Salutary Neglect

**Definition of Salutary Neglect**

The Meaning and Definition Salutary Neglect: Salutary Neglect was a long-standing British Policy in the 13 colonies which allowed the colonists to flout, or violate, the laws associated with trade. There were no effective enforcement agencies and it was expensive to send British troops to America. The British policy of Salutary Neglect was not documented. The policy and era of Salutary Neglect lasted from the 1690's to the 1760's and benefited the colonists boosting their profits from trade.

**Reversing the Policy of Salutary Neglect**

The British reversed their policy of Salutary Neglect to raise taxes in the colonies to pay for the massive war debt incurred during the French and Indian Wars. The reversal of the policy of Salutary Neglect led to insurrection in the colonies, the Boston Tea Party, the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence. This explains why the policy of Salutary Neglect, and the British attempts to reverse the policy of Salutary Neglect, was so important to U.S. history.



**Era of Salutary Neglect in the American Colonies**

The first reason for the British policy of Salutary Neglect was to ensure that the America Colonies would remain loyal to the British during the period of expansion in Colonial America. The threat of rebellion in the colonies was a concern. In 1675 Nathaniel Bacon instigated a rebellion against a corrupt Governor. The Culpeper Rebellion against the Colonial Government erupted in Carolina.

There were no effective enforcement agencies and it was expensive to send British troops to the American colonies which were far away, so the policy of Salutary Neglect meant that such costs could be kept to a minimum. The British policy of Salutary Neglect was, most importantly, about the profits that could be made from the raw materials and products used for trade by the colonists in the 13 Colonies in exchange for goods from England.

This led to the system of Triangular Trade across the Atlantic. Great Britain adhered to the philosophy of Mercantilism which came to mean that colonies existed for the good of the mother country. The famous British Prime Minister Robert Walpole stated that "If no restrictions were placed on the colonies, they would flourish".

**Reasons for the Policy of Salutary Neglect**

**Inability to Enforce the laws**

The reasons for the policy of Salutary Neglect were it was too difficult, too expensive and politically too risky to enforce the laws:

◾Enforcement: During the early period of colonization there were no effective enforcement agencies in place

◾Distance & Transport: 3000 miles from England to the colonies

◾Complex Logistics: Required difficult coordination of people, facilities and supplies

◾Expense: To expensive to implement

◾Political Dangers: Dissatisfied and discontented Colonists would find a willing ally in the French

**Salutary Neglect - The Navigation Acts**

The Navigation Acts stated that Colonial exports had to be transported in English ships and that all Colonial imports had to first pass through English ports - whether the goods were for England or another country in Europe, meaning that the colonies were prohibited from trading directly with France, Spain and the Netherlands. The trade goods were to pay heavy duties (taxes) when shipped to England. The money from the taxes went to England, not the colonies from where they originated. The policy of Salutary Neglect allowed the colonial merchants to flout, or violate, the Navigation Acts. There were no effective agencies in place to enforce them - the policy of Salutary Neglect applied.

**Salutary Neglect - Triangular Trade**

The premise of Triangular Trade was that the different regions would trade goods that they had in abundance in exchange for those goods which were needed but lacking in their own region. Triangular trade provided the colonists with the ability to obtain English manufactured goods without spending hard currency that was in limited supply refer to Colonial Times. Many of the American colonists ignored the Navigation Acts and traded directly with France, Spain and the Netherlands - very profitable. They were able to get away with violating the law due to the long-standing, undocumented, English policy of 'Salutary Neglect'.

**The Era of Salutary Neglect**

The policy of 'Salutary Neglect' lasted from the early 1600's to the 1760's and avoided strict enforcement of parliamentary laws - British officials in the colonies were basically allowed to turn a 'blind eye' to trade violations - they neglected to enforce the law. England's policy of salutary neglect on the colonies occurred in three time periods.

◾Salutary Neglect 1607-1696: Navigation Acts were passed in the English parliament - but not enforced

◾Salutary Neglect 1696-1763: Deliberate policy of Salutary Neglect to boost trade profits and ensure loyalty of the colonists

◾Salutary Neglect 1763-1775: Great Britain attempts to reverse the policy of Salutary Neglect to pay for war debts, tightening their control, enforcing the Navigation Acts and other laws and imposing new taxes on goods

**The Reversal of the Policy of Salutary Neglect**

The benevolent period of Salutary Neglect all changed after the French and Indian War (aka Seven Years War 1755-1763) Although the French and Indian War was a victory for the British they were left with a massive war debt. To pay the war debt the British ended their policy of Salutary Neglect in the colonies. The defeat of the French had removed the political danger and the British were sufficiently confident to tighten their control over their now large and lucrative colonies. The long earlier period of "salutary neglect" came to an end and new initiatives with more and tighter controls were introduced. The British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Grenville, adopted the policy of bringing the colonies in line with regard to the payment of taxes - reversing the policy of Salutary Neglect.

◾The measures implemented to reverse the policy of Salutary Neglect were to reduce the British national debt and stimulate the British economy.

◾Lord Grenville significantly increased the presence of the Navy in Colonial America and instructed them to become more active in customs enforcement. British warships were ordered to patrol the ports to catch smugglers and seize contraband

◾Writs of Assistance: Customs officials were ordered to go to their posts in Colonial America rather than work 3000 miles away. They were provided with Writs of Assistance (blanket search warrants) to stop smuggling. The Writs of Assistance gave Customs officials the authority to search any premises at at any time

◾The additional duties (taxes) raised due to the reversal of the policy of Salutary neglect were to pay the costs of having 10,000 troops stationed in the American colonies

◾Admiralty courts for tax violators and smugglers were established in the colonies where a judge decided the outcome rather than a colonial court

The British therefore had the means, and the motivation, to enforce the laws of the Navigation Acts and looked for ways of imposing new taxes in the colonies and to make them bear a larger share of the costs of their administration and defence. The policy of Salutary Neglect was ended.

**The End of the British Policy of Salutary Neglect**

The British attempt to reverse their policy of Salutary Neglect in the 1760's and end illegal trading was to tighten their control, enforce the Navigation Acts and impose new taxes including the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Townshend Acts and the Tea Act. These measures infuriated the American colonists. They had been allowed to flout the Navigation Acts for years - it had become their custom and practise and a direct result of Salutary Neglect. And then, to add insult to injury, the British were slashing their profits still further through the new taxes.

**Effects of reversing of the Policy of Salutary Neglect**

The colonists vehemently protested against the new measures resulting from the reversal of Salutary Neglect and the Sons of Liberty was formed. The Boston Tea Party affair followed which was as a result and in opposition to the Tea Act. The American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence was the inevitable conclusion to the laws and taxes imposed by the British on the American colonies - which had been fueled by their attempt to end their policy of Salutary Neglect.

**Salutary Neglect History Timeline**

The seeds of revolution were sewn when the British attempted to reverse their policy of Salutary Neglect. The fastest way to gain an overview of the history of Salutary Neglect, and the attempts at the reversal of the Salutary Neglect Policy, is via a History Timeline of Salutary Neglect, for additional facts and information refer to Taxes in the Colonies.

**History Timeline of Salutary Neglect**

1651 The Navigation Acts were designed to regulate colonial trade but laws were

violated due to the policy of Salutary Neglect

1663 The Navigation Act of 1663, also called the Act for the Encouragement of

Trade or the Staple Act, was passed in the English Parliament.

1673 The Plantation Duty Act was enacted to the Plantations to trade exclusively

with England and led to the Culpeper Rebellion of 1677.

1675 The Lords of Trade were appointed in England to enforce the new

mercantile system and maximize potential profits for England within the

confines of Salutary Neglect

1675 Bacon's Rebellion Nathaniel Bacon rebelled against a corrupt Governor

1677 Culpeper’s Rebellion: Rebellion against the Colonial Government in

Carolina and the Navigation Acts led by John Culpeper.

1688 The start of the Wars between France and Great Britain

1689 The English Bill of Rights enables Parliament to control laws and taxes in

the Colonies in America but still adhering to the policy of Salutary Neglect

1696 Salutary Neglect. Salutary Neglect was adopted as the English policy in

Colonial America

1696 The English government established the Board of Trade to oversee colonial

policies working with the policy of Salutary Neglect.

1696 Robert Walpole becomes Britain's first prime minister. Walpole approved

the Policy of Salutary Neglect.

1733 Navigation Act of 1733, also known as the Molasses Act

1763 The end of the French and Indian War (Seven years War) left the British

with a massive war debt leading to the reversal of the Salutary Neglect

policy

1763 To pay the war debt the British end their policy of Salutary Neglect in the

colonies. They started to enforce the laws of the Navigations Acts and

looked for ways of imposing new duties (taxes)

1764 Sugar Act

1765 The Stamp Act

1766 Opposition by the Colonies resulted in the repeal of the Stamp act

1765 The Sons of Liberty organization was formed

1767 Townshend Acts - Series of Laws passed by the British Parliament placing

duties on items imported by the colonists

1773 Tea Act

1774 December 16: The Boston Tea Party

1775 March 22, 1775: In a conciliatory address to Parliament, Edmund Burke

cites the British officials "wise and salutary neglect" as the prime factor in

the booming commercial success of Britain's North American holdings.

1775 The American Revolution (1775- 1783)

The Policy of Salutary Neglect

The Policy of Salutary Neglect and the British attempts to reverse the policy of Salutary Neglect was of vital importance important to the cause of the American Revolution and U.S. history.

**SALUTARY NEGLECT**

Answer the questions below from the reading:

1. Briefly define the term Salutary Neglect:

2. How long did this policy last?

3. Why did the British reverse their policy of Salutary Neglect?

4. What was the original reason for creating this policy?

5. Why was enforcement of trade laws an issue?

6. Explain Prime Minister Walpole’s statement:

7. What restrictions were placed on how the colonists shipped their products?

8. According to the process of Triangular Trade, the colonists were supposed to trade only with which country?

9. How/why did the agreements of Triangular trade fail?

10. What impact the French and Indian War have on the policy of Salutary Neglect?

11. Explain the impact (actions) of Lord Grenville:

12. How did the colonists react to the end of the policy of Salutary Neglect?