

and by the interests of self-defence. The case falls under two heads—France and Belgium, with which we will deal in turn. In the case of our relation to France, there was the call of honour and self-interest, but no direct obligation; in that of our relation to Belgium, honour, obligation and self-defence all combined.

The Case of France

In 1904, the Conservative Government concluded an Agreement with France, settling all outstanding questions between her and this country. In 1907, the Liberal Government concluded a similar Agreement with Russia. What is called the "Triple Entente" thus grew up between England, France, and Russia. It was often regarded as a balance against the "Triple Alliance" (Austria, Germany, and Italy). But so far as England was concerned, it was a friendly relationship, not a formal alliance. Except in the specific matters dealt with by the two Agreements, England was under no obligation to support either France or Russia. In 1906, when Germany was giving trouble to France on account of Morocco, Sir Edward Grey expressed the personal view to the French Government that if war were forced upon France in consequence of the Anglo-French Agreement, public opinion in this country would favour the giving of material as well as diplomatic support. In 1908, when the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria caused an international crisis (Russia protesting against the annexation and Germany "in shining armour" supporting her Austrian ally), Sir Edward Grey told the Russian Government that this being a Balkan affair, in which England had no direct interest or concern, nothing more than diplomatic support would be given by her. Thus each case was left to be decided on its own merits.

What, then, was the case as it existed in the critical days at the end of July and beginning of August? France, having no longer anything to fear from England, had concentrated her fleet in the Mediterranean. Her northern coasts were unprotected. Sir Edward Grey's opinion was, "that if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war which France had not sought and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the unprotected coasts of France," we could not honourably