Chapter III

BRITAIN'S ATTITUDE TO JAPAN'S ENTRY INTO THE WAR
Britain declared war on Germany on 3 August 1914. Two days earlier, the former had approached her Far Eastern ally for assistance and co-operation. Japan's entry into the war meant extension of an essentially European conflict to the Far East. None of the Powers ultimately involved in the war had foreseen its magnitude that so swiftly it would engulf the world. Why is it then that Britain, by inviting Japan's co-operation and assistance, converted the European conflict into a wider conflagration? On 3 August, Baron Kato informed the British Minister at Tokyo that the Government had no desire to be embroiled in a European War. (1) As late as 4 September 1914, Japan had hoped that the conflict would be localized and not extend beyond the regions which were actually involved in the war. (2) Even Australia, a British dominion, felt that she had been drawn into an essentially European conflict. (3)

There were two reasons which prompted Britain to invite Japan to enter the war. The one, and perhaps the most important, was the political, military and the strategic situation in which

she was placed in Europe. The second reason was the desire to protect the political and economic interests in the Far East. The two were not essentially independent of each other. Experience in previous years had shown, for instance, that the exploitation of the Far Eastern region for investments was inseparable from the political complication created thereby in Europe, and elsewhere. Consequently, the political rivalries in Europe had an impact on the situation and developments in the Far East.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance, again, on which Britain's relations with Japan were based, was revised for the second time in 1911, in so far as the former was concerned, not entirely in view of her needs in the Far East. If that had been the case, the Alliance would have been redundant after the Russian defeat in 1905. Instead, not only was the Alliance renewed long before it was due to expire, but the maintenance of the territorial rights and defence of special interests, in so far as Britain was concerned, in India and in Eastern Asia, were reiterated. In order to broaden the alliance and convince the Colonies of its utility in the future defence set up, London held prior consultation with the Dominions before actually signing the revised treaty of alliance.

The Alliance induced Japan to look to Britain's friendship instead of to that of Germany or even Russia. What was true of the situation after 1905, which obliged Britain to revise the Anglo-Japanese alliances in 1911, was true of the situation that compelled the same Power to invite Japan's entry into the War in 1914. As far as Germany had aimed at weakening Russia, she was successful when the latter suffered a defeat at the hands of Japan
in 1905. (4) This defeat of Russia by Japan was indirectly a defeat by England, in so far as it marked the end of Russia's plan to undermine Britain in the Far East. (5) Now, it was likely that Britain and Germany would come face to face in view of the pursuit of world-wide objectives on the part of the latter and the security of the world-wide empire on the part of Britain. The Anglo-Russian Convention and, later on, the Russo-Japanese agreement, enlarged the possibility of Anglo-German rupture.

Not that there was an imminent danger of war between Germany and Britain in the years immediately after 1905. But the German programme of military and naval expansion had created such a situation that there was some uncertainty regarding the prospects of peace in Europe. And while revising the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1906 Britain had kept the diplomatic encirclement of Germany in view. (6)

4. The German plan to divert Russian attention from Europe and weaken her was as old as the days of Bismarck. It was on the premise that Japan would resist Russian advance and impel her to seek German friendship.

5. It is suggested that Russia went to the Far East in order to attract Britain's attention there and so to facilitate the struggle with her in the Near East. Victor A. Yakhontoff, Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East (London, 1932), p. 60.


Germany alleged that Britain aimed to limit her (Germany's) freedom of action by working on a diplomatic combination in Europe comprising Britain, France, and Russia. Secondly, with the naval reorganization under Sir John Fisher she (Britain) wanted to complete encirclement of Germany. Sidney Bradshaw Fay, The Origin of the World War (New York, 1958), pp. 227, 235.
So much was the German pressure that not only Britain was constrained to concentrate in Europe in order to ensure the safety of the British Isles, but also be passive, nay timid, in face of the Japanese programme of expansion in the Far East. For instance, she remained perfectly silent when the Chinese interests were threatened and Japan was busy promoting her Manchurian trade at the expense of commerce of different countries including Britain. (7) British commercial concerns were much chagrined at the Japanese exploitation of trade in Manchuria in 1907-08, (8) and their protests to their Government at the "cold-footed trimming policy" were all in vain. Similarly, Sir Edward Grey did not go beyond commending in general the Knox Proposals for neutralization of all railways in Manchuria. The Plan fell through for lack of British support. (9) The annexation of Korea also passed off without a murmur in Downing Street. (10)

All this indicates that Britain tacitly recognized not only the supremacy of Japanese interests but also of the latter's power in the Far East. British foreign policy, conditioned as it was by the attitude of the Central Powers, was not only necessary to

7. Sir Edward Grey had even instructed the Minister at Peking not to proceed with the projection of the South Manchurian Railway when political complications were involved. Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald, 3 February 1909, Br. Docs., vol. 8, no. 350, p. 454.


contain them, but it was also important to ensure the security of the British Empire, British commercial interests in the Far East, and the security of India. This necessitated an alliance network of a world-wide character which would satisfy the above requirements, keeping in view the existing obligations (under the Entente Cordiale, the Japanese alliance of 1905, and the Anglo-Russian Convention, 1907), and the nature of the relationship with the European Powers. Last, but not least, was the desire of the Government to strengthen the existing friendship with Japan, an ally since 1902.

Of course, the task of the Government was not easy. It had to meet the criticism of Parliament and the objections of the Dominions. Of late, opinion in Parliament, was critical that the country's industrial and commercial interests had been seriously injured by the Japanese method of underselling Britain, their commercial rival. Ill-feeling against Japan and the Japanese was more pronounced in the Dominions. There, the question of unfair competition for markets was now coupled with the problem of Japanese immigration into New Zealand, Canada, and especially in Australia. These matters influenced public opinion in the Dominions, which in turn evoked concern in Britain. Besides, the Dominions also feared lest the further renewal of the Alliance entangle them in a contest with the United States, with whom they were anxious to maintain friendly relations. (11) It must be said that the

11. There were enquiries in the House of Commons if there were any provision in the Anglo-Japanese treaty (1905) safeguarding the Dominions from being involved in war with the United States of America on behalf of Japan. UK, Parliamentary Debates, series 4, vol. 48, col., 864. Also Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911, Dominion No. 7 (Speech by Sir Joseph G. Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand), p. 51.
objection especially of Australia and New Zealand was that they doubted the wisdom of the continuation of the Alliance as a basis for peace in the Pacific; and they were prepared to enter into bilateral agreement with Japan. (12) In any case, Australia did not wish the retention of the Japanese friendship at the cost of American friendship. The whole Australian attitude seems to be based on the desire to be "free" to promote British Empire-American friendship as an alternative to reliance on Asian friendship for the defence of the region. (13)

The relations between Japan and the United States were considerably strained after the final rejection of the Knox Plan. This would hinder Britain's working with her ally in the Far East. However, if the alliance was renewed, it would promote better relations between Britain, America, and the former's associates.

Those of the British subjects who did not have a deep knowledge of the British position in world politics, could not see the horizon beyond Eastern Asia. Naturally, they were less appreciative, hence less tolerant, of the implications of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. England had foreseen in 1905, and now fully realized, that the growing rivalry between her and Germany would lead to a war. The Alliance of 1905 not only had enabled Britain to continue to pursue her interests in the Far East


unhindered, but it also facilitated considerable reduction in naval disposition in the Far East (and also in the Mediterranean), thus strengthening herself in European waters as the following figures indicate: (14)

### Disposition of British Battleships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Far East</th>
<th>Mediterranean</th>
<th>Home Waters</th>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>5 (16)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
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Notwithstanding the above, the Dominions particularly Australia and New Zealand, failed to realize that the non-renewal of the Alliance would, apart from increasing the chances of a Japanese attack which Australia unimaginatively feared, impose immense burdens on the resources of the said Dominions for maintaining supremacy in the China Seas, in spite of the expected increase in Australian naval vessels and additional financial commitments. (17) The mother-country was unable to place the defence needs in the Eastern and Pacific waters above her own needs in Europe. Thus, there was no alternative to reliance on the Alliances "for the present". (18)

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14. *The Round Table*, 1 November 1910 to August 1911, p. 141.
15. This included the Pacific, China, Australia, and East India stations.
16. These battleships were withdrawn immediately after the alliance was renewed in 1905.
18. PRO, Cab. 5/5/2. *Paper on the strategic needs of Australia and New Zealand*. 
Field Marshal Lord Kitchner, who was Minister for War at the beginning of the War in 1914, after his visit to Japan in 1909, was convinced of the practical value and utility to Britain of her alliance with Japan. He went to the extent of saying that England should stand by Japan through thick and thin in all her legitimate aspirations, adding a personal note -

that Manchuria at any rate as far as Mukden, would, and indeed should be, Japanese, if the peace of the Far East was to be maintained in the future.... (19)

The Russo-Japanese agreement (1900), by which Russia and Japan agreed to abstain from "all competition" with one another in the common development of Manchuria, and to co-operate in maintaining the status quo established in that territory by the treaty of Portsmouth (1905) and other agreements between China, Russia and Japan, made a material change in the Far Eastern situation. In 1905, Russia and Japan were at war. In 1910, their antagonism had become overshadowed by the common interests in Manchuria, as against China and those other Powers who sought special commercial financial interests within it. Under these circumstances, a lapse of the Japanese alliance would have further injured British commercial interests in China. Besides, the renewal of the alliance would lessen Japan's ill-will caused by the bad treatment of the Japanese, especially in Australia. (20)

19. This observation made by Field Marshal Lord Kitchner was conveyed to the Foreign Office by the Ambassador at Tokyo, Sir C. McDonald to Sir Edward Grey, 10 December 1909, Br. Doc., vol. 8, no. 371, p. 473.

20. Sir A. Nicolson, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs admitted in a conversation with the Russian Ambassador in London that the Australian Immigration Laws showed but little consideration for the yellow race, and a lapse of the Japanese Alliance might lead to serious friction. B. de Siebert, Entente Diplomacy and the World (New York, 1924), p. 32.
Above all, it was feared, the non-renewal of the Japanese alliance in face of the Russo-Japanese close understanding since July 1910, and the Potsdam agreement between the Emperors of Germany and Russia of the same year, might lead to a German Russo-Japanese combination. (21) (Even as late as the year 1917 the British Government was not free from the apprehension that "the Germans would detach Japan from Britain through the mediation of Mexico" (22)). If this materialized, not only would it have jeopardized the Anglo-Russian accord since 1907, but would also have upset all the defensive agreements and the defensive planning. Hence, the importance of continued Anglo-Japanese friendship. In this respect, the following statement attributed to Marquis Ito explains Britain's need as much in 1902, when the first alliance with Japan was concluded, as in 1911:

It is difficult to understand why England has broken her record in foreign policies and has decided to enter into an alliance with us. The mere fact that England has adopted this attitude shows that she is in dire need, and she therefore wants us in order to make us bear some of her burdens. (23)

As an alternative to the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Britain could support the policy of the United States in China, and realize commercial advantages in the Far East. But looking from political and military points of view, it would have lost the friendship of both Russia and Japan, without the possibility

of concluding an alliance of a world-wide character with the United States, as Washington was still not willing to give up its traditional policy of isolation. (24) Of the European Powers, an agreement with Germany was out of the question. And in spite of the Entente Cordiale, there were not infrequent occasions when France was subjected to severe criticism in Britain. (25) Even the arrangement with France was criticized because "the mutual advantages of the entente cordiale" were considered "more apparent than real". (26)

Thus, Sir Edward Grey was justified in wishing as early as 1908 the continuation of the Anglo-Japanese goodwill and friendship reposed in the Alliance. He thought the Alliance had stood the test of time and had succeeded in its aim and object - to be a guarantee of peace among the nations. (27) He was happy that the Anglo-Russian Convention and the Russo-Japanese alliance would rather make the object of the Anglo-Japanese alliance more secure. (28)


27. This was conveyed in a message on the occasion of the dinner at Tokyo to celebrate the Anglo-Japanese alliance on 13 February 1908: Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald, 30 January 1908. Br. Docs., vol. 8, no. 342, p. 453.


Also Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald, 3 February 1908. Ibid., vol. 8, no. 350, p. 454.
Apart from the importance of the Japanese alliance, its renewal on 13 July 1911 preceded a departure from the existing pattern of inter-imperial relations. The Dominions had already manifested a desire, in resolutions submitted for discussion at the 1911 Imperial Conference, for greater influence in Britain's foreign affairs, and freedom from the Colonial Office. (29) Australia did not, in all probability, wish to be bound by the Alliance as seen from Europe. She wanted to be "heard" in the formulation of imperial foreign policy, in so far at least the Far East and the Pacific was concerned. She had started thinking "independently" of her defence needs, which incidentally were supported by the Admiral Sir Richard Henderson Report (March 1911) advocating for the Dominion a large naval fleet of eight Dreadnoughts and forty-four other vessels, for local defence. (30)

Thus it was in deference to the wishes of the Dominions for a share in the formulation of Imperial foreign policy, that the


30. PRO., Cab. 17/79. Also during 1911-12 the Commonwealth of Australia spent £4,776,000 on defence. This came to 2ls. 6d. per head, a greater per capita contribution than any country except France and Britain. Richard Jebb Papers (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London). N. Muirhead Collins (Australia) to R. Jebb, a copy of the speech at the launching of the "Sydney", 23 August 1912. While schemes as for instance evolved in the Henderson Report and later Lord Kitchener's defence reorganization made the Dominions more or less responsible for looking after the Dominions defence, consistency in the Australian idea for a permanent Imperial organization led to the establishment of "the Commonwealth of Nations" granting better status to the Dominions within the British Empire. Ibid., R. Jebb to N. Muirhead Collins, 28 August 1912.
British Government consulted the Dominions before the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which was after all the mainstay of the British defence in the East. Secondly, London was guided by the need for suitable expression of Imperial unity in the years preceding the actual outbreak of war in Europe. Above all, once the Government in London had conceded separate Dominions Navies, it was only logical that the foreign policy of the Empire was a common policy. As Grey observed:

If it is to be a common policy, it is obviously one on which the Dominions must be taken into consultations, which they must know, which they must understand and which they must support. (31)

Nonetheless, the Alliance was not incompatible with Dominion loyalty. To Britain, its need could hardly be over-emphasized. It had repeatedly underlined its importance. Even the proposed treaty of unlimited arbitration with America could not stand in the way of its renewal. (32) Grey was not prepared to weaken the alliance, for he did not desire political and defence readjustment. (33) Rather, the need was the consolidation of the resources against the German threat. Non-renewal of the Alliance could not be avoided without coming to terms with Germany. In fact, the German Navy Law of that year speeded up the negotiations. (34)


32. PRO., F.O. 371/952, Grey to MacDonald, 26 September 1910, no. 167. Rather there were misgivings about the proposed arbitration treaty in high circles in England. Richard Jebb Papers, n. 30; R. Jebb to L.S. Amery, 24 April 1912.

33. PRO., F.O. 371/1140/1126, Grey to MacDonald, 20 March 1911.

Conversely, Grey justified the renewal of the Alliance on the ground that it would exercise restraint on Japan's ambitions, at least in so far as British interests were concerned. The absence of the Alliance would "compel" her to augment her armed strength which would be unhealthy for Australia and New Zealand. (35) Notwithstanding the impending crisis, the British Empire was unable to finance an "independent" East Asian-Pacific fleet almost equal to the size she possessed in Europe, in order to secure "free" communication between the north and south of the Equator in the Pacific and between the Far East and Europe. Last but not least, what was the guarantee that the immigration problem would not raise its ugly head if the Alliance was allowed to lapse? (36)

The Alliance was revised and ratified notwithstanding the Australians' unchecked anxiety about the future. (37) No doubt the immigration question was a great problem, yet the Alliance was too vital to allow the Dominion to veto it. After all, Britain was the vital spot of Europe, and the Dominions could not expect more than a guarantee for local autonomy from the "mother". (38)

36. PRO, Cab. 5/5/2, n. 18. Also Br. Doca., vol. 6, pp. 731-90.

36. PRO, F.0. 371/1140, Grey to Rumbold, 26 May 1911, no. 118 and Rumbold to Grey, 7 July 1911, no. 196.

37. Richard Jebb Papers, n. 30, R. Jebb to C.H. Cahan (Canada), 26 September 1912. William M. Hughes, reiterated the Australian argument during the Imperial Conference in 1921 that the Alliance was an indispensable part of his nation's policy. It was the Australian stance that strengthened the American pressure leading to the termination of the Alliance in that year. J. Chal Vinson, "The Imperial Conference of 1921 and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance", The Pacific Historical Review, 1962, p. 257.

38. There was also involved a constitutional question of deciding a policy with the help of the Dominion Prime Ministers while the Government in London, in the last resort was dependent upon the Electorate of the United Kingdom. Richard Jebb Papers, n. 30, L.S. Amery to R. Jebb, 3 January 1917.
And the latter was better placed to take a broad view of Europe's needs. The critics, on the other hand, could argue that under cover of the German scare, London was trying to extract the maximum from the Dominions while denying them the minimum. (39) The "consultations" with the Dominions in 1911 over the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance vis-a-vis the defence of the Empire in the wake of German threat had brought to the surface many Imperial questions, which highlighted the magnitude of the defence question, and the all too important nature of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. But when Britain declared war in 1914 the Dominions were suddenly and unexpectedly involved in a war by events of which not only they but the governments knew nothing. Although the Dominions were left with no option but to back the mother country, few facts brought home to the Dominions by the outbreak of war. First, that they had no voice in the conduct of foreign affairs, and second, that the management of domestic affairs ultimately depended upon the management of foreign affairs. The review of foreign affairs to which the Dominions had listened in 1911 was obsolete by the time the war came three years later. (40)

39. Ibid., R. Jebb to John S. Ewart (Canada), 9 January 1913. Also other letters in the same envelope.

BRITAIN'S NEED OF JAPAN

Now, what were Britain's actual circumstances which necessitated her invitation to Japan, notwithstanding the Entente Powers' superior strength, (41) for co-operation and assistance whereby the war was extended to the Far East and the Pacific? Before considering this aspect, it must be said that Britain's invitation to Japan was not accidental; nor was the latter's entry into the war automatic. Secondly, no single nation had the requisite strength and self-sufficiency to ensure its complete immunity from attack on its territories and vital interests. In varying degrees, all the Powers needed help and support from others, and Britain was no exception, although she had an edge over other Powers in naval power.

It was universally perceived that the ultimate resources of Britain, France, and Russia were far greater than those of Austria and Germany. But the centre of gravity was fast changing. The islands of Britain were vulnerable to attacks from various points. The sea-power, which had been the real foundation of her Empire, was most needed in Europe in this life and death struggle.

Churchill observed in March 1914:

The situation in the Pacific would be determined absolutely by the situation in European waters ... the ships in Pacific waters would be useless after the defeat of the British navy in the danger centre which was Europe. (42)

41. In 1914 the two Central Powers commanded armies totalling together 3,547,000 men, whereby Russia and France alone could place 5,350,000 troops in the field not to mention the British navy with its well-known preponderance over Germany. Wilhelm Marx, *The Responsibility for the War*, Foreign Affairs, January 1926, p. 181.

The loss of command of the sea would be a peril to Britain. The safety, therefore, depended on her ability to reinforce her own strength and to prevent her principal rival, Germany, from exerting the full power. In view of these factors, it was essential that commercial and other contacts with Britain's overseas colonies, especially in the East, were maintained uninterrupted. She had wisely recognized Japan since 1902 on account of her past commitments in the Indian Ocean and the Far East. (43) She had come to rely more and more gradually on the latter. Now when the war came Japan could be a partner of immense utility so as to enable Britain to concentrate on the conflict in Europe.

Thus, the heavy pressure of defence on the home areas in Europe and in view of the meagre reinforcement that could be expected from the overseas colonies, taxed Britain's ultimate capacity of intervention to assist in the parts of the Empire in the Indian Ocean and further east which, in turn, made Japan's assistance and co-operation unavoidable and necessary. The sea-routes for supplies were so vast and urgent and so necessary that to intercept an enemy action, much less to fight out single-handedly in the East, during the full-strength operations in the Europe, was beyond the capacity of the British Navy, whatever the extent of strength it commanded prior to the opening of hostilities against the Central Powers. Consequently, it was natural for London to invoke the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and seek her friendly co-operation. In fact, it was a proof of the far-sightedness of the English statesmen that in their hour of need, London

43. Even the United States after the War felt that the Far East meant the relations with Japan.

could count on Japanese support.

It must be emphasized that Britain had felt the need of Japanese co-operation and assistance in the war, notwithstanding the former's entente with France since 1904 and alliance with Russia since 1907. The British Foreign Office even discussed the gravity of the European situation with the Japanese ambassador in London before declaring war. (44) London, in fact, was always alive to the danger that both France and Russia being European Powers, could become her rivals in Europe and elsewhere at any time. Even if the Russo-Japanese collaboration after 1905 and Anglo-Russian understanding since 1907 had become a part of the general arrangement between herself, France, Russia and Japan, she could not easily overcome the days of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the East.

It was, in fact, the German naval laws that changed the priorities in the British mind, (45) and "Japan appeared to be best suited to do the British job in the East". (46) Here was an evidence of interactions of the affairs in Europe and the Far East.

Although the Russian Imperial Government sought to consolidate its political influence in North China without interfering with British commercial interests, in the background of Russia's China policy was the hope of ultimately displacing British supremacy in Asia. The Tsar's ministers were believed to be thinking of him as the logical heir to the Mongol Emperors. (47) Confident of her


45. Sir Frederick Maurice, "British Policy in the Mediterranean", Foreign Affairs, October 1926, p. 103.

46. Ibid., p. 104.

47. Nicholas Roosevelt, "Russia and Great Britain in China", Foreign Affairs, October 1926, p. 80.
great political and naval strength, Britain had also sought under
the Anglo-Japanese alliance to check Russia in any attempted
advance on India from the north, (48) and by seeking Japanese
co-operation in the war, did eclipse Russia in China for the time
being. And Britain's trade in the meantime increased substantially.

As to the British anxiety that Japan should not be allowed
to become too powerful on the Asian mainland, by giving her
practically a free hand, did not seriously affect the thinking in
the British Foreign Office when the war began. And that the war
in the Far East could have been won more cheaply (than with the
active co-operation and assistance of Japan) was the mistaken
belief of the men who agreed with the thinking of Winston Churchill,
not at the beginning of the war but after it had gone on for two
years. There is no available evidence, till the time Sir Edward
Grey presided over the Foreign Ministry, to show that any member
of the Foreign Office minimized the need of Japanese co-operation
and assistance.

Besides, France, due to the expected magnitude of the
struggle in Europe, could practically be of no assistance to
Britain in the Far East. Hence, Britain looked towards Japan,
a Power with practically no rival interests. Rather, Japan had
served Britain's interests in Asia by defeating Russia in 1905,
thus saving the British-Indian Empire for good, in so far as the
latter's northern frontiers were concerned. (49)

48. The Anglo-Japanese alliances of 1905 and 1911 explain this.

49. Even the government of New South Wales had recovered from the
fear of "Japanese menace". After 1905, it was thinking of
closer Japan-Australian commercial bonds, and appointed a
commercial Agent of its own in Tokyo independent of the mother-
country (Britain). Jack Shepherd, Australia's Interests and
also endorsed that Japan's rapidly expanding strength would be
kindly disposed towards the British Empire. Ian F.G. Milner,
New Zealand's Interests and Policies in the Far East (New
Japan, moreover, had an advantage over Russia diplomatically and militarily. The latter being a single independent economic and military unit from West to the East, was liable any time to be distracted from the defence of her Western interests in case she, even at the instance of Britain, actively participated in the East. And even granting the United States her due, as yet Japan-American relations had not become too difficult as to embarrass Britain or weaken Anglo-Japanese bonds, renewed in 1911, or as to provide London a substitute elsewhere to Tokyo's friendship. On the other hand, in spite of Britain and the United States working together in international relations since 1911-12, this did not mean the former was willing to give up her alliance with Japan.

Above all, Japan with her naval and military strength, free from any European danger (because of the distance involved) and her interests largely concentrated in the Far Eastern region and at best attended to the Pacific, was particularly in an advantageous position to extend assistance to Britain, whose power, did not extend beyond Singapore, but whose political and commercial interests were paramount in Australia, New Zealand, and the mainland of China. Japan's knowledge of the area was another factor from which Britain could benefit. (50) By the beginning of the war, Japan was more than a mere primus inter pares; it had in fact become the supreme power in the Far East.

There were three general British interests, viz., the protection of a vast number of strategic islands from attack by

50. Even after Japan, on Britain's invitation, had opened hostilities against Germany in the Far East and in fact Tsingtau blockaded, the latter's Colonial Office and the Admiralty much less the Foreign Office in London, lacked exact information of the Pacific Islands and those under German occupation. They had to depend for the information on Japan. F.C. (Political), 1914/1912, nos 75383 and 74103.
Central Powers; the maintenance of the all-important British trade; and the development and security of her overseas possessions. To these may be added, the German project of a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway (51) which was another source of British anxiety.

In the Far East, she was interested territorially, in respect of Hong Kong, Malaya, Borneo, and the South Sea Islands, and commercially and financially in respect of her trade with, and investments in, China, Japan, and British Far Eastern dependencies. She was further interested in the East and Far East, in so far as developments there affected the defence of India, Australia, and New Zealand, and had repercussions upon the balance of power in the world at large and, indirectly, in the European continent.

In the political sphere, British prestige in the Far East, especially after 1905, rested in a large measure on the Anglo-Japanese alliance which could ensure the possession of the island of Hong Kong, (52) having one of the finest harbours in the world, and of the adjacent territory on the mainland, on which depended British commercial prosperity in the southern Pacific.

Besides Hong Kong, British Malaya was important as a source of primary products, (53) and together with Netherland India,

51. For Britain's interest in Middle East oil, see P.L.E. de la Tramerye, The World Struggle for Oil (New York, 1924).

52. The island gave to the British Empire a pied-a-terre for participation in the economic development of the Chinese hinterland. The island also provided an entrepot for shipping and trade as well as being a centre for banking and insurance activities. British investments in the tiny island represented between 0.5 per cent and 1.0 per cent of the total British overseas investment. See C.P. Remer, Foreign Investment in China (New York, 1933).

53. British Malaya furnished over 40 per cent of the world production of tin and rubber, 11 per cent of the world production of copra, 9 per cent of tungsten, and 1 per cent of iron ore. Ibid.
which was the sixth largest producer of crude oil, Britain's dependencies in the southern Pacific were attractive economically, through it politically and militarily strategic. Once these places were in the hands of an enemy Power like Germany (an ambitious Power like Japan if she turned hostile or Russia after the building of the Trans-Siberian railway), (54) Britain's economic, political and militarily strategic interests in the area, in fact her material prosperity to a great extent, would be in danger of being severely jeopardized. The dependencies ensured safety for the trade-routes to Australasia, a link with the Indian Empire, and between them and London. Besides, if everything else had been lost in Asia, New Zealand and Australia were the only spots in the region wherein the White race could expand without encroaching upon already existing races. Britain was taking full advantage of the opportunities by pursuing, veiled and unveiled, the White-Australia policy. And there was a danger that Germany might swoop down. (55)

The increased importance of the eastern Dominions to Britain no doubt underlined the importance of uninterrupted communications, but London as yet was not quite sympathetic to the continued stirrings of nationhood in the Dominions.

Apart from the security of the dominions of Australia and New Zealand, there was, to the English mind, India's special problem, a territory regarded as a valuable jewel in the British

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55. It was believed by some White critics that White-Australia policy was a humane attempt to avoid conflict. The experience of the American Civil War was never forgotten. However, to peoples in Japan, China, and India, this was indeed the height of selfishness.

Aside from the Indian army which could look after land operations in the area and in an eventuality of dire need supply forces for imperial purposes overseas - and were supplied (56) - Britain had not developed an Indian navy to defend over seven thousand miles long Indian coastline. Even the defence of the major ports such as, Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Madras, Cochin, Vizagapatam, and Chittagong fell upon the care of the Royal Navy, which was in great demand in European theatres on the outbreak of war. Consequently, defence of the vast land involved the task of clearing the adjacent seas such as between the Persian Gulf in the west and Singapore in the east, of enemy ships and of keeping open imperial communications with the United Kingdom, (57) not to speak of the British interests to keep the local populations under check to avoid their collusion with the external enemy. Although the increasing resentment of the colonial peoples created no serious problem for Europe until well after the world war, in invoking the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and in requesting Japan for co-operation and assistance on the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, Britain had, notwithstanding the other compulsions, kept in mind, the possibility of a rising taking place in India. Hence, this was an additional factor which convinced the London Government of the need to ask Japan for armed support. (58)

56. For the role of the Indian Army, see The Times History of War (London, 1915), vol. 2, pp. 317-55.

57. New Zealand alone had to rely on the United Kingdom market for about 80 per cent of her exports apart from political links. Milner, n. 49, p. 26.

Britain's economic interests in China were profound and varied for example, trade, shipping, mining, railways, industry, and finance (which included ordinary banking and insurance). In the eyes of the European Powers down to 1914, unlike the United States in later years, the political importance of the Far East was due to its economic potentialities. In fact, the Eastern trade was the balancing centre of the world's trade and development. Since this benefited Britain most, she tended to regard herself as the balancer of world politics.

On the eve of the war, the figures for Britain's trade with China were:

- Imports from China worth = £4,011,000
- Exports to China worth = £11,131,000

Besides, China imported worth 10 per cent of the total exports from British India, Singapore and the Straits Settlements, Australia, New Zealand. In aggregate, China's trade with the British Empire (including the United Kingdom but excluding Hong Kong) was 10 per cent. (59)

As regards shipping, a total of 32,106,732 tonnage (60) of vessels entered and were cleared at offices under Chinese customs control compared to 6,171,684 tonnage of German vessels. Britain had the single largest tonnage, (61) and a big chunk of the railway system. (62)

60. Figures for 1912.
Pertaining to International Finance, Britain's loan to China, apart from trade, mining and railway enterprises, stood at £7,416,480 besides £7,141,000 as her (Britain's) share of the Boxer indemnity. (63) In respect of British investment in China, the total equivalent in gold dollars in 1914 was about £124,846,000 of which about £82,203,000 represented business investments, while about £42,643,000 represented in Chinese Government obligations, the latter comprising railway loans and loans for general purposes. Apart from the above, China was an expanding market for New Zealand butter, and she was also an important buyer of Australian flour. So much about Britain's economic involvement in China, that is, outside the Colonies.

Since Britain was determined to secure her participation in the Far Eastern markets of the future, and that she had no intention of retreating from the position already built in the regions, she could only hope to accomplish her objectives in friendship and co-operation of the Regional Power, Japan.

The problem of Imperial Defence in the area could only be solved in concert with Japan for another reason also. The political preponderance Britain enjoyed in the area rested on her sea power, which had to be deployed now in the European theatre of war. If, therefore, she had to maintain her existing political influence without jeopardizing her economic dependence on the East vis-a-vis all-too-powerful need of Home defence, she had to rely on the goodwill and co-operation of Japan than any other member of the entente. Thus, the Anglo-Japanese alliance had become too

63. Gull, n. 59, p. 79.
64. Remer, n. 52.
important as to be a part of the general system of defence preparedness. As to the fear of dominions like Australia and New Zealand from the domination of Japan in the area, it is interesting to note that while Japan's expansion into Manchuria threatened the British interests in the southern Pacific, any improvement in Japan's economic position was expected to benefit Australia, New Zealand and the British Indian Empire. (65) Thus, the assumed fear of Japanese domination was nothing but over-consciousness on the part of Australia and New Zealand of their weak military (and political) position vis-a-vis Japan, maintained for various reasons by the mother-country, and their increased zeal in becoming independent of London in military affairs. (66)

However, the colonies were one with the mother-country in so far as the maintenance of the British naval supremacy was concerned. They held their own views in regard to the British declaration of war over the violation of Belgian neutrality or the German spoilage of France, but had no choice in supporting British supremacy in the Anglo-German naval competition. For, on it depended their security, on it depended Britain's whole existence including the high-sounding title of King-Emperor bestowed on the

65. Total trade of Japan with the British Empire represented one-fifth of Japan's foreign trade. Imports from India mostly of raw cotton, from Australia raw wool and from New Zealand dairy products, represented a little less than 10 per cent of Japanese imports, while India took 8 per cent of Japanese exports. See Remer, n. 52.

In addition both New Zealand and Australia had growing trade relations with Japan. The former's imports from Japan during 1910-13 averaged about £150,000 a year while her exports to Japan reached £60,000 in 1914. Milner, n. 57, p. 17.

66. Imperial Conference, 1937, Summary of Proceedings, Cmd. 5482, pp. 16-20,
monarch of England, and for this Britain had sought Japan's co-operation and assistance. In this respect, neither the Australians nor New Zealanders could object to Japan's co-operation in a "common" cause. (67)

Besides, the Anglo-German rivalry and the European war threatened the unity of the British Empire. There was a pretty strong belief in Germany before the war, and at its beginning, that some of the British colonies would declare themselves neutral and take no part in the crisis. The Government in London was not complacent in this respect. And it is possible to argue that this was one such sensitive spot where Britain could not rely on either France or Russia. Thus, under the existing treaties, Japan's assistance and co-operation was rightly thought of. (68)

Britain's interests in eastern Asia were vaster than in Morocco, Africa or even Persia. They were far more difficult and complicated than the situation in the Balkans as to enable Britain to handle them single-handedly during the war against the Central Powers. Japan's resources, industrial and others, were far richer than what could be expected of Australia and New Zealand. In fact, the Far Eastern Power was expected to ensure the territorial integrity of the two British colonies against its infringement at the hands of Germany, (69) or lest they go too nearer the United


69. Shepherd, n. 49, pp. 7, 13; Greenbie, n. 55, p. 282.
States at the head of London. (70)

There were a few other reasons also which impelled Britain to seek Japanese support. In fact, the question in the British Foreign Office was not a second-thought "on seeking" Japan's co-operation and assistance but "how much". It was felt firstly, if assistance was not sought, Japanese feeling as an ally might be hurt. If they at all felt offended it might encourage them to seek an alliance with Germany later in the war, or after the war, and no doubt Germany would have made strenuous endeavours to get their assistance.

Therefore, it was desirable to make Japan commit herself early in the war by hostile acts against Germany. Moreover, in case German war preparation in the Far East was allowed unchecked, "the loss to British trade will be the greatest at the commencement". It was thus necessary to utilise Japanese assistance to protect British trade as soon as possible. It was also necessary (by inviting Japanese assistance to Britain's help) to distract Japan from China "in a military or commercial sense" especially from the Yangtse district. (71)

Notwithstanding the above, it is necessary to examine the naval situation in the Pacific. Besides her fortified base at Kiaochow, Germany possessed numerous islands in the Western Pacific. In addition, a formidable German Asiatic squadron was stationed in the Far East, built around the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau, two powerful cruisers of 11420 tons each launched in

70. Greenbie, n. 56, pp. 349-50, 353. It was felt that the rise of American power had already contracted English influence in the Pacific. Ibid., p. 361.
71. PRO, F.O. (Political), 371, 1914/2016, no. 36648.
1907 and 1908 respectively. Before the war broke out the squadron left Tsingtau for a secret rendezvous with other German vessels in the Caroline Islands, unknown to the British Admiralty, (72) the famous Emden capturing a Russian steamer on 4 August, which was taken to Kiaochow and converted into an auxiliary cruiser. (73)

Britain's naval fleet in the Far East chiefly consisted of the Minotaur (14,600 tons launched in 1908) and the Triumph (11,995 tons, launched in 1904) and the speed of these ships could hardly match that of the German ships. In addition, there was the Australia, an Australian battleship (19,200 tons, launched in 1911). (74) Winston Churchill reviewed the naval situation thus:

Our last look round the oceans before the fateful signal, left us therefore in no immediate anxiety about the Pacific. (75)

It is, however, difficult to agree. Although the German Squadron was not very superior to the English and Australian ships, it nevertheless presented a serious naval problem. As long as the German Admiral, von Spee, concealed his whereabouts and was likely to strike boldly, Great Britain's naval strength was at a disadvantage. Thus, the problem of attacking German ships, of blockading the base at Kiaochow, and of capturing enemy territory elsewhere was a difficult task for Britain's naval forces in the Pacific, and it was not easy to see how the things could have been


74. Corbett, n. 72, p. 138.

done effectively but for the assistance which Japan so opportunely provided. (76) Many of the contemporary British experts agreed with this. (77) Even Admiral von Tirpitz wrote in his memoirs:

the entry of Japan into the War wrecked the plan of a war by our Cruiser squadron against enemy trade and against British war vessels in those areas.... (78)

Thus, considering the vast interests of Great Britain, Edward Grey was justified in taking the initiative to ask Japan's "co-operation and assistance" in spite of the complacency of the First Lord of the British Admiralty, Winston S. Churchill.

Assuming, moreover, that Britain could have coped with the naval situation in the Pacific, as Churchill believed was possible, the attitude of the Commonwealth of Australia reveals an important point. On 6 August, two days after British Parliament approved of the declaration of war, the Colonial Office in London asked Australia to seize the German wireless stations in New Guinea, Yap, and Nauru. Australia agreed to carry out the job provided that the German fleet was considered the first objective. Australia considered the German fleet more menacing than the German territories. (79) This supports Grey's initiative in requesting Japan's assistance under the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

76. Corbett, n. 72, p. 278.


79. Jose, n. 77, pp. 49-52. Also The Times (London), 11 August 1914.