

Volume 2

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Anglo-Japanese Naval Alliance (1902) I

Lead: In 1902, Great Britain ended a century of splendid isolation and cut a deal with Japan.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: For nearly a century the oceans of the world were dominated by the British Navy. It was technologically superior to any other and was backed by an industrial economy that overshadowed all others until the late 1800s when other nations such as Germany, France, Russia and the United States began to catch up. The

power of this naval machine was so overwhelming that Britain was permitted a freedom of action unequalled as it established and maintained the largest empire in the modern era. By 1900 this power was under challenge. The greatest threat to British interests at this time was in the Far East. The Chinese Empire was set to rot. Various European powers were nibbling around the edge of that Eastern giant. It could hardly handle its own internal affairs much less resist pressure from the modern states of the West. The weakness of the Chinese meant that Britain had to protect her trading interests there against the infringement of other powers. Russia was expanding into areas of special British interest along Russia's borders:

Manchuria in northern China, northern India, and Persia. Germany, France and the United States were increasing their navies which threatened Britain's link with her colonies.

In contrast to a disintegrating China, Japan had emerged as a significant power on the world scene in the late 1800s. The Japanese had begun the long climb to an industrial economy, had a first-rate navy, and looked with alarm at the moves Russia was making in Manchuria and Korea. Both powers needed a partner. With that in mind Japanese Ambassador Hayashi Tadasu arrived in London in Spring 1900. He would spend the best part of the next two years trying to

convince Japan and England their interests in the Far East were parallel and an alliance would be mutually beneficial. Next time: Kicking and screaming, Britain takes an ally.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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