
THE END OF 1904 TO THE CHANGE
TO LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was the eventual result of continuous British attempts, by both the Unionist and Liberal governments, to reach a diplomatic understanding with Russia. Relations between the two countries, however, were smoother after Britain’s change in government. But why were the negotiations more successful after the change to Liberal rule, than earlier attempts under the Unionists had been? Lord Salisbury, British prime minister from 1895 to 1902, and Lord Lansdowne, British foreign secretary from 1900 to 1905, and Sir Edward Grey, who was foreign secretary from December 1905 to 1916, all wished to come to some arrangement with Russia, but conditions for doing so were more favorable after 1905.

The most important event of Great Britain’s Edwardian era was the abandonment of the traditional policy of isolation and the nation’s turn towards Europe.¹ In the late 1890s and even with the turn of the century, Great Britain possessed one important factor, and was aware of another, which sustained this policy: the world’s most powerful

navy safeguarded its shores; and the continuous rivalries among the other Powers ruled out the need for coalitions. Lord Salisbury maintained the policy of "splendid isolation" despite the catastrophic Boer War. The South African involvement, as noted in Chapter 3, reinforced Britain's traditional policy. Notwithstanding the fact that Foreign Secretary Lansdowne was gradually leading Britain to look to continental allies, British historian A.J.P. Taylor has argued that perhaps the height of Britain's security and isolation even extended through the settlement of the Dogger Bank affair in November 1904.

Slowly, however, Great Britain's nineteenth-century advantages were ceasing to operate. Technical changes in armaments were reshaping diplomacy. In the early years of the twentieth century members of the British government had to adjust their foreign policy to a global situation which appeared to be moving against the Empire. Lord Lansdowne sought a European alliance, in part, because of Britain's acknowledged military weaknesses. Britain's industrial monopoly was fading and with it Germany (and, it should be noted, the United States) would shortly possess the means, if not the will, to challenge Britain as a world power.

The policy of isolation was leaving Great Britain vulnerable in the face of Europe's expansionist Powers. Previously, British policy makers had been spectators to

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2 The phrase was coined by Salisbury and, ironically enough, he used it to describe a position which Britain could not achieve. If the British lived in "splendid isolation" then they could base their policy on moral principles. See A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1919 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 346.
3 See above Chapter 3; and Taylor, Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 425.
continental events. The Unionist Government was concerned more with imperial affairs and expanding the empire. Slowly, however, Britain became a participant in affairs across the Channel. Events in Europe and the Far East were giving a powerful impetus to future policy by forcing diplomats to structure negotiations in reaction to circumstances. In almost every part of the globe the British were faced with increased competition both commercially and politically, while on the continent alterations in the relative strengths of the great powers were producing international tensions. Germanys rumblings in Europe and Japans rise in the Far East, for example, were causes for concern in the Foreign Office. Policy makers were aware of the scramble for empire in Central Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, caused by the conflicting ambitions of Russia, Germany, and France. Only slowly did the imperial preoccupation of the Conservatives begin to change to involvement in European affairs. Lansdowne and Joseph Chamberlain, colonial secretary from 1895 to 1903, were the first to illustrate the perils of isolation and the advantages of turning to the continent. Lansdowne was convinced that, notwithstanding the gradual improvement of Great Britains position after the Boer war, the nations resources were over-taxed and Britain stood in need of continental friends, if not allies. The maintenance and protection of the Empire's colonial possessions would have to be accomplished through a European coalition.

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One of the driving forces behind Lansdowne and the members of the Foreign Office’s search for a European diplomatic arrangement was German diplomacy. Somewhat ironically, Great Britain’s early twentieth-century deteriorating relations with Germany marked a change of comparable significance to the improvement in Anglo-Russian relations during this same time. Relationships with both Russia and Germany were connected, indirectly, to the reasons why most influential members of the British Foreign Office desired the 1907 Anglo-Russian entente.

One event which caused British diplomats concern, primarily because Britain was diplomatically bound to support French aims, was the Moroccan Crisis of 1905. The Moroccan crisis was Germany’s attempt to break the Anglo-French Entente. Although the diplomatic intricacies of that crisis exceed the scope of this work, it is important to look at some aspects of Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow’s and German diplomacy during this period since this diplomacy played a major role in exacerbating Anglo-German antagonism, which ultimately led to the signing of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente.

Germany had acquired important commercial interests in Morocco and, thus, had the right to be contacted in regard to any alteration of the status quo. The German government was informed of the Anglo-French Entente, but Théophile Delcassé, the French foreign minister, had failed to ask for Germany’s recognition of France’s special position in Morocco. The Germans, therefore, had a legitimate grievance and one which,

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8 For an excellent account of the Moroccan crisis, see Monger, *End of Isolation*, 186-235.
in principle, would public opinion recognize. Von Bülow, however, failed to proceed
with moderation, which created problems for the Wilhelmstrasse.

The failure of German diplomacy, which contributed to drawing Britain and
Russia closer, fell under two headings. In the first place, the German Foreign Office did
not imagine that Britain, as provided by article 9 of the Anglo-French agreement, which
offered "diplomatic support", would go to great lengths to support France. Secondly, the
"Sphynx-like reticence of the Wilhelmstrasse," as Harold Nicolson labeled the German
Foreign Office, mistakenly assumed the Germans could push the French into a
continental alliance with Germany against the French will. Neither assumption held
ture, and, as a result, the failure of German diplomacy in 1905-06 created what some
Germans had referred to as the "policy of encirclement" and what many British historians
have labeled as "the strengthening of the entente."

The single most destructive act the Wilhelmstrasse committed was Emperor
William's visit to Tangier on 31 March 1905 which began the Moroccan crisis. His
deliberate recognition of the Sultan's independence transformed the Anglo-French
Entente from a settlement of outstanding differences to the idea (in both French and

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9 For a full account of the Anglo-French Entente including the secret articles, see G. P.
Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds. British Documents on the Origins of the War, 11
Hereafter cited as B.D.
10 Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart., First Lord Carnock: A Study in the Old
Diplomacy (London: Constable and Company, 1930), 156.
11 Prince Bülow and not the emperor suggested the visit. In fact, William, initially, raised
objections contending that the visit would be unsafe and undignified. See Nicolson, Sir
Arthur Nicolson, 161.
British Foreign Office officials' minds) that the entente must now be used as a defense against German pressure. The Moroccan crisis dramatically altered the power balance in Europe by ostracizing Germany and exacerbating the British Foreign Office member's ill-feelings towards that nation. At the same time, the failure of German diplomacy was bringing Britain and Russia closer together.

One of the major concerns of the Unionist Government, especially during the tumultuous year of 1905, was the fear that a Liberal administration might pursue a pacifist foreign policy. During 1905, Russia experienced domestic revolution, France and Germany were embroiled in the Moroccan dispute, and at the end of the year Great Britain saw the passing of ten years of Conservative rule. The main outlines of British foreign policy, however, continued. On 6 November 1905, Lord Lansdowne had commented on a variety of speeches by leading liberals. "It is good that... foreign policy should be lifted out of the rut of party politics", he explained, "and placed on a higher and different plane. It is of immense importance that our foreign policy in this country should be a continuous policy, and not deflected from its course by the eddies of party political opinion."  

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new leader of the Liberal Party, who concerned himself, for the most part, with domestic affairs, fully agreed. Additionally,  

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13 The Times (London), 7 November 1905.
Campbell-Bannerman believed that British Liberal attacks upon the Tsar's despotic rule were out of place and only exacerbated the tensions between the two nations. Sir Charles Hardinge, British ambassador to St. Petersburg, had reassured the Tsar in October 1905 that "complete unanimity prevailed in England on the subject of friendly relations with Russia, since it constitutes part of the policy not only of the Government but also of the Opposition." In addition, Sir Edward Grey expressed reassurance that foreign policy would continue without changes. In a London speech on foreign policy at a meeting of Free Trade electors two months prior to taking office as foreign secretary, Grey stated, "I observe in some quarters that there is . . . an idea that a change in Government in this country would bring some new and unwelcome change in foreign policy. . . . In my opinion there is no foundation whatever for such an opinion."

The Conservatives bequeathed a considerable heritage to their successors in the improvement of relations with Russia. Salisbury had seen the desirability of a future Anglo-Russian agreement. Lansdowne picked up Salisbury's efforts but with much greater success. From the end of 1902 he worked assiduously to persuade Russian diplomats to renew conversations towards an Anglo-Russia Asiatic settlement. Although his efforts were interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War, mutual assurances provided for a resumption after the peace settlement. Before the Unionists left office, Lansdowne, in the short time remaining, pushed Anglo-Russian relations towards a "happy augury for the

17 The Times (London), 21 October 1905.
future.” This was the Russian inheritance that the Liberals received: not definitive proposals, but a feeling of cordiality and a hope of better future relations between two bitter rivals.

Historian Keith Neilson suggests that some of the reasons the Anglo-Russian negotiations proceeded more easily under the Liberals were Russian. Russian statesmen realized that their diplomatic leverage vis a vis Britain was not as strong following the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, as it had been before their defeat. Russian domestic unrest also exacerbated that country’s precarious situation. Although the internal situation in Russia during the year of 1905 is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to look briefly at how Russia’s liberal reforms and growth of constitutional ideas influenced British officials.

The most persuasive belief which existed in Britain about Russia was that Russia was a reactionary country. That the British public believed Russia to be the most illiberal major state in Europe had an impact on Anglo-Russian affairs. British officials believed that deliberations would be easier between countries with similar governments than between a constitutional monarchy and a misunderstood or disliked form of government. For members of the British Foreign Office, reforms in Russia were related to that country’s parliament, the Duma. Broadly speaking, they saw the creation of the Duma as

18 Hardinge to Lansdowne, 24 October 1905, B.D., 4: 215.
19 Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 267.
evidence that Russia was attempting to progress towards constitutional government. In the summer of 1905 massive Russian peasant uprisings culminated in a mammoth general strike which lasted from 20 October to 30 October 1905. The Russian Tsar, Nicholas II was forced to capitulate and he issued the October Manifesto. Briefly, the October Manifesto provided the conditions necessary for legal political activity, namely, freedom of speech, assembly, conscience, and union. In addition, to placate the people, the October Manifesto announced the creation of a Duma with actual legislative powers. The government hoped, in creating a political system responsible to the country’s social needs, that it would reduce popular unrest.

For obvious reasons, British Foreign Office officials believed that it would be much easier to deal with a less autocratic Russia. “The institution of the Duma in Russia,” future Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey remarked, “has done something to make even [Britain] more sympathetic.”21 In short, as historian Nicholas Riasanovsky concludes, the October Manifesto made the empire of the Romanovs a constitutional monarchy.22

British officials kept a watchful eye on the appointments of Russian foreign ministers. British officials viewed Vladimir Lamsdorff (1900-1906) as very capable, and Alexander Izvolsky (1906-1910) as a particular favorite and a strong backer of the Anglo-Russian Entente. In a letter to Sir Edward Grey, then foreign secretary, in the spring of

1906, Sir Arthur Nicolson, the new British ambassador to Russia under Grey, assured the foreign secretary of Izvolsky's support. "... [Izvolsky is] desirous of entering upon a discussion which might lead to a satisfactory conclusion. Monsieur Izvolsky expressed his great satisfaction with this and he assured me that he would cordially take part in the discussions to which I alluded." Izvolsky admired English institutions and had a strong interest in English literature and history. His stay at Edinburgh, where he attended the university, helped to contribute to Izvolsky's admiration of the West, as well as influencing his timid liberal views and English sympathies. Russia's domestic disorders, the appointment of Russian ministers willing to work with Great Britain, and the nation's military defeat in the Russo-Japanese war were all factors in altering British officials' perception of the Tsarist empire, insofar as an agreement was concerned.

The way had been prepared for a closer Anglo-Russian friendship by the appointment in May 1904 of Sir Charles Hardinge as British ambassador to St. Petersburg. Lansdowne had selected Hardinge because Lansdowne attached "immense importance to the presence in Headquarters of a high official thoroughly conversant with the recent course of Anglo-Russian relations." Hardinge arrived at his post with all the advantages of a long career abroad. He had experience dealing in Russian affairs and was

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24 Grey to Sir Claude MacDonald, 28 May 1906, Grey Papers, FO 800/371; Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 217.
26 Lansdowne to King Edward VII, 22 November 1905, quoted in Wilson, Policy of the Entente, 19.
a strong advocate of cordial Anglo-Russian relations dating back to his time in Persia in the late nineteenth century. Upon becoming ambassador in 1904, Hardinge became the leading figure in the negotiations during the strains of the Russo-Japanese war.

Hardinge's tasks during the conflict were clear, but difficult. He had to maintain Britain's position of strict neutrality while ensuring that the nation's interests were not affected by the hostilities. The ambassador to St. Petersburg well understood Great Britain's precarious situation. On the one hand, Britain was two years into the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Hardinge was careful not to upset Japan diplomatically. On the other, Russia was France's ally, and Britain was fresh from the Anglo-French Entente. In both instances, Hardinge used remarkable skill and persuasiveness by appeasing Japan while working closer to an Anglo-Russian understanding, despite the fact that progress was, at times, difficult.27

Hardinge worked assiduously towards a future Anglo-Russian agreement, but he had to suspend negotiations when Russia's internal problems were at their height, and he had returned to England for a visit just prior to the fall of the Unionist government. In a December 1905 letter from Grey to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, British chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, the new foreign secretary echoed Hardinge's policy of inaction concerning Russia's internal problems:

In a conversation with the Russian Ambassador today, I said that I had hoped that an Agreement might be reached between Great Britain and Russia. [Hardinge] said that he was himself responsible for any negotiations of this kind having been suspended, but he had felt that it was quite impossible to make any progress with them while things in

Russia were in their present condition. I said I felt that this must be so, and that of course I should not press any question at this moment, but that, during this inevitable delay, it would be the policy of our Government not to do anything which would make the resumption of negotiations or a settlement more difficult later on. The Ambassador expressed great satisfaction at this.28

Unlike Hardinge, who saw the importance of close Anglo-Russian relations, there were those in the Cabinet who felt otherwise. One official whose views on Russia were given careful consideration was Sir Cecil Spring-Rice. Spring-Rice had become first secretary of the St. Petersburg embassy in 1903 but did not share his fellow diplomats' benevolence towards Russia. Moreover, he was not sanguine about the possibility of good Anglo-Russian relations. He found the country ugly, the climate intolerable, and the people accustomed to misery.29 In addition, Spring-Rice was obsessed with the idea that Russia intended to invade India. Sir Arthur Balfour, then the prime minister, concurred with Spring-Rice on what he perceived as the Russian policy towards India, but not to the same degree.30

One official who took Spring-Rice’s views on Russia a step further was Lord Curzon. Curzon, Viceroy of India from January 1899 to August 1905, was deeply suspicious of both British and Russian policy. He was determined to reverse the balance in Central Asia and what he regarded as the “dilatory and conservative policies that had

hitherto prevailed in London, and force the British Government to adopt a more
determined response to the Russian advances in Central Asia. Curzon criticized the
defeatist attitude of the Home Government, which he felt incapable of formulating a
coherent Persian and Central Asian policy. By early 1905, in fact, it was no longer
possible to conceal the disagreement between himself and the Cabinet regarding Central
Asian policy. Curzon resigned his post in August of that year.

The last years of Conservative rule, had seen a forward policy against Russia.
Foreign Secretary Lansdowne, it is true, had been unhappy with this policy, but generally
encouraged firm diplomacy against Russia. In addition, British policy-makers were
becoming more aware of German diplomacy. The year 1905 was crucial in the unfolding
of a new European order. As explained above, France and Germany were embroiled in
the Moroccan dispute, Russia was in the midst of domestic revolution, and Great Britain
was seeing the passing of ten years of Conservative rule. In the autumn of that year,
Lansdowne, who recognized that his own tenure was nearing an end, hoped that the new
Liberal Government, under Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, would carry his Russian
policy towards an Anglo-Russian agreement.

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CHAPTER 5

THE LIBERALS TAKE CHARGE: FROM
DECEMBER 1905 TO JANUARY 1907

With the December 1905 elections, Britain ushered in a decade of Liberal
government and continued its turn away from isolation. Unlike the Unionists, the new
Liberal government had no interest in expanding the Empire; its primary concern was to
consolidate what Britain already had.\(^1\) With respect to Russia, the new cabinet decided
eyearl in its course to continue the Unionist plans and work towards obtaining a Russian
agreement. The Liberals were making it clear to the Russians that they were as eager for
a friendly arrangement with Russia as their predecessors had been.

Great Britain's Liberal government had come to office pledged to improve
relations with St. Petersburg. The signs were encouraging. Foreign Office reforms after
1905 gave greater influence to its professional personnel.\(^2\) The Liberals had the example
of their predecessors, a change in personnel in St. Petersburg, and a liberal turning in
Russia in their favor. After 1905 the upper ranks of the British Foreign Office desired
Russian politics to continue in its liberalizing course, so that Russia would be more

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1 George Bernstein, *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England* (Boston:
2 Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge:
acceptable as a British ally. Above all, the Liberal government possessed an awareness of the clear-cut and limited area of Anglo-Russian friction, which was sufficiently dangerous to make an agreement worth having.³

Soon after the New Year, on 10 January 1906, Charles Hardinge, outgoing ambassador to St. Petersburg, met with Tsar Nicholas II for the last time. He presented a letter from King Edward VII announcing that he had been recalled to London to become permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs. Hardinge’s final interview with the Tsar went cordially, with both parties expressing the continued hope and satisfaction over the recent improvement in Anglo-Russian relations, as well as the conviction that the future would find them better still.⁴ Hardinge left his post in Russia and went back to the Foreign Office in 1906 with full determination to achieve an Anglo-Russian agreement. The British Foreign Office reforms of 1905-06 freed Hardinge, now permanent under-secretary, from direct departmental duties, and he could focus more on general administration and diplomatic problems.⁵ Although he had excelled in his ambassadorship, Hardinge looked forward to his new post and to working closely with

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Sir Arthur Nicolson, the new ambassador to Russia, to bring the Russian agreement to fruition.

For the next decade Nicolson was at the center of British policy towards Russia. Because he was regarded as the leading Russophile in the British decision-making elite, and since it was his tireless labors that culminated in the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, Nicolson’s position deserves close examination. Sir Arthur Nicolson was a strong advocate of good Anglo-Russian relations. Nearly twenty years prior to assuming his post, Nicolson had advocated an Anglo-Russian agreement as the ideal solution to the quarrels between the two countries over Persia. His determination to attain the long-coveted general agreement with Russia never waned.

Nicolson, like Hardinge before him, had spent time in Persia early in his career and formed an appreciation of the problems Russian diplomats caused British Foreign Office officials in Central Asia. He understood that the Russian advance towards the Indian frontier was considerably greater than a mere Cossack march. In addition, Nicolson realized that the British government’s policy of supporting Persia exposed Great Britain and Russia to constant friction. The best way to halt the Russian advance, Nicolson concluded during his time in Persia, lay in negotiations with St. Petersburg and not through conflict in Central Asia. One advantage Nicolson had when he became

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6 For an excellent account of Nicolson as ambassador to Russia, see Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, 121-53.
8 Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 59.
9 Ibid., xi.
ambassador to Russia was the immediate favorable impression he made upon Sir Edward Grey.

Grey's approval of the appointment of Nicolson was due in large measure to the latter's adroit handling of British affairs at the Algeciras Conference of 1906. Although the Algeciras conference is not directly germane to an examination of Nicolson and Russia, it is, nonetheless, significant for two reasons. First, the conference placed Nicolson on the diplomatic stage of Europe for four months. In February 1906, Hardinge had written to "my dear Nico", that "we are watching your conference with greatest possible interest." Second, the new foreign secretary got an immediate opportunity to observe Nicolson under fire. Grey could have resented Lansdowne's appointment of Nicolson, which was completed prior to Grey assuming his post as foreign secretary. Nicolson's skillful diplomacy during the Algeciras conference, however, confirmed in Grey's mind that Lansdowne had made a good choice.

The conference, which opened on 16 January 1906 at Algeciras, Spain, was the international meeting over the 1905 Moroccan Crisis. By testing the Anglo-French

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10 For a closer look at Nicolson's experience at Algeciras, see Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 170-99.
13 Neilson, "'My Beloved Russians,' " 526.
14 Briefly, the conference was Germany's attempt to reduce France to subordination without a war. The Germans pushed for the independence of Morocco while France desired possession of the police and the Moroccan bank. The end result, after six weeks of stalemate, was a diplomatic defeat for Germany, which found its only support from Morocco and Austria-Hungary. See Chapter 4 and A. J. P. Taylor, The
Entente, the conference also witnessed the beginning of a wider association of German diplomacy. Nicolson used the diplomatic situation presented him, namely, politically isolating actions by German Officials, to bring Great Britain and Russia closer in a spirit of cooperation and common counsel. His conversations with Arturo P. Cassini, the Russian Foreign Minister, paved the way for Anglo-Russian cooperation in support of France’s position against Germany.15 Perhaps historian Rogers Churchill was not exaggerating when he remarked of the Algiceras conference that “the old animosities were not so unsurmountable and there appeared a spirit of willingness to work together towards a better understanding.”16 Nicolson’s experience at Algeciras helped to shape his perception of how negotiations with Russia should be conducted. At a dinner at Foreign Secretary Grey’s house on 24 April 1906, shortly after the Algiceras conference, the foreign secretary, Nicolson, and others, “talked entente in and out, up and down” with the result that Nicolson was sent to St. Petersburg a month later with instructions to work towards a future agreement.17

Still, no British diplomat proved more influential on Anglo-Russian relations than Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey. Grey was Britain’s leading figure in foreign affairs prior to the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, and, because he will be the author of the agreement itself, it is necessary to examine the foreign secretary’s impressions of Russia

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15 Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Grey, 2 January 1906, B.D., 3: 204.
17 Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 206.
and the background that created these views. Grey entered Parliament as a Liberal Member for his home constituency of the Berwick-on-Tweed division of Northumberland. A decade prior to becoming foreign secretary in the new Liberal government in December 1905, Grey served three years as parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs. After 1895, Grey became the recognized Liberal spokesman for foreign affairs in the Commons. During his time in opposition, his work was confined largely, but not exclusively, to foreign affairs. Grey, as foreign secretary, acquired his general reading of Britain’s diplomatic position from conclusions he had reached while in opposition. Before being appointed foreign secretary, Grey was already concerning himself with easing the pressures on Britain’s imperial frontier through a Russian agreement. He was exposed to the colonial quarrels of France and Germany, and the possible ramifications of the new Dual Alliance. During the Armenian crisis of 1895, young Grey argued that “a bold and skillful Foreign Secretary might detach Russia from the number of our active enemies.” Years afterwards, Grey, then speaking in behalf of the opposition on 26 July 1901, reiterated the importance of cordial relations with Russia when he declared that a joint understanding was “really vital to any satisfactory condition

of affairs."\textsuperscript{21} Grey's remarks seem to confirm a sense of agreement between the government and the opposition to the desirability of an understanding with Russia. Six months later, on 22 January 1902, he spoke in favor of an Anglo-Russian agreement regarding Persia. Grey argued that the only result of the senseless quarreling would be war, and if no arrangement were consummated, Russia would benefit more than Britain.\textsuperscript{22}

The lessons of the years prior to becoming foreign secretary left an impression on young Grey.\textsuperscript{23} Britain's position as a global power depended upon the balance of power, and this balance, in Grey's opinion, rested with the British response to German diplomacy. His policy was, in large measure, shaped by his experiences as under-secretary in the 1890s. Germany, Grey believed, had used Britain's late nineteenth-century difficulties with both France and Russia to extract concessions as a price for its (Germany's) support for British policy in Egypt and elsewhere. In a 1910 letter to Sir Edward Goschen, then ambassador at Berlin, Grey recalled how his early impressions of Germany were formed during his tenure as under-secretary:

The general impression left on my mind was that we were expected to give way whenever British interests conflicted with German interests, and that we got no diplomatic support from Germany anywhere and continual friction. It is true that the Germans did support us in Egypt, but I remember once at any rate a threat to withdraw that support if we did not clear the way for railway concessions in Turkey.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th ser., 98 (1901), 286-7.  
\textsuperscript{22} Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th ser., 101 (1902), 609-10.  
\textsuperscript{23} In 1905, Grey was 43, a young age for a Foreign Secretary.  
\textsuperscript{24} Grey to Sir Edward Groschen, 26 October 1910, B.D., 6: 538.
Grey was acquiring a growing uneasiness as to the attitude of some German government officials and believed, a full ten years before he would assume his role as foreign secretary, that Germany was a danger to Great Britain's security.

When he left the Foreign Office for the first time, Grey acquired a much graver impression of the German dangers to European peace and of Great Britain's isolated position. In January 1903, nearly three years prior to becoming foreign secretary, Grey's feelings towards Germany worsened as he described the nation as "our worst enemy and our greatest danger." He was convinced that German military planners were seeking to establish their control over the continent of Europe and, to make matters worse, they were rapidly acquiring the means to do so. The foreign secretary was a product of his time who conducted his diplomacy with a response to outward events. Lord Lansdowne's 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Anglo-French entente of 1904 were, for Grey, the means by which the government of Britain could contain what had been widely regarded as an ambitious German government. Grey welcomed the Anglo-French entente especially after renewed hostility on the part of German actions over Morocco put new life into the French agreement. An agreement with France was, in Grey's mind, inexorably linked with a future Russian agreement. "We could not pursue at one and the same time a policy of agreement with France and a policy of counter alliances against

Russia . . . an agreement with Russia was the natural complement of the agreement with France.\textsuperscript{28}

The rise of a powerful Germany at the turn of the century altered the balance of power on the continent and made many British Foreign Office officials aware that they lacked the resources to take care of both their imperial possessions and continental responsibilities.\textsuperscript{29} The British navy was sufficient for safeguarding the seas, but diplomacy seemed to be Britain's only means of strength on land. British historian A.J.P. Taylor remarked that the European balance of power was the dominating factor behind the foreign policy of the new Liberal government, and that all German political and diplomatic moves were seen as bids for continental mastery.\textsuperscript{30} The rivalry with Germany became the key factor in British diplomacy. Therefore, to grasp the full meaning of Grey and the British Foreign Office officials' mindset leading to the signing of the Russian entente, it is necessary to see the negotiations in the context of Britain's foreign relations with Germany.

Early twentieth-century Anglo-German antagonism exceeds the scope of this study. Since Grey, however, believed the German threat acute enough to require diplomatic action in the form of an agreement with Britain's traditional enemy, it is necessary to examine briefly some aspects of German diplomacy which caused Grey this

\textsuperscript{29} Keith Neilson, "Wishful Thinking: The Foreign Office and Russia, 1907-1917," in Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy 1895-1939, B.J.C. McKercher and D.J. Moss, eds. (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), 173.
\textsuperscript{30} Taylor, Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 438.
concern. The single greatest cause of Anglo-German tension around the turn of the century, as well as the main issue for the rising Germanophobia in the Foreign Office during Grey’s tenure, was Germany’s resolve to build a formidable naval fleet. The growth of the German fleet increased British awareness of defense problems and placed the Admiralty in an awkward position. From 1897 onward, the largest branch of Germany’s complex naval administration, the Reichsmarineamt, was under the control of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, Secretary of the Navy. What is germane to this examination was the British Foreign Office’s awareness of Tirpitz’s firm conviction that the German empire needed naval power as a political and military factor against England.31

In 1898, Tirpitz had sanctioned a navy bill which marked a new departure for Germany. The bill proposed not only the construction of cruisers to defend the German coast, but also proposed combat-ready battleships. The bill provided for the construction of five first-class cruisers and eleven battleships to be completed by 1905. Although at this time the German navy was relatively small, the adoption of a second bill in January 1906, further expanded the building program and was the source of heated British Cabinet disputes. The result was that between 1898 and 1906, the Imperial Navy was steadily expanding at annual rates which necessitated a response from Britain.

Initially, the Foreign Office was slow to respond to the German naval laws. In the long run, despite German chancellor von Bülow’s cautious foreign policy and the efforts of the German press bureaus, it proved impossible to avoid raising British Foreign Office

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31 Jonathan Steinberg, “The German Background, 1905-1914,” in Hinsley, British Foreign Policy, 196.
suspicions. By 1902, the admiralty came to the conclusion that the German fleet was being constructed against them and the admiralty began to consider countermeasures.\(^{32}\) A naval attaché to the British Foreign Office was appointed to enlarge on the theme of German naval power.\(^{33}\) In 1904, the Royal Navy acted upon the German naval expansion and regrouped to meet a German threat in the North Sea. The British navy placed the bulk of its main fighting force in home waters.

Given the size and efficiency of the growing German army and the extent of diplomatic and political influence Germany possessed over Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Rumania, many British Foreign Office officials felt the need to counter the German naval challenge. In a letter to Lord Lansdowne in the Spring of 1902, Sir Frank Lascelles, British ambassador to Berlin, denied that the German naval law was aimed at Britain, a denial which had to be retracted in a postscript after consultation with his naval attaché:

Since writing the letter, I have had a talk with Captain Ewart, who has pointed out to me that the development of the German navy was directed against England. This was stated over and over again in the Reichstag, and the preamble of the Navy Bill states that its object is to create a navy which will be equal to that as the greatest sea power.\(^{34}\)

Sir Charles Hardinge, after 1906 permanent under-secretary to Sir Edward Grey, expressed the view that became the prevailing Foreign Office orthodoxy. He believed that the German naval building program represented an intended challenge to Britain's

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\(^{33}\) Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, 54.

supremacy at sea, and that only Britain's clear demonstration of naval supremacy was the accurate response to give Germany. A Russian agreement would, therefore, serve to give British diplomacy greater support and flexibility in Europe. The German government's decision to increase the German navy, combined with the strongest army on the continent, was viewed by many in the British Foreign Office as a blatant indication of aggressive intent.\textsuperscript{35}

What became apparent was the beginning of a naval rivalry between two nations each of whom feared the strength, whether plausible or not, of the other. For Grey, the German naval threat was far more frightening in its implications because Great Britain had established its worldwide mastery through naval strength and tradition. Grey and others in the Foreign Office looked upon German naval expansion as a threat to Britain's security primarily because of Germany's pre-existing large and efficient army. An increase in German shipbuilding, therefore, was unnecessary if it was meant to secure defensive purposes.\textsuperscript{36} Germany could already defend itself, or enforce its dominance, through military action on the continent of Europe. Perhaps it would seem an exaggeration to state that British Foreign Officials actually "feared" the consequences of the German government's decision to build a High Seas Fleet. More properly, members of the Cabinet, at least initially, were concerned that Germany might actually succeed in realizing Emperor William II's dream of a continental coalition against Britain, and that


a possible naval combination would result which Britain could not hope to combat on equal terms. Nonetheless, to Grey, Hardinge, and other members of the Foreign Office, Germany's naval development was seen as a starting point to a maritime and a European domination in peacetime previously unequaled by any power even during wartime.

The growth of the German fleet constituted enough of a threat to British power that the Admiralty, members of the War Office, and the Committee of Imperial Defense all were considering, in 1905-06, the implications of a possible Anglo-French war with Germany. In 1905, the C.I.D. discussed whether a foreign (specifically, German) invasion of the British Isles were possible. The investigation proved negative, but the alarm was so great that the discussion and conclusion were reopened prior to the Anglo-Russian entente in 1907. In both cases, the main threat was seen not as Russia but as Germany. Grey and other members of the Foreign Office did not fear Russian power. On the contrary, they believed that a powerful Russia, side-by-side with Great Britain (and France), was the surest check to German ambitions.

The expansion of the German navy was also very much in the mind of John Fisher, First Sea Lord (1904-10). Like Hardinge and Grey, Fisher sincerely believed in the German threat. "Undoubtedly, she [Germany] is a possible enemy," Fisher recorded.

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39 Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, 55.
40 Williams, "The Strategic Background To The Anglo-Russian Entente," 369.
"There is a political rivalry which has unfortunately but indisputably caused bad blood between the two countries." In a letter to King Edward VII, the First Sea Lord revealed his sentiments as well as his plan to counter the agressive German navy. "Our only probable enemy is Germany. Germany keeps its whole fleet always concentrated within a few hours of England. We must therefore keep a fleet twice as powerful concentrated within a few hours of Germany." In addition, Fisher, somewhat sarcastically, offered his response to the reported German attitude towards him and the British navy. "[I understand] I am the most hated man in Germany! I think that proves we are doing the right things in the British Navy and accept it as a compliment."

Was the rapid development of the German fleet reason alone to court a Russian partnership in order to maintain Britain’s security? In part, the answer is no. An additional reason why British officials were concerned with William II’s and German chancellor, von Bulow’s ideas for continental hegemony was geopolitical. Affairs on the continent, more so after 1905, affected Great Britain more directly than imperial tensions. Members of the Foreign Office, in the interest of maintaining a continental balance of power, concentrated more upon western Europe than upon the eastern frontiers. Sir Edward Grey was less concerned with global events than his predecessors.

44 Fisher to Lord Francis Knollys, 17 December 1906, quoted in Marder, Fear God and Dread Naught, 1:107.
Though he had been one of the Liberal Imperialist leaders, events such as the Boer War had dimmed Grey's enthusiasm for Empire.\textsuperscript{46} His horizon was limited to Europe, for it was there, as historian Keith Robbins stated in his biography of Grey, that Grey believed the dangers to the British Empire existed.\textsuperscript{47} It was the German threat to Belgium and northern France, not the Russian threat to Persia, that concerned Grey.

Another significant factor which brought Britain and Russia together and did not go unnoticed by Sir Edward Grey and the Foreign Office was the simple fact that Germany actually was getting relatively stronger. The statistics compiled by historian A.J.P. Taylor merit a brief examination.\textsuperscript{48} In the period from 1900 to 1910, Germany outpaced Great Britain in armaments expenditures, defense estimates steel, pig-iron and overall manufacturing production. Great Britain's decrease in armament expenditures \textit{vis à vis} Germany, it should be noted, was aided by Britain's change to Liberal government in December 1905. Most significantly, however, and here the development of the German fleet proved a definite factor, was Germany's increase over Britain in the percentage of naval expenditures. Although Great Britain spent considerably more towards its navy, 40.4 million £ to 20.6 million £, Britain's percentage increase in relation to Germany was less. German military planners were building ships at a much quicker rate. This awareness by British Officials of a military and overall manufacturing deficiency as compared to Germany, coupled with other unquantifiable characteristics

\textsuperscript{46} Steiner, \textit{Britain and the Origins of the First World War}, 39.  
\textsuperscript{48} Taylor, \textit{Struggle for Mastery in Europe}, xxvii-xxxii.
such as superior German efficiency, planning, discipline, and advanced technology, further influenced Grey to search for the best means of halting active German designs.

Grey's aim was to restrain Germany while at the same time protect Britain's interests. The foreign secretary's own statements leave little doubt of his intentions and his constant concern for the balance of power. Grey had written to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice in February of 1906, "I am impatient to see Russia re-established as a factor in European politics." While Germany was embroiled with France over Morocco, Grey had already envisioned what needed to happen in order to strengthen Great Britain's position in Europe. "The recovery of Russia," he wrote optimistically to Nicolson during the Algeciras conference, "will change the situation in Europe to the advantage of France [and Britain]." At the height of the Moroccan crisis, Grey juxtaposed his concern for Europe with the possibility of a future entente with Russia. In his private memorandum of February 1906, the foreign secretary revealed, in succinct and lucid form, that his interest in the affairs of Europe must be accompanied by a solicitude of Russia:

The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least the prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An entente between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.

The importance of this memorandum cannot be overemphasized. Grey saw clearly the implications of a future Anglo-Russian agreement. What he and the other

50 Grey to Sir Arthur Nicolson, 12 February 1906, B.D., 3: 249.
members of the Foreign Office was working towards, in stark contrast to his predecessors, was a new doctrine of the European balance of power that was essential, if not crucial, to Britain’s security.

Many of the British Foreign Office impressions of German intentions were expressed, if not in fact reinforced, by Sir Eyre Crowe’s memorandum of 1 January 1907.\textsuperscript{52} Crowe, Senior Clerk of the Foreign Office under Grey, composed a memorandum which illustrated the various strands of British suspicion and German hostility in coherent and comprehensive form. Although the seeds of the British attitude towards Germany were sewn earlier than 1907, Crowe’s paper is important because it defined Britain’s basic interests as determined by the nation’s dependence on predominate seapower, as well as the basic assumption behind German diplomacy. As far back as 1902, Assistant Quarter-Master-General Sir William Robertson had argued that Britain should remember its ancient principle of the balance of power which might be upset in the future by an expanding Germany, “our most persistent, deliberate, and formidable rival.”\textsuperscript{53}

Modern historians have debated the validity of Crowe’s memorandum. Historian Keith Wilson labels the paper confusing and self-contradictory.\textsuperscript{54} Crowe, it appeared, was unable to decide between two hypotheses he put forth regarding Germany’s intentions. On the one hand, Germany was consciously aiming at the establishment of hegemony, he

\textsuperscript{52} Eyre Crowe, “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany,” 1 January 1907, B.D., 3: 397-420.
\textsuperscript{53} Memorandum to W. R. Robertson, 18 January 1902, quoted in Kennedy, Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 253.
argued, first in Europe and eventually the world. On the other hand, Crowe believed that “Germany does not really know what she is driving at,” and that German hegemony is “the expression of a vague, confused and unpractical statesmanship, not fully realizing its own drift.” Regardless of which of the two arguments was correct, the practical effects of the memorandum were the same and many members of the Foreign Office found it unnecessary to determine which was the true explanation. The importance of the paper lies not so much in its factual accuracy, as in the fact that Grey and other members of the Foreign Office believed in Crowe’s message.

It is clear that the memorandum had a profound effect upon Grey. “This Memorandum by Mr. Crowe is most valuable,” Grey stated in his minutes of 28 January 1907 after reviewing the paper. “The review of the present situation is both interesting and suggestive. . . . The whole Memorandum contains information and reflections, which should be carefully studied.” Grey found the memorandum so important that he instructed that it be forwarded to the prime minister, Lord Ripon, Lord Asquith, and Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War. The significance to Grey of Crowe’s memorandum was that it stated in concrete terms the doctrine of the balance of power, which came to be the characteristic feature of Sir Edward Grey’s foreign policy.

By seeking to restrain Germany with the help of a Russian agreement, Grey appeared to discard the belief that existed under the previous administration of refusing

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55 Memorandum by Crowe, 1 January 1907, B.D., 3: 415.
to ally with a Tsarist nation. Broadly speaking, a Liberal government would not seek an agreement with a nation that was the embodiment of autocratic tyranny. Russia, liberal ideology held, suppressed the natural rights of its individuals and oppressed its citizens. Moreover, most liberals, in theory, sought the preservation of peace through the mutuality of national interests. Grey, and most influential members of the Foreign Office, embraced the balance of power doctrine which, in contrast, assumed the opposition of national interests. European powers were searching for allies to oppose each other, if necessary. In addition, the foreign secretary was making arrangements for military intervention on the continent, which, again, would seem to contradict liberal ideology. Grey, however, was a product of his time and forced by the European realities to overlook some of Russia's governmental policies which, ordinarily, would be against "liberal" principles.

Whether some members of the German government sought to promote purely German schemes of expansion and whether they possessed an elaborate plan to establish their own primacy in the world of international politics to the detriment of other nations is open to debate. The German army and navy, after the turn of the century, were already advancing into Africa, China, and the South Seas. Nevertheless, historian Keith Wilson advances the theory that German foreign policy prior to the Anglo-Russian Entente was one of restraint and not one of outright aggression. Further, the Germans had as much

57 Bernstein, Liberalism and Liberal Politics, 167.
58 Ibid., 185.
59 Wilson, The Policy of the Entente, 104-05.
right as any other nation to build a large fleet, Wilson argued, as it deemed necessary for the purpose of defending its national interests. What was significant, however, with respect to British government reaction, was what Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey and other officials believed Germany's intentions. Russia had been Great Britain's traditional enemy; Germany was now the immediate one. Members of the Foreign Office were always aware that Russian armies might threaten the lifelines of India. The threat of the German challenge, real or imagined, to the equilibrium in Europe, however, was the constant concern that came to occupy the foreign policy of Grey, Hardinge, and Nicolson, during the Liberal period of power.  

British foreign policy makers after the 1905 December elections, represented a decisive shift in diplomacy from their predecessors. The members of the Foreign Office elite focused more upon the affairs of Europe, and, unlike the Conservatives before them, were less preoccupied with imperial matters. At the same time Great Britain and Russia were growing closer. Over a year prior to the signing of the agreement, Grey was denying rumored reports of any arrangement, but added that the growing tendency of the two nations "to deal in a friendly way with questions concerning them both as they arise," may very well lead to a progressive settlement and the "strengthening of friendly relations between them." Grey looked upon Russia as a potential ally and not as the once great disturber to India. The Russian threat to the Indian frontier still existed, but,

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60 Zara Steiner, "Elitism and Foreign Policy: The Foreign Office Before The Great War," in McKercher and Moss, Shadow and Substance, 41.
61 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 4th ser., 157 (1906), 1416.
62 Williams, "Great Britain and Russia," in Hinsley, British Foreign Policy Under Sir
primarily because of Russia's defeat in the war with Japan, an actual invasion had less chance.

And finally, a greater concern about German diplomacy emerged under Sir Edward Grey. German encroachment in the Middle East; a possible, albeit not probable, Russo-German rapprochement; German diplomacy during the Moroccan crisis; and most importantly, the rapid development of the German navy, all created a greater sense of urgency in the British Foreign Office to counter a perceived German aggression. A Russian agreement was one avenue Grey, and the other members of the Foreign Office, chose to check German political and military movements.

Edward Grey, 134.
On 11 December 1905 Sir Edward Grey had entered office as foreign secretary with a strong desire to conclude an agreement with Russia. The speed with which Grey inaugurated negotiations with the Russians, at a time when Russia was still involved in revolution and not far removed from the disaster of the Russo-Japanese War, bears witness to his desire for a swift Anglo-Russian understanding. Less than two weeks after taking office, Grey remarked that he hoped Russia’s unrest would shortly end. “I want to see Russia re-established in the councils of Europe,” Grey noted to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, first secretary of the St. Petersburg embassy, “and I hope on better terms with us than she has been yet.”

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1 Grey was not Campbell-Bannerman’s first choice as foreign secretary. The prime minister offered the position to Lord Cromer, who, crippled by arthritis, declined. Herbert Gladstone convinced Campbell-Bannerman not to close his mind to Grey. See Keith Wilson, The Policy of the Entente (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.


The main reason Sir Edward Grey initiated talks with members of the Russian
government in June 1906, which culminated in the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente
on 31 August 1907, was to check the potential danger Germany was posing to the
European equilibrium. On 6 June 1906, at the opening of Anglo-Russian talks, Grey
reiterated what were alleged to be the lessons of history, “The Germans do not realise
that England has always drifted or deliberately gone into opposition to any power which
establishes a hegemony in Europe.” Influential members of the British Foreign Office,
such as Sir Charles Hardinge, the new permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office,
and Sir Arthur Nicolson, Hardinge’s successor as ambassador to Russia, shared Grey’s
ideas. The new men at the British Foreign Office were far more conscious of the German
menace than their predecessors had been, and they possessed considerable freedom in
shaping foreign policy. Although Lord Balfour, British prime minister from 1902 to
December 1905, and Lord Lansdowne, foreign secretary from 1900 to December 1905,
did not agree with this anti-German view, neither was able to suppress the rapid
Germanophobic sentiment. The emergence of the German empire as an economic and
technological super-power during this time upset many of the prevailing calculations in
international relations and was a factor in bringing Great Britain and Russia to

4 Minutes by Sir Edward Grey, 6 June 1906, in G. P. Gooch and Harold
Temperley, eds. British Documents on the Origins of the War, 11 vols. in 13 parts
(London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1926-38), 359. Hereafter cited as B.D.
5 Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914 (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1968), 482; and Zara Steiner, “Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign
6 Paul Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914 (London:
George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 251.
negotiations. The German appearance in Persia and the Gulf as a third contender was, additionally, viewed with concern by members of the British Foreign Office.

Sir Edward Grey had pledged to continue along the diplomatic path laid by Lansdowne: to look for continental allies. Grey welcomed the significant diplomatic moves of the Conservative government, each crucially important with respect to Anglo-Russian relations: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Anglo-French Entente, as well as backing his government’s decision to support France in Morocco. Like Lansdowne, the new foreign secretary was acutely aware of Britain’s diplomatic weakness and isolation. One of his motives for a logical extension of Lansdowne’s policy was that any Anglo-Russian agreement would consist of a genuinely pacifistic desire to put an end to the traditional hostility which had brought the two nations to the verge of war. Unlike Lord Curzon, former viceroy of India under the Unionists, and Spring-Rice, the new British minister to Teheran, Grey refused to be influenced by ideological differences, such as the suppression of citizens’ rights. The estrangement between Great Britain and Russia, he believed, was not rooted in the present, but solely in the past, and patient work on the part of both governments could improve matters.

Russia appeared to Great Britain as a more attractive political partner than before the Liberal ascension to power. Russia’s internal chaos coupled with the disastrous
results of the Russo-Japanese war made the Tsarist nation, despite its contradictions of traditional British "liberal ideology," Grey's natural complement to the Anglo-French entente of 1904. The grouping of Britain, France, and Russia solidified, in Grey's mind, a power block to check an unpredictable Germany.

Official opinion in the War Office on the main purpose of an Anglo-Russian agreement mirrored that of Sir Edward Grey. 10 There was general agreement that Germany was the power most likely to upset the status quo and that such a change would only be to Britain's detriment. Many officials, such as Sir J.M. Grierson, Director of Military Intelligence, and Chief of General Staff, Sir Neville Lyttelton, saw in a Russian entente not just a balance to Germany strength, but the prevention of a possible Russo-German coalition. Ongoing negotiations between St. Petersburg and Berlin made the possibility of a Russo-German rapprochement very real, if the probability was not. Anti-British sentiment in the Russian governing circles was strong. 11 The Tsar and his wife, the Empress Alexandra Federovna, were both, essentially, pro-German. The Russian diplomatic service and the military were generally opposed to an agreement with Great Britain. Some members of the British Foreign Office feared that the known weakness of Russia presented the danger that the country could be drawn into a German alliance. 12

11 Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain, 484.
In a memorandum of March 1906, General W. R. Robertson, the head of the European section of the Intelligence Division, expressed the advantages of obstructing any arrangement between Russia and Germany. "By thus detaching her [Russia] from Germany we should have her on our side if and when Germany reaches the Persian Gulf. It would also tend to weaken Germany's military position in Europe, and therefore to strengthen our own."\(^{13}\) In the same memorandum, Robertson not only summed up his feelings, but those of other key members of the military as well as those in the Foreign Office: "Germany's avowed aims and ambitions are such that they seem bound, if persisted, to bring her into collision with us sooner or later."\(^ {14}\)

The reports of German infiltration into Persia coincided with the opening of the Anglo-Russian talks. The necessity for diplomatic action against Germany was becoming urgent. Sir Nicholas O'Connor, ambassador at Constantinople, noted to Grey on 24 April 1906, "if Great Britain and Russia do not very soon come to an agreement with regard to their respective interests in Persia they may find themselves confronted there with Germany."\(^ {15}\) Sir Arthur Nicolson was also aware of German movements and their consequences. In the summer of 1906, he wrote to Hardinge regarding the importance of expediting a Russian understanding, "I am anxious as to the German movements. . . I think that we should endeavor, as soon as possible, to come to an arrangement [with

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\(^{13}\) Memorandum by W.R. Robertson, 20 March 1906, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, 282.


\(^{15}\) Sir Nicolas O'Connor to Grey, 24 April 1906, *B.D.*, 4: 381.
Russia as to Persia before Germany has any ostensible pretext for interference.\footnote{16}

Nicolson recognized that German political and diplomatic influence in the Middle East, in addition to its perceived threat to Europe, would only heighten Germany's aims. In fact, Nicolson, in view of the German challenge to Persia, requested that during the negotiations with Russia leading up to the entente, the subject of Persia should be discussed before the previously agreed upon subject of Afghanistan. The reason stems from the fact that the Persians applied to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, A. Isvolsky, for a joint Anglo-Russian loan, and if rebuffed, the Persians would turn to Germany. A significant German entry into Central Asia, Nicolson feared, could only strengthen that nation's political and military position.

Nicolson was probably even more anxious than Grey to see a Russian agreement as a counterbalance to, what he believed, an aggressive German government. He had been suspicious of Germany since his experience as the British representative at Algeciras. This determination to check Germany illustrates, once again, the sense of unity among the influential members of the British Foreign Office.

Sir Charles Hardinge was similarly convinced that German strength represented a legitimate threat to British security in Europe. His convictions reassured Grey, with respect to a cohesive approach to a desired Russian agreement and gave a distinct focus to British policy.\footnote{17} "It is generally recognized," Hardinge remarked four months into the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{16} Sir Arthur Nicolson to Sir Charles Hardinge, 29 July 1906, Hardinge Papers, FO 371/3, PRO.
\footnote{17} Zara Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 94.
\end{footnotes}
negotiations for the Anglo-Russian agreement, "that Germany is the one disturbing factor owing to her ambitious schemes for a Weltpolitik and for naval as well as military supremacy in Europe." \(^{18}\) Hardinge was anxious for a revived Russia because, like Grey and Nicolson, he envisioned Russia, together with Britain and France, as a legitimate continental check against the German foreign policy makers. Although Hardinge realized that it would take time for Russia to build its resources back up, he remained committed to finding the means by which German power could be contained.

Negotiations which led to the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, although not unique, were somewhat different than other discussions in that Foreign Secretary Grey had to consult other governments outside of St. Petersburg. The government of India had a voice in any Central Asian settlement. The challenge facing the government of Great Britain was to govern India, efficiently and beneficially, but also to cultivate friendliness with the nearest great power, Russia. \(^{19}\) The man who played a crucial role during the Anglo-Russian talks of 1906-07, and who proved to be the moderating influence between Whitehall and the government of India was John Morley. Morley, Secretary of State for India (1905-1910), was a strong proponent of a future Anglo-Russian agreement and an important ally to Edward Grey and the Foreign Office. In fact, on the day of the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, the foreign secretary had remarked to Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman, that without Morley, "we

\(^{18}\) Memorandum by Hardinge, 30 October 1906, quoted in Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, 94.

should have made no progress at all [with Russia] for the government of India would have blocked every point and Morley has removed mountains in the path of the negotiations."\(^{20}\)

Morley was not surprised by the cautious and suspicious outlook with which the Anglo-Russian talks was greeted at Simla. The Secretary of State for India, however, declared explicitly that, "the policy of the Russian entente was not open to question, that the home government were definitely decided on an entente, that there could not be two foreign policies, one at Whitehall and the other at Simla."\(^{21}\) John Morley, like Grey, Nicolson, and Hardinge, had the German threat very much in mind during negotiations for the Anglo-Russian entente. On 29 August 1906, Morley told Lord Minto, viceroy and governor-general of India (1905-1910), "the key to German diplomacy is to prevent anything like a triple entente of England, France, and Russia. To weaken England, she [Germany] will use the Russian whenever she can."\(^{22}\) Less then a month later, Morley explained, again to Minto, "the key . . . lies in the attempt of Germany to get her finger in the Persian pie -- first as a step in the general World Policy; second, by way of complicating attempts at an entente between us and Russia."\(^{23}\)

In its literal form, the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 concerned colonial questions in Central Asia and settled the most urgent imperialist disputes between the

\(^{20}\) Grey to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, 31 August 1907, quoted in Robbins, Sir Edward Grey, 162.


\(^{22}\) Morley to Minto, 29 August 1906, quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 286.

\(^{23}\) Morley to Minto, 20 September 1906, quoted in Monger, End of Isolation, 288.
two nations. The agreement consisted of three sections with the objective, from the British government's perspective, to facilitate the defense of India. Grey understood the consequences of the continuing Russian advance towards India, but was skeptical of Russia's ability to actually threaten the Indian frontier, especially at a time when "she [Russia] confessed herself unable to drive back some Turkish troops on the Persian border." If Grey was unconvinced of Russia's ability to threaten India or even occupy Afghanistan, he, nonetheless, recognized the fear that such a threat implied. Historian Zara Steiner states that, "even if the Tsarist government did not invade India, it would be in a powerful position to apply diplomatic blackmail."

Tibet and Afghanistan, two of the three areas of colonial friction, never proved much in the way of diplomatic obstacles. With respect to Tibet, Britain had gained a Russian recognition both that Tibet was under Chinese control and that Britain had a special interest in excluding other powers. British and Russian policy makers agreed to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet, and promised not to interfere with its internal administration. With respect to Afghanistan, the area that most concerned the Indians, Russian Foreign Minister Alexander Izvolsky accepted the British position that Afghanistan was outside their (Russia's) sphere of interest. In addition, the agreement recognized the pre-existing Russo-Afghan contacts along the frontier.

24 For the full text of the Anglo-Russian Entente, see B.D., 4: 618-21.
25 Williams, "Great Britain and Russia," 136.
26 Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War, 80.
Persia, the primary area of conflict, proved to be the most difficult part of the convention. After long, and sometimes heated negotiations, Persia was divided into three spheres of interest: Russia obtained the northern zone including Tehran; the middle zone was to remain neutral, open to the commerce of both nations; and the British government acquired the southern area containing Seistan. Great Britain and Russia each pledged to refrain from seeking political and commercial concessions in the sphere of the other. In effect, Britain controlled the region covering the Perso-Afghan and Indo-Persian frontier in exchange for Grey's decision to abandon the already lost northern part. The strategic significance of the Seistan area was a constant concern for Indian defense planners. Since the interests of Britain and Russia touched on numerous points—specifically, the Indian frontier, Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet—the foreign secretary believed that direct negotiations between the two governments was the only way to avert a clash.

Sir Edward Grey was successful in accomplishing one of the top priorities in British foreign policy since 1894 with the signing of the 1907 Anglo-Russian entente. At its most general level, Anglo-Russian enmity, at least temporarily, ended. Grey had brought to fruition the settlement that Salisbury had envisioned and Lansdowne had worked tenaciously towards achieving. The practical reason for the agreement was apparent from the start: to solve the problem of dealing with Russia in Central Asia.

27 For a look at the significance of Persia in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, see Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 499-502.
From the beginning, the Anglo-Russian agreement, both in form and purpose, was an imperial arrangement with the protection of the Indian subcontinent in mind. In his autobiography, Grey noted that "the cardinal British object . . . was to secure ourselves for ever, as far as the treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier."30

The resulting Anglo-Russian convention, however, achieved more than the temporary settling of Great Britain's Central Asian position. Grey, in coming to terms with Russia, had the German threat very much in mind.31 An agreement with Russia, most members of the Foreign Office believed, prevented a possible European coalition which might isolate Great Britain. Imperial problems which had preoccupied the Unionists, such as the need to reduce tensions in the Middle East, though still existent, were no longer at the center of British Foreign Office concern, and, likewise, were rarely considered in isolation but against the background of the European balance of power.32 Admittedly, in both form and purpose, the Anglo-Russian Entente was an imperial arrangement. In Central Asia, there were frictions which were in the best interests of both nations to resolve. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests, however, that Grey's chief motive for seeking a Russian agreement was more in reaction to the balance of power taking shape in Europe than to reduce colonial friction. The foreign secretary was

31 Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914, 87.
inspired by an acute appreciation of the threat posed by Germany. The Anglo-Russian entente was, therefore, the culmination of Grey's efforts that he deemed necessary to maintain Great Britain's security.\textsuperscript{33}

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

No single cause created the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the most influential quarters in the British Foreign Office believed the Anglo-Russian agreement was necessary less because of danger in Central Asia, than because of the growth of a threatening power in Europe. The Persian Question may have been the most significant unresolved issue between Great Britain and Russia, but the rapprochement of Britain and Russia, as far as British Foreign Office officials were concerned, was a result of the pressure of forces that lay entirely outside Central Asia.¹

Not Sir Edward Grey, nor Sir Charles Hardinge, nor Sir Arthur Nicolson denied the benefits of eliminating imperial difficulties whenever and wherever possible. Nicolson valued the Anglo-Russian Entente for its effect on the British position in Asia. An advantage of an Anglo-Russian entente, he argued prior to the agreement, “is that we keep Russia at a distance from our land frontiers, and bind her to pacific engagements.”²

Less than a week after the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, however, Nicolson

¹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 488.
realized the importance of working with Russian policy-makers and not against them. "I am most anxious," he remarked to Grey, "to see removed all causes of differences between us and Russia."³ After the December 1905 elections, the need to reach an understanding with Russia for the sake of safeguarding the approaches to India was less urgent than before the Liberals took office. It seems that the British Foreign Office was less concerned with Russia than Germany as a threat. Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, which resulted in the destruction of its navy, coupled with that nation’s domestic turmoil, created the proper environment for Foreign Secretary Grey to seek an agreement with Russia.

There were those in the Foreign Office, however, who were unimpressed with the Anglo-Russian Entente. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice’s experiences as British minister for Teheran influenced his thinking concerning any proposed Anglo-Russian agreement respecting Persia. His correspondence revealed his skepticism and strong opposition to any Anglo-Russian entente.⁴ He realized, reluctantly, that his views were not shared by most members in the Foreign Office, although he continued to warn his government that an agreement with Russia would not only be seen by many other nations as a betrayal to Persia, but more significantly, British prestige would tumble.⁵ In a lengthy letter to Grey on 11 April 1907, Spring-Rice revealed both his perceptions on the upcoming meeting as

⁴ Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Grey, 13 September 1907, B.D., 4: 590.
⁵ Spring-Rice to Grey, 30 September 1907, B.D., 4: 592-3.
well as how these perceptions would be received. "It is clear from the . . . manner of the communication," Spring-Rice declared, "that my opinion on this proposed arrangement is neither invited nor desired. . . . Although in a sense the convention only recognizes what already exists . . . its publication will I think produce a considerable effect on the general situation. It will imply the definite withdrawal of England from the diplomatic struggle."

Lord Curzon was highly vocal in his criticism of an Anglo-Russian convention. Without fail, that "congenital Russophobe," as Rogers Churchill labels him, could be counted on to exhibit wordy opposition to the Russian agreement. Curzon found nothing good to say about the convention and almost categorically condemned the agreement. He led a small group of Conservatives who felt that the British were conceding far too much in Persia to secure the doubtful benefits of Russian goodwill. Additionally, nothing tangible was gained, he argued, in either Afghanistan or Tibet. The former Viceroy of India made his feelings known in a letter to Earl Percy on 25 September 1907, just one day before the public release of the text. His distress over the understanding was evident. "The Russian Convention is in my view deplorable," Curzon argued, "It gives up all that we have been fighting for years. Ah, me, it makes one despair of public life. The efforts of a century sacrificed and nothing or next to nothing in return. When Parliament meets there ought to be, but I suppose will not be, a demonstration of force."
The Anglo-Russian perceptions of Curzon and Spring-Rice have been labeled as extreme and outside the normal diplomatic channels. Grey defended the Anglo-Russian Entente to Spring-Rice, Lord Curzon, and other critics by arguing that the agreement was intended “to begin an understanding with Russia which may gradually lead to good relations in European questions also.” Sir Charles Hardinge, likewise, recognized the significance of the agreement. “I have been so imbued with the importance of an agreement with Russia,” Hardinge later wrote to Sir Arthur Nicolson, “that it is one of the reasons which induced me to give up the embassy at St. Petersburg since I felt that I could do more by impressing my views on people at home.”

The views of Spring-Rice and Curzon, however, did not fall in with the majority, although Balfour’s niece and official biographer stated that the former prime minister, like Curzon and Spring-Rice, continued to regard Russia as Britain’s only serious enemy until he fell from office. The majority of protests, it should be noted, were heard from the radicals and the Labour M.P.s, and with some members of the Conservative party whose sympathies lay with the small nations struggling for independence. But, according to Curzon and Spring-Rice, any effort to come to an understanding with Russia was

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11 Hardinge to Nicolson, 4 September 1907, Private, B.D. 4: 580.
destined for failure. The interests of the two nations were irreconcilable and they believed Russia could not be trusted to observe any undertaking that it made.

The Anglo-Russian Entente, in large measure, sprang from the rise of Anglo-German antagonism. British Foreign Secretaries Lord Salisbury, Lord Lansdowne, and Sir Edward Grey all sought a Russian agreement. The political landscape, however, was much different before the Liberal government assumed office. German policy and expansion had done much to create this environment and bring the traditional enemies, Britain and Russia, together. The rise of Germany produced international problems after 1905 that were qualitatively different from those that existed before Grey became foreign secretary. The violent exchanges, for instance, those between King Edward VII and the Kaiser during the turbulent year of 1905 made the task of bringing about any type of reconciliation between Britain and Germany difficult, if not impossible.

All the important posts in the British Foreign Office were held by men of a new generation who chose to deal with events differently than the Conservatives. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice went as far as to argue that, "If there had been no German menace, there would've been no Russian agreement." Grey and the members of the Foreign Office desired the much eluded Russian entente, not so much for the protection of India, but more as a result of German rumblings in Europe.

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13 Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, 369.
Sir Edward Grey's policy was dominated by suspicion of Germany and, as mentioned above, this suspicion was his principle motive for the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. What created this distrust of Germany? As historian Zara Steiner explains, the Foreign Office's suspicion sprang from German diplomatic methods. Grey's concern was not based upon any first-hand knowledge of the situation in Germany nor on any understanding of the domestic pressures driving von Bülow to an aggressive stance. The Kaiser's visit to Tangier in 1905 confirmed Grey's feelings. German threats towards France convinced Grey of the necessity of accomplishing his first objective upon assuming office: the preservation of the Anglo-French Entente. Germany's continued defiance resulted in Grey's second objective: the securing Russia's friendship, and thereby separating Russia from Germany. The end result was that Grey's diplomacy was the price Germany had to pay for its decision to embark on an active world policy.

Sir Edward Grey had striven to make Russia an additional source of strength against a growing, aggressive German ascendancy. Although in his memoirs Grey denied making use of the term "balance of power," as Grey, Keith Robbins explains, saw the European situation in these traditional terms. Additionally, Hans von Miguel, first secretary of the German embassy in St. Petersberg, explained what impressed him the most about the Anglo-Russian agreement, "the meaning of the Anglo-Russian agreement, "the meaning of the Anglo-Russian agreement lay not so much in Asia," von Miguel remarked less than a month after the signing of the

entente, “but much more in Europe, where its consequences could be made noticeable for a long time.”

The Anglo-Russian convention was concluded because of suspicion of German policies, not as an instrument of aggression deliberately forged against Germany. As the evidence presented in this thesis suggests, Sir Edward Grey and the influential members of the British Foreign Office, while aware of the need to rectify the immediate problems in Central Asia, had the German threat very much in mind during negotiations which led to the signing of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente. Perhaps it would seem simplistic to conclude that Grey’s achievement in producing the Anglo-Russian Entente resulted in the perception that thereafter Europe was divided into two opposing power blocs: the Triple Entente of Great Britain, France, and Russia, and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. One thing was certain, however: that the two traditional enemies, Britain and Russia, found it to their advantage to bury their existing hatred, at least for the time being, and face united the greater dangers that German policy and tactics presented.

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