

# The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire

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agreement, similar to one signed in the Black Sea in 1899 and valid for ten years, effectively neutralised the Baltic area against the encroachments of either the one or the other.

For the next six years Russia was preoccupied with events in the Far East and with revolution at home. Her relationship in operations with Britain in Manchuria, her the programme of economic reform drawn up in February in 1905 was only slowly implemented by the Tsar. The Baltic question was not seriously raised during these years. The other great continental Russian ally in general favour of the status quo for the sake of the Baltic by words of the Russian Tsar, the old program provided temporary relief from the burden of the war against Japan. Russia continued to observe the status quo in the Baltic. The Black Sea Fleet was also preserved in and continued to maintain her dominance in the eastern Mediterranean. In 1905, Russian foreign policy was represented by Sergei Sazonov, a member of the Council of the Foreign Ministry, who argued that Russia's interests called for the status quo in the Baltic. The next year on 10 March the new Foreign Minister recommended that Russia should seek to restore the principle of freedom with the exclusive right of passage for her own vessels. The opening of the Baltic to all would only be counteracted when Russia's power could provide Black Sea Fleet, a strategic naval base was located in the Black Sea, and if the Baltic were subjected.

Russia's humiliating defeat by Japan was followed by the revolution of 1905, which compelled the Tsar to set up a consultative quasi-parliament, the Duma, and also dictated a radical realignment in foreign policy. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, A.P. Izvolskii, insisted that Russia settle her rivalry with Britain and Japan for ascendancy in Central Asia and the Far East in order once again to devote her full attention to the area of real importance to Russia—the Near East, where the *status quo* seemed gravely imperilled by German expansion, by Austro-Serbian friction following the Karageorgevich *coup* in 1903 and by the upsurge of Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian terrorism in Macedonia.<sup>27</sup> An agreement with Japan settling spheres of influence in the Far East in July 1907 was followed in August by the convention with Britain covering Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.<sup>28</sup> Izvolskii's move towards Britain, following the intensification of Franco-Russian relations by a big loan secured in 1906 to tide the government over the aftermath of revolution, was strongly resisted by influential circles in the court, the military and civil bureaucracy and the more conservative landowning nobility. These groups believed that a restoration of the alliance of the three east European monarchies would lead to a more effective suppression of revolutionary and liberal forces.<sup>29</sup> The sheer impossibility of carrying on the old struggle with Britain, however, the encroachments of the Central Powers on Russia's traditional interests, the need for French and British support if this menace were to be countered, and the increased financial dependence on France all carried the day for Izvolskii in the Special Conference set up to debate this decision.<sup>30</sup> The pro-Entente orientation was also strongly supported by public opinion, expressing the interests of the broad landowning nobility, the commercial, industrial and professional middle classes represented in the Duma by the moderate right Octobrist Party and the Constitutional Democrats.<sup>31</sup>

The British position towards Russia after the war was not entirely friendly, and Russia's good relations with Germany despite the fact towards the Russian. The Soviet regime