

Why did great britain move away from splendid isolation essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the 19th century Great Britain pursued a foreign policy aiming to maintain the “ Balance of Power” throughout Europe. They carried this aim into the twentieth century, but their method of splendid isolation was coming under increasing strain. Despite a continued arrogance about her domination, Britain showed a new unease for the first time when she adopted a method of international relations imitative of other Europeans, even if her overall aim remained the same.

This unease was fuelled by new imperialist intentions from strengthening powers in Europe, and the international tensions this caused were further accentuated by the emergence of alliances. At the turn of the century, problems within their own Empire gave Great Britain cause to question their own strength in depth militarily at the very time the economic importance of their Empire in the emerging international power struggle was growing. Great Britain had been the dominant force throughout the 19th century and had reached a pinnacle of imperialistic strength during the Victorian era.

While she remained so unchallenged by other nations she had no reason to become involved in international affairs, other than to maintain the status quo. It was entirely in her interest to maintain the current division of strength between the Great Powers of Europe, namely Austria-Hungary, France, Russia and the emerging Germany, in order to protect her domination. The decades that this attitude went unchallenged allowed Great Britain to become arrogant about her “ policemenanship” of the world.

The concept of Splendid Isolation was used to describe the way she kept out of world affairs unless it was necessary to protect her own interest, in which

case victory, it was assumed, would come with ease. However this arrogance continued into the twentieth century despite a very obviously changing balance of power and status quo. By the turn of the century all of the powers in Europe bar Austria-Hungary were looking outside of the continent for glory and gains.

The imperialist intentions were the result of rapid economic growth and partly an attempt to further increase it, by searching for new markets and new resources. In many ways it was, “ a passing of initiative in Europe from British hands to others eager and now able to take it,” 1. Challenge from France and Russia on Africa and India was beginning to come in the form of direct threats. Russian was beginning to challenge the North western frontier of India from Asia and France expansion in Indo-China was also beginning to represent a problem.

Russia who had advanced rapidly in economic terms represented a bigger threat due to a quickly expanding railway system right across Asia. Britain’s “ prize jewel” was indeed India, the most profitable country in her empire and these challenges to it made her if not worried then take notice. However while these powers remained detached there was no real threat to Britain due to the obvious supremacy of her military and particularly naval power.

Yet the when the alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1879 was followed by an alliance between Russia and France in 1894 Britain began to feel weakened by the isolation which the Times had described as “.. Deliberately chosen... ” in 1896. The intention of it had not been to leave them in the situation they now found themselves, as more or less the

enemies of everyone. However Britain did assume at this point that the alliances within Europe cancelled each other out, not even questioning the possibility of intervention.