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Master's Thesis of Political Science and International  
Relations

# Looking into the Peacefulness of the Anglo-American Power Transition

- Analysis of Diplomatic Frictions between the  
Two Countries in the Interwar Period -

영미 세력전이의 평화적 성격에 대한 검토:  
전간기 양국간 외교적 마찰의 분석

August 2023

Graduate School of Political Science and  
International Relations  
Seoul National University  
International Relations Major

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Examiner Doohwan Ahn

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# Abstract

The maintenance of a relatively peaceful relationship between the United States and Britain despite the American growth of national capabilities and its eventual overtaking of the British international status as the most preeminent nation in the international system attracted the attention of various scholars from diverse theoretical perspectives. Their focus of research, however, was limited because they chiefly dealt with the net result of the interaction of many factors that eventually prevented the outbreak of war or serious military conflict between the two countries. Through the analysis of the negotiations for naval arms limitation around the 1920s and the controversy over policy cooperation about Japanese expansionism in the 1930s, this study looked into their diplomatic frictions in the interwar period so as to better understand the ambivalent aspects of the Anglo-American power transition. The result of the study was that, despite their deepening strategic alignment on a general level, the diplomatic frictions between the United States and Britain persisted in detail. Although these frictions did not critically impede the peaceful progress of the power transition, their existence suggests that reinforcing strategic alignment may not be an effective solution to individual points of contention.

**Keyword:** Anglo-American Relations, the Interwar Period, Liberal International Order, Power Transition Theory

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Study Background and Research Question

Paying attention to the massive impact of the Industrial Revolution on the world, A. F. K. Organski asserted that the traditional logic of balance of power no longer applied to international politics in modern times, and a new trend appeared in its stead.

Nations that have been preponderant for centuries are losing ground relative to new nations that have emerged abruptly as great powers, and nations that were but yesterday near the bottom of the international pyramid are rising rapidly. Newcomers are constantly challenging the established leaders of world politics, and if ever one of these challenges is successful, it will mean a huge transference of power from one group of nations to another—and a new international order.<sup>1</sup>

He called modern times the period of power transition, in which new great powers constantly rose from the gutter and challenged the predominant nations of the international system. The industrial growth of a new great power and its eventual overtaking of the predominant nation of the time usually sparked a war between them (Figure 1.1). In this respect, the diplomatic relations between the United States and Britain are a unique historical phenomenon. Even though the United States began to surpass Britain in many indices of national power in the late 19th century (Table 1.1), the rise of American power did not

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<sup>1</sup> A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 300.



trigger any war. On the contrary, the two countries fought side by side in the two world wars of the 20th century. Britain also participated in the American postwar international order, peacefully handing over its leadership position in global affairs.

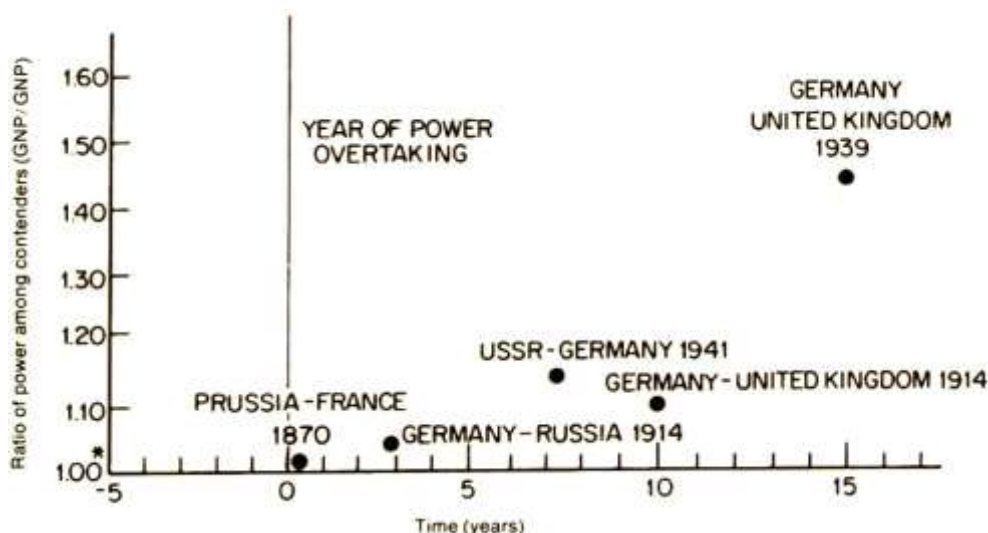


Figure 1.1. Power Ratios and Timing of Overtaking (Challenger–Dominant Nation)<sup>2</sup>

Index of National Power	Year
GDP	1873
Iron and Steel Production	1890
Relative Shares of World Manufacturing Output	1892
Composite Index of National Capability	1880–1900

Table 1.1. The Timing of American Overtaking of Britain<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 59.

<sup>3</sup> The GDP was calculated with 1990 International Geary–Khamis dollars. Maddison Historical Statistics (Historical Statistics of the World Economy: 1–2008 AD), <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-database-2010>; Correlates of War, National Material Capabilities (v6.0), <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities>; Paul Bairoch, "International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980," *Journal of European Economic History* 11, no. 2: 296.

Nevertheless, Anglo-American relations were not all unicorns and rainbows. Although British Prime Minister Winston Churchill praised “a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States” and “the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples”<sup>4</sup> immediately after World War II, rivalry and tension certainly existed in Anglo-American relations during the interwar period. For example, in 1927, when Britain was quarreling with the United States over the issue of naval arms limitation, Churchill himself admitted the possibility of war between the two countries.

No doubt it is quite right in the interests of peace to go on talking about war with the United States being ‘unthinkable.’ Everyone knows that this is not true. However foolish and disastrous such a war would be, it is in fact, the only basis upon which the Naval discussions at Geneva are proceeding. We do not wish to put ourselves in the power of the United States. We cannot tell what they might do if at some future date they were in a position to give us orders about our policy.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, despite the historical tendency toward peaceful power transition between the United States and Britain, the interwar period created moments of both harmony and friction. Recognizing this ambivalent character of Anglo-American relations at the time, a number of historians described interwar Anglo-American relations

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<sup>4</sup> “The Sinews of Peace (‘Iron Curtain Speech’),” International Churchill Society, March 5, 1946, <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace>.

<sup>5</sup> “Cruisers and Parity,” Churchill Papers 22/182, Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume V, Companion Part I Documents, The Exchequer Years 1922-1929* (Heinemann, 1979), 1033.

with phrases such as “Allies of a Kind,” “Bargaining for Supremacy,” “Ambiguous Partnership,” and “Competitive Cooperation.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, they were too close and friendly to be enemies, but at the same time too mistrustful of each other to be close friends.

Ultimately, as a matter of fact, neither war nor any devastating conflict broke out between the United States and Britain during the period of power transition. Furthermore, Anglo-American relations had evolved into a comprehensive political, military, and economic partnership ever since. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the harmonious aspects of their diplomatic relations prevailed at the end of the interwar period, after all. Then, what were the impacts of the other half, namely the diplomatic frictions between them, on the course of Anglo-American power transition? It is the question this study attempts to answer.

## 1.2. Literature Review

Within the academic realm of international relations, a number of scholars have directly or indirectly discussed the peaceful character of the Anglo-American power transition.

The proponents of liberal institutional theories of international relations tended to regard *Pax Britannica* and *Pax Americana* in the same light. Developing the concept of the liberal international order, G. John Ikenberry understood America’s replacement of Britain as the most preeminent state of the international system as the continuation of a long-term ideological progress designed to transform the system

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<sup>6</sup> David Reynolds, "Rethinking Anglo-American Relations," *International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1988): 91.

according to the tenets of liberalism. This “liberal ascendancy” was not a simple linear progression. Ikenberry argued that the winner of a major, global-scale war devised a fresh international order for the new era. Thus, in this respect, the years of 1815 (the Napoleonic Wars), 1919 (World War I), and 1945 (World War II) were crucial historical moments rather than the timing of American overtaking of Britain in terms of material capabilities. From his viewpoint, the moments of Anglo-American power transition were fundamentally unproblematic and its historical meaning was that the United States was now able to take the mantle of global leadership when Britain was becoming increasingly unfit for the job. The peacefulness of the power transition was a natural result of their shared political vision.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, more realistic approaches to international relations contended that large-scale power shifts among nations were generally volatile and dangerous. Created by Organski, power transition theory focused on the likelihood of a hegemonic war between a rising great power and the current predominant nation of the international system. However, as discussed above, such inherent risk of power transition did not materialize in the Anglo-American case. Organski argued that this exception was possible thanks to America’s acceptance of the international order created by Britain. He adduced several factors that mitigated the possibility of war: the lack of American interest in global leadership, the unthreatening nature of its economic growth, shared elements such as language, culture, and history between the United States and Britain, and its geographical location, which induced major

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<sup>7</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2001); G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton University Press, 2011); G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise, Character, and Evolution of International Order," in *International Politics and Institutions in Time*, ed. Orfeo Fioretos (Oxford University Press, 2017).

European powers to neglect it before it grew too much to be contained. He generalized those factors with the term “satisfaction.” In other words, the Anglo–American power transition was peaceful because the United States was, on the whole, satisfied with the international order designed and maintained by Britain.<sup>8</sup> Another study belonging to power transition theory covered the Anglo–American power transition as an individual case study and drew a similar conclusion to Organski, listing Britain’s leadership, common institutional heritage, America’s separation from European affairs and decentralized political system, and British capital investment in the United States as the sources of satisfaction. These factors led to the American support of the *Pax Britannica* and the absence of arms buildup aimed at each other.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas power transition theory dealt with the rising power’s perception of the current predominant nation and international order, Graham Allison concentrated on the role of the predominant nation in averting a devastating collision. He argued that the longstanding tensions between the United States and Britain, which had remained less than friendly since the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, could be alleviated successfully in the early 20th century because Britain strategically accommodated American demands about its primacy in the Western Hemisphere. Surrounded by mounting security threats to the empire from across the world and bogged down in the fiasco of the Second Boer War, Britain decided to prioritize more immediate threats posed by Germany and Russia. Britain made a series of concessions in negotiations with the United States, such as the Alaska boundary dispute, the Venezuela Crisis, and the rights over the

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<sup>8</sup> Organski, *World Politics*.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald L. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (Seven Bridges Press, 2000).

Panama Canal. For this reason, a war between the United States and Britain was not inevitable despite the American overtaking of Britain at the time.<sup>10</sup> Aaron Friedberg presented a similar assessment in his explanation of Britain's renunciation of worldwide naval supremacy. The use of power standards, the British government's methodology for assessing the global naval balance and the required naval strength, had been flawed because of its Eurocentric worldview. When the United States and Japan emerged as naval great powers outside the European theater, the Royal Navy's vulnerability was undeniable. In response to this situation, Britain rebalanced its naval assets from the periphery to the center. Thus, although naval supremacy was the cornerstone of British national strategy, Britain did not take action to restrain the rise of American naval power because of its strategic limitations at the time.<sup>11</sup>

Kori Schake asserted that such Realpolitik-based explanations of the Anglo-American power transition within the realist camp could not adequately explain the peacefulness between the two countries. She set the bar high with the possibility of a peaceful power transition but asserted that the United States and Britain were able to meet the requirements due to some unique circumstances. According to Kori Schake's argument, while various historical factors, both international and domestic, contributed to the lack of a hegemonic conflict to some degree, the fundamental reason for peacefulness was their identical political characteristics at the very right moment. The combination of democratic America's evolution into an empire and imperial Britain's democratization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries positively

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<sup>10</sup> Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Scribe Publications, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

altered their mutual perception. The confidence in the other side's unthreatening nature prevented a flare-up of conflict in this sensitive time of Britain's waning national capabilities and America's advance on the global stage.<sup>12</sup>

As discussed above, the peacefulness of the Anglo-American power transition has been interpreted through various academic approaches. However, they universally endeavored to measure the net aggregate value of different factors that either facilitated or impeded peaceful power transition because they all had to account for the given fact that the Anglo-American power transition progressed without war or serious military conflict. Liberalist approaches, such as Ikenberry's liberal international order, almost entirely focused on the facilitating factors. Meanwhile, realist approaches theoretically emphasized the impeding factors but had to prioritize other coexisting facilitating factors so as to explain the lack of war. Additionally, scholars like Kori Schake searched for unique enabling factors for peaceful power transition. Consequently, little effort has been diverted to taking a deeper look at the workings of the diplomatic frictions between the United States and Britain. Although these frictions did not overturn the overall trend of peacefulness in the Anglo-American case, research on them can yield insights into the general understanding of power transition.

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<sup>12</sup> Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Harvard University Press, 2017).

### 1.3. Composition of the Study

This study argues that despite the growing macro-level strategic alignment between the United States and Britain in the interwar period, micro-level diplomatic frictions between them persisted. In general, these diplomatic frictions did not critically disrupt the peaceful course of the power transition. As mentioned before, there were many factors conducive to the continuation of friendly Anglo-American relations, which ultimately functioned as powerful incentives to prevent any severe weakening or collapse of their alignment. This aspect was especially true for Britain, a declining great power more and more in need of American support in dealing with potential enemies. Even so, lingering diplomatic frictions between the United States and Britain at the time suggest that increasing or increased convergence of broader strategic interests does not necessarily entail smooth negotiation of individual points of contention among nations. The impetus for their definite settlement may require a watershed moment to become effective.

This paper analyzes issues in the interwar period that negatively affected diplomatic relations between the United States and Britain. While the two countries interacted in various areas throughout the interwar period, there were two prominent issues that led to consistent diplomatic frictions between them. Chapter 2 examines the tumultuous progress of the negotiations for naval arms limitation between the United States and Britain in the 1920s. Both countries desired to avoid a costly military competition like the devastating Anglo-German naval arms race before the First World War. Moreover, they saw eye to eye on the importance of promoting global peace through disarmament and fostering postwar economic recovery by curtailing military expenses.



Nevertheless, the United States and Britain differed in opinion on the detailed terms of the naval arms limitation because of their different strategic considerations.

Britain wanted to retain its naval mastery, which had been the cornerstone of British national strategy for centuries, whereas the United States sought equal status with Britain as a naval power. As a result, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, American President Woodrow Wilson and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George failed to reach an agreement on naval affairs. Two years later, the willingness of a new American administration led by President Warren Harding and Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes to stop naval buildup programs and the manifest decline of British economic potential eventually led to the Washington Naval Conference in 1921, in which Britain conceded the United States naval parity in capital ships and abrogated its alliance with Japan. Still, Britain declined to renounce its superiority in cruisers, which was considered crucial for preserving the widespread British Empire. American President Calvin Coolidge soon pushed for naval parity in cruisers as well, but Britain was unwilling to embrace such an American demand at the Geneva Naval Conference in 1927. The eventual compromise between them, which materialized at the London Naval Conference in 1930, was possible only in the wake of changes of government in both countries (from Coolidge to Herbert Hoover in America and from Stanley Baldwin to Ramsay MacDonald in Britain) and the ensuing change of tone in their diplomatic approach to each other. Although both the United States and Britain pursued identical principles regarding the naval arms limitation issue, it took around a decade to work out the details.

Chapter 3 looks into the Anglo-American controversy in the 1930s

over the question of formulating joint responses to the rise of Japanese expansionism. In common with Chapter 2, the United States and Britain shared largely congruent attitudes and goals. Suspicious of Japanese protestations that its Asian policies were fundamentally defensive, both countries regarded Japanese expansionism as detrimental to their national interests in China and Southeast Asia. Thus, they morally and later materially supported China in its uphill struggle against Japan. As Japan's aggressiveness became increasingly apparent over the course of the decade, American and British policymakers hardened their diplomatic stances towards Japan. They also considered effective Anglo-American cooperation an important prerequisite for keeping Japan's ambitions at bay. Nevertheless, because of a mutual mistrust of the other side's commitment caused by the disparity in their political and economic stakes in the Asia-Pacific region, meaningful policy coordination proved frustratingly elusive.

Economic historian Charles Kindleberger portrayed the era of the Great Depression as a situation of "British inability and United States unwillingness to assume responsibility for stabilizing [the international economic system]." <sup>13</sup> His critique is also relevant to this issue. As a country with greater stakes in the region, it was imperative for Britain to stabilize the aggravating regional situation. However, the hands of British policymakers were heavily tied. Any diplomatic effort for a *modus vivendi* with Japan was destined to fail due to strong opposition from the United States, which suspected that Britain might acquiesce in Japanese aggression by means of diplomatic rapprochement. On the other hand, British attempts to obtain American support against Japan tended to achieve only limited success due to rhetoric-only American

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<sup>13</sup> Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression 1929-1939* (University of California Press, 1973), 292.

diplomacy and lingering isolationist sentiment among the American public. Consequently, Anglo-American relations regarding their policy towards Japan were consigned to limbo. The Manchurian Crisis in 1931 brought about a bitter quarrel between American Secretary of State Henry Stimson and British Foreign Minister John Simon over Britain's hesitation to follow Stimson's initiative of morally (and only morally) condemning Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Since the crisis subsided in 1933, stimulated by a worsening European security environment, some British policymakers like Neville Chamberlain and Warren Fisher had tried to mend diplomatic ties with Japan. They pushed ahead with an Anglo-Japanese nonaggression pact, which the American government under Franklin D. Roosevelt vehemently opposed. However, ironically, Roosevelt shirked from providing any explicit guarantee of American support when the British government adopted more hardline policies towards Japan after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, putting Britain in a situation of strategic dilemma and uncertainty. Eventually, the unexpected defeat and surrender of France in 1940 solved the commitment problem. Subsequent Japanese accession to the Axis powers by the Tripartite Pact consolidated British determination to regard Japan as an implacable security threat and elicited American willingness to provide substantial material aid to Britain.

This study used process tracing<sup>14</sup> to chronologically analyze the management of diplomatic frictions between the United States and Britain discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. For this purpose, this study made use of various primary sources (memoirs, published

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<sup>14</sup> Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pederson, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing* (University of Michigan Press, 2016); James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (2015).

documents, and other archival materials) and secondary sources (books and journal articles about the diplomatic history of each country, interwar Anglo-American relations, naval arms limitation in the interwar period, and political events leading up to the Pacific War).

## Chapter 2. The Negotiations for Naval Arms Limitation around the 1920s

### 2.1. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: America's Pursuit of Naval Parity with Britain

Following the Spanish–American War in 1898, the United States became a great power in the Asia–Pacific region. It acquired Guam and the Philippines from Spain and annexed Hawaii, advancing its frontier to the western Pacific Ocean. In his 1900 book, *The Problem of Asia*, naval strategist Alfred Mahan emphasized this new frontier's future importance and the merits of international cooperation in the region.

[In] the wide movement of expansion which has characterized the last quarter of the closing century, the Pacific Ocean in general and eastern Asia in particular are indicated as the predominant objectives of interest, common to all nations, both in the near and in the remote future. [...] In eastern Asia and the Pacific, although the interests of the United States are not identical with those of Germany and of Great Britain, they are alike; not the same, but similar. Rightly understood, while the three nations will be competitors,—seeks of the same end,—they should not be antagonists. For this reason our sympathy should go with the others in whatsoever, by facilitating their influence, tends towards the furtherance of the common policy.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect upon International Policies* (LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY, 1900), 131–134.

Although Mahan could not anticipate the fall of Germany as a naval power, his notion of the United States and Britain as “competitors but not antagonists” increasingly characterized Anglo-American relations in naval affairs. Indeed, it took significant time, money, and resolve for the United States to be considered a “competitor” for Britain. As of 1897, the American Navy was operating or building only 11 battleships in total, only a fraction of the Royal Navy’s 62 battleships.<sup>16</sup> The American public was also not interested in having a powerful navy because there was no visible threat to justify the expensive costs of naval buildup.<sup>17</sup>

World War I was a welcome turning point for the supporters of naval expansion as the war boosted the American awareness of naval power’s importance. The United States was unwillingly embroiled in the crossfire between Britain and Germany during the war. The Allied naval blockade of German coasts heavily interfered with American intercontinental trade in the Atlantic Ocean. America’s insistence on commercial rights as a neutral state could not prevent the drastic drop in trade with the Central powers. Furthermore, Germany’s continued adoption of unrestricted submarine warfare threatened American trade and life, which contributed to the American declaration of war on Germany in April 1917.<sup>18</sup> These events served as a reminder that the maritime interests of the United States were at stake, no matter which side eventually won the war. Throughout World War I, America’s hollow invocation of the freedom of the seas fell on deaf British ears.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Allen Lane, 1976), 209.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips Payson O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936* (Praeger, 1998), 122-23.

<sup>18</sup> Donald J. Lisio, *British Naval Supremacy and Anglo-American Antagonisms, 1914-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>19</sup> For example, as late as 1918, “Lloyd George [asserted] that Great Britain was prepared to go on with the war without the United States rather than give up the

American President Woodrow Wilson accordingly decided that naval expansion was necessary to protect his country's rights.

In a 1916 speech, Wilson urged Americans to build “incomparably the greatest navy in the world,” but switched the word “greatest” to “adequate” in the official text of the speech. This incident showed the determined but ambiguous nature of American naval buildup at the time. The 1916 naval building plan mandated by the Naval Act of the same year set the expansionist direction of American naval policy. This plan was supposed to increase the navy's size significantly (156 new ships) until 1923. Still, the question of the new navy's purpose remained elusive. The United States had not formally entered the war yet. Its potential enemies, missions, and operations were all unclear. Much clearer were the dreams of fulfilling America's maritime destiny and building a grand navy suitable for the country's great power status and influence on global affairs.<sup>20</sup> Whatever its directions or purposes, the 1916 naval building plan was sure to change the global balance of naval power upon its completion. The construction of ten battleships was authorized, which would have made the main battle fleet of the American navy superior to its British counterpart. Six battleships of the South Dakota class were especially important, since no British battleship would have been a match for them.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, it seemed self-evident to American policymakers that the size of America's “adequate” navy had to be measured against the British Royal Navy, the largest one in the world. As a consequence,

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right of naval blockade which he believed Point 2 [of Wilson's Fourteen Points] to require.” Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton University Press, 1961), 48.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Dingman, *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914–1922* (The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 34–47.

<sup>21</sup> Craig L. Symonds, *American Naval History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

the goal of naval parity with Britain was established, which had been the focal point of Anglo-American disputes in naval affairs during the interwar period. Even after the United States joined the war on the side of the Allied powers in 1917, American policymakers believed that inevitable commercial competition with Britain necessitated naval parity. President Wilson, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, and Admiral William Benson all expected the clash of national interests to prevail over wartime camaraderie. Therefore, American naval buildup continued despite the armistice in 1918. The next year, President Wilson submitted another naval building plan to Congress for ten additional battleships and six battlecruisers as part of his sustained focus on catching up with Britain.<sup>22</sup>

Britain was highly concerned about this new threat to its naval superiority, which had been at the heart of British military strategy for centuries. Besides, the recent war showed that naval superiority was essential to perform trade interdiction operations and counteract the same operations by an enemy navy.<sup>23</sup> Britain possessed a long history of eliminating challengers to its control of the seas, but the aftermath of World War I left Britain in a time of hardship. The country's growth potential was severely impacted by the war. A steady decline in economic competitiveness, massive casualties of war, and the growing independence of its constituents all contributed to the steady decline

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<sup>22</sup> By the way, America's naval ambition at the time may not be interpreted solely in terms of self-interest or balance of power logic. There were certainly some hypocrisies, such as the claim that the United States needed to protect sea lanes around the entire South American continent. However, Wilson's ulterior goal was to ensure compliance with his new world order. For him, the American navy's at least equal strength to the Royal Navy was necessary to prevent any abuse of power by Britain. John H. Maurer, "Lloyd George and the American Naval Challenge: 'The Naval Battle of Paris'," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 30, no. 2 (2019): 292; George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford University Press, 1994), 83-90.

<sup>23</sup> Lisio, *British Naval Supremacy and Anglo-American Antagonisms, 1914-1930*, 8.



of the British Empire. In the years from 1914 to 1918, 6.3% of the British male population between the ages of 15 and 49 perished. From 1913 to 1929, Britain's economic share in the Chinese market decreased from 16.5% to 9.5%. Moreover, the Dominions grew more autonomous despite attempts at achieving imperial unity.<sup>24</sup> If the United States had threatened Britain by launching a naval arms race, the British economy would not have matched the rapidly growing American economy.

Nevertheless, simultaneously, the storm had passed at least for a moment. The elimination of the German menace alleviated Britain's military and diplomatic duties in Europe. The postwar stabilization of great power relations also diminished the potential of facing multiple enemies at once, which had troubled British policymakers for decades. American abandonment was not a lethal strategic problem as a result. Furthermore, the Royal Navy still retained a few advantages. First, Britain oversaw a network of alliances, while the United States had no official ally due to its isolationist foreign policy. Second, because American naval construction during World War I prioritized destroyers for anti-submarine operations in the Atlantic Ocean, many American battleships remained unfinished when the war ended. Thanks to this, British naval superiority was granted a respite for a few years. Last, Britain was maintaining worldwide overseas bases for naval operations, which meant the Royal Navy was better than the American Navy in logistics.<sup>25</sup> Although a long-term decline of naval superiority was

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<sup>24</sup> David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2013), 99–102; Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers* (Routledge, 1995), 45–46.

<sup>25</sup> Brian McKercher, "Wealth, Power, and the New International Order: Britain and the American Challenge in the 1920s," *Diplomatic History* 12, no. 4 (1988); Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 102–05.

unavoidable, the immediate strategic environment left some room to maneuver for British policymakers trying to preserve British naval superiority without turning the United States into an implacable enemy.

At the Paris Peace Conference from January to June 1919, naval affairs became a conundrum in the Anglo-American negotiations about the postwar world order. The initial issue was the freedom of the seas, the second clause of Wilson's Fourteen Points, proclaimed in January 1918.<sup>26</sup> This issue was hot even before the conference, as the British wartime blockade inflicted economic damage to the trade of the United States as a neutral country. John Davis, the American ambassador to Britain, reported that the "sole question concerning which any anxiety is expressed is that of the freedom of the seas."<sup>27</sup> At first, Wilson was adamant about securing the freedom of the seas. In December, he said that if Britain disapproved of it, the United States would "build the biggest Navy in the world, matching theirs and exceeding it [...] and if they would not limit it, there would come another and more terrible and bloody war and England would be wiped off the face of the map."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, in contrast to Wilson's fierce rhetoric, this issue was quickly excluded from the negotiation's main agenda at the conference. The freedom of the seas was essentially the right of a neutral country to continue maritime trade with belligerent countries in war. However,

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<sup>26</sup> The full text of the second point is as follows. "Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international actions for the enforcement of international covenants." Woodrow Wilson, *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York University Press, 2006), 404.

<sup>27</sup> "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis) to the Acting Secretary of State," Document 352, 763.72/12568: Telegram, in U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Volume I: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (United States Government Printing Office, 2018). Hereinafter cited as *FRUS* with appropriate year and volume number.

<sup>28</sup> A. S. Link (ed.) et al, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson vol.53* (Princeton, 1966), 320-321. Quoted in Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931*, 364.

there was supposed to be no neutral country in the world united under the banner of the League of Nations, which was Wilson's own creation, because every League member was obliged to cut trade with the aggressor. Realizing the contradiction between the right to neutral maritime trade and the concept of a universal collective security system, Wilson retracted his claim about the freedom of the seas.<sup>29</sup>

Still, the question of naval balance remained as ongoing American naval building plans were poised to threaten British naval superiority. While the British Admiralty called for the buildup of new battleships to keep up with the American ships under construction, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George disagreed with the Admiralty on the grounds of financial constraints and doubts about the utility of large warships in the postwar world. He wanted to find a diplomatic solution instead.<sup>30</sup> Thus, after late March, the delegations of the United States and Britain in Paris entered an intense negotiation over their naval balance in the future. Both sides supported an arms limitation agreement but headed in diametrically opposite directions. Americans wanted naval parity, whereas Britons tried to persuade the United States to discontinue its naval building plans, letting Britain retain naval superiority for the foreseeable future. Indeed, the American side refused to seriously consider any compromise which placed its navy under the Royal Navy.

Naturally, tense conversations between American and British officials ensued throughout the negotiation. For example, Walter Long, the First Lord of the Admiralty, complained that it was unbearable for Britain to become relegated to a second-rate naval power on top of

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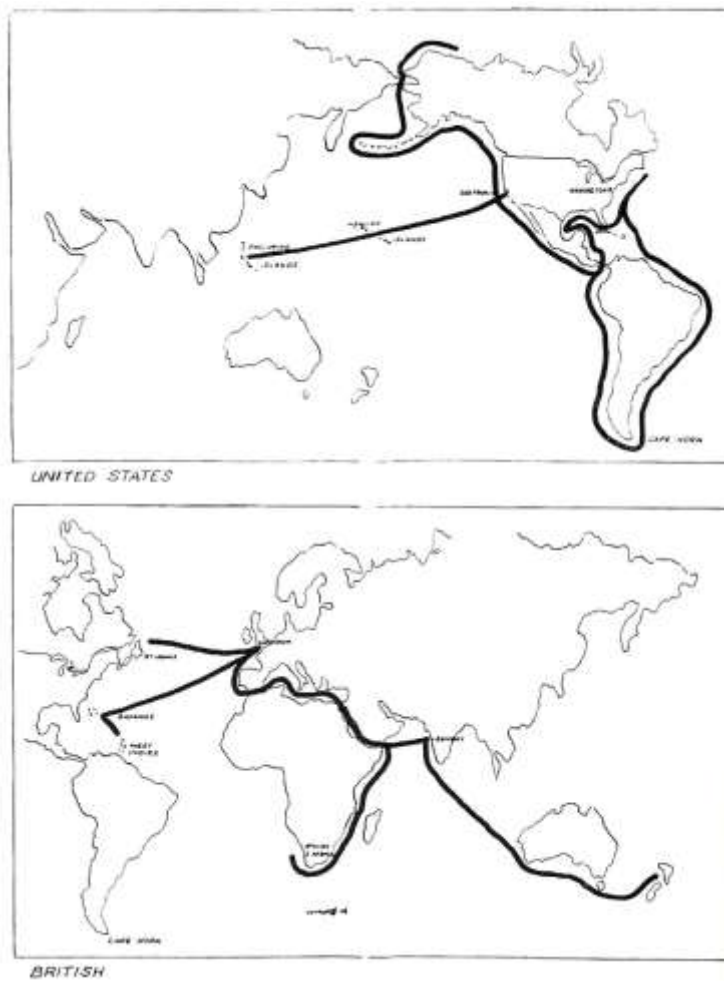
<sup>29</sup> Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 289.

<sup>30</sup> Maurer, "Lloyd George and the American Naval Challenge: 'The Naval Battle of Paris'," 295-96.

suffering immense losses during the war, to which Daniels retorted that the United States only wanted equal status with Britain and that peace between the two countries required such equality. In a breakfast meeting with Daniels, Lloyd George urged Americans to refrain from building more warships if they sincerely believed in the League of Nations. Daniels then questioned whether his statement meant that Britain's support of the League depended on the cessation of American naval building plans. Although that was not the case, replied Lloyd George, America's naval buildup (and its eventual overtaking of Britain) would turn the League into nothing but rhetoric. Daniels explained that a navy larger than the Royal Navy was necessary for the United States to protect widespread sea lanes around the Americas and the Pacific Ocean. Lloyd George called Daniels' argument "preposterous."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 290–91.



Map 2.1. Naval Defense Responsibilities according to Josephus Daniels<sup>32</sup>

The diplomatic deadlock lasted until April. Although Britain never convinced the United States to shut down its naval buildup altogether, it eventually obtained a moderate compromise. Wilson's desire for the foundation of the League of Nations turned out to be a vulnerable point, which gave Britain some leverage at the conference. Wilson needed to insert the Monroe Doctrine into the Covenant of the League of Nations lest Congress refuse to ratify the covenant. The British delegation

<sup>32</sup> Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era: Years of War and After, 1917-1923* (University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 379. Quoted in Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990*, 88.

adopted an issue linkage tactic, asserting it would not agree to this issue unless the United States pledged to drop its ongoing naval building plans. Two were underway at the time: one from 1916 and the other from 1919. The American delegation had signaled its willingness to abandon the latter plan (which was not yet legislated), whereas Britain constantly encouraged the United States to abandon both. British insistence was based on the fact that the 1916 plan alone would have stripped Britain of its cherished naval superiority. Wilson was adamant about preserving the 1916 plan. In the end, a compromise was finally reached on April 10. In exchange for British cooperation on the Monroe Doctrine issue, the United States gave up only the 1919 naval building plan.<sup>33</sup> By and large, the Paris Peace Conference failed to address the question of Anglo-American naval balance. The 1916 naval building plan was still in motion, continuously tilting the balance of naval power in favor of the United States.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.2. The Washington Naval Conference, 1921: Britain's Concession of Naval Parity in Capital Ships

Beginning with the Washington Naval Conference in 1921, naval conferences during the interwar period functioned as a channel of mediation between the United States and Britain. Efforts for finding a diplomatic solution to Anglo-American naval balance was spearheaded by American politician Charles Evans Hughes, the Secretary of State in the Harding Administration. Whereas he viewed the possibility of

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<sup>33</sup> Maurer, "Lloyd George and the American Naval Challenge: "The Naval Battle of Paris".

<sup>34</sup> O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936*, 149.

war as an unavoidable aspect of global politics, he envisioned a world order based on reason and enlightened self-interest instead of force.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, his foreign policy goal was to eliminate “provocative armament” beyond the confines of reasonable necessity for defense. He considered Wilson’s 1916 naval building plan an unnecessarily provocative policy. For Hughes, it was reasonable for Britain and Japan to assume that they were targets of the American naval buildup now that Germany no longer had any meaningful fleet. As they were likely to respond with their own naval buildup, the 1916 plan would only bring about mutual suspicion and a costly but futile naval arms race.<sup>36</sup> To sum up, whereas Wilson desired a system of peace undergirded by American naval power, Hughes tried to build a system of peace in exchange for American naval power.

By achieving naval parity with Britain through mutual disarmament, Hughes aimed to avert the danger of a naval arms race and provide a framework for international cooperation. However, he recognized that any agreement about naval arms limitation entailed far more than dealing with the number and power of warships. Successful arms limitation was contingent on a broader political settlement in the Asia-Pacific region because it was “apparent that in considering the appropriate limits of defensive armaments we meet, at the outset, questions not simply of military strategy, but of governmental policy, or political questions in the broad sense.”<sup>37</sup>

As a result, Japan’s role as a British ally in the Asia-Pacific region emerged as an intrusive problem. Since World War I, the United States

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era* (Columbia University Press, 1990), 43–46.

<sup>36</sup> Charles E. Hughes, “Possible Gains,” in *Proceedings of the American Society of International Law at Its Annual Meeting (1921–1969), APRIL 28–30, 1927, Vol. 21* (Cambridge University Press, 1927).

<sup>37</sup> Hughes, “Possible Gains,” 10.

had become increasingly suspicious of Japan's growing power and its encroachment into China.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance became a contentious issue in Anglo-American relations. During the war, Japan easily conquered Germany's Pacific colonies, which might become a foothold for strategic encirclement of Guam and the Philippines in case of war.<sup>39</sup> The General Board, an advisory body to the American Navy, predicted that if a conflict erupted between the United States and Britain, Britain would seek Japanese support. The Board thus argued that if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance continued, the United States would need a navy that was as strong as the combined forces of their navies.<sup>40</sup> Even the amendment to the alliance treaty in 1911, which stated that none was obliged to go to war with any third party with a Treaty of General Arbitration (e.g., the United States), did not allay persistent concerns of American strategists, who recently witnessed how a complex alliance structure could incur a world war.<sup>41</sup> Hughes desired to settle this matter once and for all by terminating the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

From the British perspective, the prospect of surrendering naval superiority was not palatable. Still, it became increasingly unavoidable

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<sup>38</sup> "[If] matters are left to their course, the doctrines of equal opportunity [in China] for all will disappear as the Japanese political and commercial program extends and that herein lies an actual danger of future complications between the powers concerned in the Far East." "The Acting Secretary of State to the Commission to Negotiate Peace," Document 436, Paris Peace Conf, 861.77/4: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1919, Volume II: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*.

<sup>39</sup> J. Kenneth McDonald, "The Washington Conference and the Naval Balance of Power, 1921-22," in *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power*, ed. John B. Hattendorf, Robert S. Jordan, and Robert O'Neill (Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 190-91.

<sup>40</sup> William R. Braisted, "The Evolution of the United States Navy's Strategic Assessments in the Pacific, 1919-31," in *The Washington Conference, 1921-22: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, ed. Erik Goldstein and John H. Maurer (Frank Cass, 1994), 104-06.

<sup>41</sup> Michael J. Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific since 1783* (Columbia University Press, 2017), 139.



over time. Indeed, because Britain kept accumulating naval assets when the United States was negligent in its naval buildup efforts, the Royal Navy was capable of retaining a numerical advantage over the American Navy for a while after World War I.

	Britain	United States
Battleships	33	15
Battle Cruisers	9	0
Cruisers	2	0
Light Cruisers	69	3
Flotilla Leaders	28	0
Destroyers	327	185
Submarines	156	68
Aircraft Carriers	6	0

**Table 2.1. Naval Strength of America and Britain (September 1919)<sup>42</sup>**

Unfortunately, Britain's relative capability was destined to decline as other naval powers built newer, more powerful warships. The Royal Navy was in a terrible predicament in this respect. The Admiralty calculated in 1920 that by 1925, assuming that Britain immediately began fully utilizing its shipbuilding capacity, the Royal Navy would have 9 newest (post-WWI ships in Table 2.2) capital ships. Meanwhile, the American Navy would have 12, and the Imperial Japanese Navy would have 8. However, if any delay occurred, the Royal Navy would have only 5 newest capital ships since a capital ship took more than four years to complete. Because the deficiency in quality was hard to

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<sup>42</sup> "Lieut. H. H. Frost, US Navy, to Admiral William S. Benson, US Navy," (September 3, 1919) in Michael Simpson, ed., *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939* (Ashgate, 2010), 18.

substitute with an advantage in quantity in naval warfare, Britain was at risk of being relegated to third place in the world.<sup>43</sup>

	Britain	United States	Japan
Post-WWI Ships	9(5)	12	8
Pre-Jutland Ships	13	11	4
Pre-War Ships	4	4	4
Total	26(22)	27	16

**Table 2.2. Projected Estimate of Capital Ships as of 1925<sup>44</sup>**

Only a renewed national focus on naval buildup could reverse the trend of decline, but Britain's second wind never arrived. On top of replacing the traditional two-power standard (of keeping the Royal Navy as powerful as the combined forces of the second and third navies) with a modified one-power standard of 60% superiority over the next powerful navy already in 1910, Britain also gave up the modified one-power standard at the Imperial Conference held in June 1921.<sup>45</sup> Such strategic retrenchment resulted from drastic cuts in defense budgets (shown in Table 2.3), which were caused by soaring public aversion to preparing for war and the urgent necessity to spend money on boosting the economy.

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<sup>43</sup> "Memorandum for the War Cabinet by the First Sea Lord," (December 14, 1920) in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 30-32.

<sup>44</sup> "Memorandum for the War Cabinet by the First Sea Lord," (December 14, 1920) in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 30.

<sup>45</sup> Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers*, 51.

	Army	Navy	Air Force
1920	395.0	156.5	52.5
1921	52.5	88.4	22.3
1922	95.1	80.8	13.6
1923	45.4	56.2	9.4
1924	43.6	52.6	9.6

**Table 2.3. British Defense Spending, 1920–1924 (in Million Pounds)<sup>46</sup>**

As the prospect of preserving naval superiority vaporized, open confrontation with the United States became an untenable policy. While the danger of war was not a realistic possibility between the two countries, there were concerns that Britain would be susceptible to American coercive diplomacy once it lost naval superiority to the United States. Accordingly, the British government established that the Royal Navy should not be placed in an inferior position to the American Navy.<sup>47</sup>

The American hostility toward the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was Britain's other strategic concern. The alliance with Japan had been the pillar of its foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region since the 1900s. However, Britain started feeling ambivalent about the alliance after World War I. The report of the British Foreign Office's Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee, published in January 1921, showed the challenge Britain experienced at the dawn of the Washington Conference.

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<sup>46</sup> Brian McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>47</sup> Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895–1956* (Macmillan, 1996), 74–75.

Inasmuch as the future of the Far East pivots on the policy of Japan, the political and economic situation of that country calls for very special attention. [...] All Japanese activities, be they military, political or economic, have so far resulted in the closing of the open door and the exclusion of foreign competition. [...] Whatever justification she may have, her aims have revealed an increasing variance from the principles for which British policy has always stood, and upon which the Alliance is founded. [...] The Alliance has never acted as an effective brake on Japanese activities.<sup>48</sup>

Japan's opportunistic expansion in the region during the war reminded British policymakers that Anglo-Japanese relations might be more conflictual than previously recognized. Japanese encroachment into China could threaten British commercial interests. Furthermore, Japan seemed to be looking for more self-aggrandizement, unsatisfied with its wartime gains. Britain thus had some internal, spontaneous incentive to end the alliance.

If the cardinal feature of our foreign policy in the future is to cultivate the closest relations with the United States and to secure their whole-hearted co-operation in the maintenance of peace in every part of the world, the renewal of the Alliance in anything like its present shape may prove a formidable obstacle to the realisation of that aim. [...] The war has left us too exhausted to cope with so great a problem. To succeed in

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<sup>48</sup> "Report of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee," No. 212, F 1169/63/23, in Rohan Butler and J. P. T. Bury, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Volume XIV* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), 223-24. Hereinafter cited as *DBFP* with appropriate series and volume number.

such an effort [to carry out a constructive policy for the rehabilitation of China] we believe the co-operation of the United States to be indispensable.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, still struggling in the aftermath of a punishing war, Britain needed American support to accomplish its policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States wanted the Anglo-Japanese Alliance terminated, providing an additional, external incentive to end the alliance. After assessing the strategic situation of Britain in the region, the committee concluded in favor of abrogating the alliance. The committee's conclusion, however, did not imply that Britain should antagonize Japan from now on.

[The alliance] should, if possible, be substituted a Tripartite *Entente* between the United States, Japan and Great Britain. [...] In the regrettable event of America finding it impossible to enter into any sort of arrangement with us such as indicated above, we would suggest as an alternative the conclusion of an agreement with Japan, brought up to date and in harmony with the spirit of the League of Nations, and so framed as not to exclude the eventual participation of the United States.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, Britain's strategic objective regarding the fate of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was to befriend the United States while not giving Japan the impression of abandonment.

Throughout the Washington Conference from November 1921 to

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<sup>49</sup> "Report of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee," No. 212, F 1169/63/23, in *DBFP, First Series, Volume XIV*, 225-26.

<sup>50</sup> "Report of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee," No. 212, F 1169/63/23, in *DBFP, First Series, Volume XIV*, 226-27.

February 1922, Anglo-American naval parity and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were primary issues between the United States and Britain. This conference was a comprehensive platform, calling together all major naval powers (America, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy) and dealing with a variety of agendas, such as the reduction of government expenditures on weaponry, the maintenance of world peace, and the development of solutions to problems in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, as the conference's opening moments demonstrated, the naval balance was the greatest concern. On November 12, during the first plenary session of the conference, Hughes revealed the American proposal for naval arms limitation. What he announced to the audience was an extraordinary offer. Hughes himself read the text, naming every warship that would be scrapped. The proposal surprised the listeners, who expected a formal speech full of generalities. Hughes made four major points in it. First, all countries should stop the ongoing or planned capital ship construction, thereby starting a “naval holiday.” Second, they should scrap some old-fashioned battleships. Third, the international ratio of naval power, measured by the total tonnage limit for capital ships, should be fixed at 5 (America): 5 (Britain): 3 (Japan). Last, the same ratio should determine the total tonnage limit for auxiliary combatant craft such as submarines, cruisers, and aircraft carriers. The United States was supposed to cancel 15 capital ships under construction and scrap 15 old battleships, bearing the heaviest burden of disarmament.<sup>52</sup> Hughes showed that the United States was willing to give up the 1916 naval building plan and, in turn, the potential

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<sup>51</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Great Britain (Wheeler),” Document 70, 500.A4/117C: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1921, Volume I*.

<sup>52</sup> “Reuter’s Telegram,” in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919–1939*, 38–40; Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: I The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919–1929* (Seaworth Publishing, 2016), 310–11.

for American naval superiority.

Thanks to the American willingness to make the largest sacrifice, the subsequent negotiation over the arms limitation of capital ships progressed smoothly in light of the issue's strategic significance. On November 15, Arthur Balfour (Lord Balfour), the British representative, and Kato Tomosaburo, the Chief Plenipotentiary for Japan, endorsed the American proposal in principle. Indeed, accepting the proposal meant that Britain had to give up its long-standing policy of naval superiority. Although heated discussions on detailed technical matters continued afterward, the United States and Britain embraced naval parity in capital ships as a basis for their future relationship.<sup>53</sup>

On the contrary, some other low-profile issues did not progress as smoothly. Among them, the arms limitation of cruisers was the issue with the gravest strategic implications in terms of Anglo-American relations. Hughes initially tried to extend the capital ship ratio to cruisers as well but met stubborn objections from the British delegation. The arms limitation of cruisers was a sensitive issue for British policymakers because they believed Britain deserved special treatment due to its unique situation as a worldwide empire. According to the British perspective, no other major naval powers relied on maritime trade and sea communications as heavily as Britain. Cruisers played a central role in carrying out those duties. Thus, the British delegation regarded it unfair when the American proposal assigned the identical total tonnage limit (450,000 tons) to both the United States and Britain.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, for Britain, such an outcome was not only unfair but also disadvantageous.

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<sup>53</sup> Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (Penguin Books, 2014), 528-31.

<sup>54</sup> "Notes by Admiralty Section of the British Delegation," in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 42-43.

In cruisers and other smaller craft, and also in the important matter of aircraft carriers, we are at the present time well ahead of the US. By their present proposals we lose this advantage, and they are enabled to build up an equality with ourselves modern vessels.<sup>55</sup>

Whereas the American Navy was about to overtake the Royal Navy regarding the power of the main battle fleet of capital ships, the Royal Navy still remained unparalleled in its cruiser strength because American naval buildup efforts overlooked this inconspicuous aspect of naval power. Consequently, in stark contrast to the capital ship issue, Britain was unwilling to concede naval parity in cruisers to the United States. As an alternative, Britain offered a counterproposal with its own version of the total tonnage limit for cruisers: 450,000 tons for Britain and 300,000 tons for the United States. This counterproposal did not get through, of course. Eventually, the countries failed to agree on definite numbers for the total tonnage limit for cruisers. The Washington Conference's outcome regarding naval arms limitation, the Five-Power Treaty (with the inclusion of France and Italy), stipulated the naval parity in capital ships and aircraft carriers between the United States and Britain but not in cruisers. The only meaningful limitations on cruisers were a maximum displacement of 10,000 tons and a maximum main gun caliber of eight-inch guns.<sup>56</sup>

A question remains as to why the American delegation failed to push ahead with the cruiser issue vigorously. One possible reason was

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<sup>55</sup> "Note by the Director of Plans," in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 44.

<sup>56</sup> Leo. Marriott, *Treaty Cruisers: The World's First International Warship Building Competition* (Pen & Sword Maritime, 2005), 23-24.



the “Mahanian doctrine of battlefleet supremacy,”<sup>57</sup> which looked down on the value of auxiliary vessels like cruisers. Another possible reason was the perceived benign nature of the weapon. After the cruiser issue escalated into a dispute between the United States and Britain, Hughes stated that the Washington Conference intended to create a peaceful international atmosphere by reducing weapons of invasion (capital ships and aircraft carriers).<sup>58</sup> Hence, cruisers were neglected because they were not considered to be such weapons. His statement, however, was most likely a pretext since Hughes did not heed the warning of the General Board that “such a reduction in capital ships tends toward a war of auxiliaries.”<sup>59</sup> At any rate, the American delegation did not take the cruiser issue very seriously. For example, a report by the delegation commented that the importance of imposing limitations on cruisers should not be overstated, and the lack of limitations was unlikely to result in a shipbuilding competition because of the public mood against unnecessary military costs.<sup>60</sup>

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the other crucial issue at the Washington Conference. Even before the conference officially started, Hughes was forthright about his desire for the alliance’s demise, stating that “the time had come when the constant sentiments and cordial expressions [between the United States and Britain] should be translated into something definite [the abrogation of the alliance].”<sup>61</sup> In response to American pressure, Britain attempted to maintain formal

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<sup>57</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 63.

<sup>58</sup> Hughes, “Possible Gains,” 11.

<sup>59</sup> GB 438-1/1088 (o), 26 October 1921, Records of the General Board. Quoted in Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 55.

<sup>60</sup> “Report of the American Delegation, February 9, 1922,” Document 88, in *FRUS, 1922, Volume I*.

<sup>61</sup> “Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the British Ambassador (Geddes), September 20, 1921,” Document 88, 500.A4/190½ in *FRUS, 1921, Volume I*.

diplomatic ties with Japan by drawing the United States into the existing alliance structure. In preparation for the conference, the Foreign Office presented two agenda items of fundamental importance. Alongside a naval arms limitation agreement, “a tripartite agreement of declaration of policy between the United States, Japan and Great Britain” was pointed out as the future aim of the British delegation.<sup>62</sup> At the beginning of the conference, Balfour submitted to the American delegation a draft of a tripartite agreement in which two contracting parties were free to make a military arrangement if other countries threatened them.<sup>63</sup> Hughes objected to Balfour’s draft, as the alliance would survive in all but name. He thought Britain and Japan could still team up against the United States under this proposed agreement.<sup>64</sup> Recognizing that the United States would not allow any binding Anglo-Japanese cooperation, Kijuro Shidehara, the leader of the Japanese delegation, came up with a modified draft. Instead of making a bilateral military arrangement, the two countries could invite the third country to a joint conference for consultation. A troublesome part of his draft was that the contracting parties were obliged to consult when “vital interests of [any contracting party] in the regions of the Pacific Ocean and of the Far East” were threatened.<sup>65</sup> It was too easy for Japan to invoke this agreement by broadly interpreting its terms, embroiling the United States and Britain in undesired affairs. To avoid such possibility, Hughes made the last modification, limiting the scope of the agreement

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<sup>62</sup> “General Survey of Political Situation in Pacific and Far East with reference to the forthcoming Washington Conference,” No. 404, F 3823/2635/10, in *DBFP, First Series, Volume XIV*, 440.

<sup>63</sup> “Memorandum by Mr. Balfour, of the British Delegation,” Document 2, 500.A4a/162, in *FRUS, 1922, Volume I*.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas H. Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921–1922* (The University of Tennessee Press, 1970), 130.

<sup>65</sup> “Draft by Ambassador Shidehara, of the Japanese Delegation, of an Arrangement between Japan, the United States of America, and the British Empire,” Document 4, 500.A4a/162, in *FRUS, 1922, Volume I*.

to “rights with respect to their insular possessions and dominions in the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>66</sup> Besides, Hughes invited France as a contracting party to this agreement to prevent the dominance of two former allies (Britain and Japan) at future joint conferences.<sup>67</sup> Signed on December 13, the Four-Power Treaty officially terminated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and offered a loose system of multilateral consultation in the Asia-Pacific region. Subsequently, in February, the signatories of the Four-Power Treaty and the other five countries signed the Nine-Power Treaty, confirming the Open Door Policy as an international obligation.

Overall, the Washington Conference was a fine deal for Britain. Amid the negotiations, Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey reported to Lloyd George the desired goals of the British delegation, which were achieved through the Five-Power Treaty and the Four-Power Treaty.

If we can bring home with us an agreement which removes the American post-Jutland programme of capital ship construction, together with a settlement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, I shall feel not dissatisfied.<sup>68</sup>

Despite its generally satisfactory outcome, the conference marked Britain’s retrenchment from the Asia-Pacific region. Although British naval power was to be equal to American naval power in capital ships, British national interests were much more scattered around the world. For this reason, the regional balance tilted to the American side over

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<sup>66</sup> “Draft by the Secretary of State of an Agreement between the United States of America, the British Empire, France, and Japan,” Document 7, 500.A4a/162, in *FRUS, 1922, Volume I*.

<sup>67</sup> Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922*, 133.

<sup>68</sup> “Hankey to the Prime Minister,” in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 30.

time.<sup>69</sup> Abrogating the Anglo-Japanese Alliance further undermined Britain's regional position. Britain broke the tradition of "splendid isolation" and sought an alliance with Japan in the 1900s because its naval power could no longer secure its regional possessions alone. Without a functioning *casus foederis*, the loose consultation system of the Four-Power Treaty was not a reliable bulwark. Inevitably, in the post-alliance era, the "success of our Far Eastern policy and the prosperity of our economic interests [were] largely dependent on Japanese good will,"<sup>70</sup> which persisted in the 1920s but gradually disappeared in the 1930s. None of these flaws, however, developed into a crisis for the time being. Thus, even after the Washington Conference, Britain retained some naval advantage over the United States thanks to its continued superiority in cruisers, worldwide oversea bases, and merchant shipping.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.3. The Geneva Naval Conference, 1927: An Anglo-American Dispute over the Arms Limitation of Cruisers

Contrary to the wish of Charles Evans Hughes, the cessation of capital ship construction failed to solve the issue of the naval arms race. The focus of naval buildup quickly shifted to the construction of auxiliary warships, particularly cruisers. What was intended to be an upper limit eventually became the norm. The maximum displacement

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<sup>69</sup> Christopher Hall, *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921-37* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 202.

<sup>70</sup> "Memorandum by Sir V. Wellesley," No. 239, F 654/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 290.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher M. Bell, "Great Britain and the London Naval Conference," in *At the Crossroads between Peace and War: The London Naval Conference of 1930*, ed. John H. Maurer and Christopher M. Bell (Naval Institute Press, 2014), 49.

of 10,000 tons and the maximum main gun caliber of eight-inch guns, established through the Five-Power Treaty, became the standard for heavy cruisers during the interwar period, earning them the moniker “treaty cruisers.” As these heavy cruisers could serve as substitutes for capital ships, the Washington Naval Conference inadvertently sparked a cruiser arms race among great powers. In the first half of the 1920s, all major naval powers began heavy cruiser construction.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout the mid-1920s, the United States severely fell behind in this new cruiser arms race. As of 1926, the cruiser strength of the American Navy looked acceptable in terms of the total tonnage of all types and classes of cruisers. When it came to the strength of heavy cruisers, however, the prospects were ominous. The American Navy was building only 2 cruisers weighing 10,000 tons and armed with eight-inch guns, whereas the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy were building 11 and 6, respectively. The American Navy was to be at a significant disadvantage compared to the Royal Navy even if cruisers in the planned state were added up. Despite the navy’s stubborn insistence on naval parity with Britain in cruisers,<sup>73</sup> the two countries were heading toward naval disparity, not parity.

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<sup>72</sup> Ernest Andrade, Jr., “The Cruiser Controversy in Naval Limitations Negotiations, 1922–1936,” *Military Affairs* 48, no. 3 (1984): 113.

<sup>73</sup> “Rear Admiral Pratt, US Navy, to Read Admiral Jones, US Navy,” in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919–1939*, 71.

	Britain	United States	Japan
Cruiser Number	63	40	43
Cruiser Tonnage	380,670	334,560	289,701
“Treaty Cruisers” in Construction	11	2	6
“Treaty Cruisers” in Planned State	2	6	4

Table 2.4. Naval Strength of Cruisers in 1926<sup>74</sup>

American President Calvin Coolidge refrained from carrying out naval buildup in cruisers for years. Coolidge stated in 1924 that he was “opposed to any policy of competition in building and maintaining land or sea armaments.”<sup>75</sup> However, this embarrassing naval deficiency forced him to look for naval parity in cruisers. Proponents of naval expansion in Congress pushed for the construction of more heavy cruisers. By holding a new international naval conference, Coolidge tried to save enormous expenses of warships, promote peace by averting an arms race, and ensure Anglo-American naval parity in cruisers simultaneously. He sent invitations to the contracting parties of the Five-Power Treaty of the Washington Conference in February 1927. Britain and Japan accepted the invitations. On the other hand, France and Italy declined. When there was to be no corresponding restriction for land and air warfare, they did not want to be subject to additional naval treaties. However, the absence of primarily European powers was a minor setback. Believing that a trilateral conference was better than none, America pushed ahead with a trilateral agreement,

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<sup>74</sup> Hall, *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921–37*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (The Free Press, 1991), 275.

which led to the Geneva Naval Conference from June to August 1927.<sup>76</sup>

The road to the conference's opening was straightforward, but American and British expectations about its outcome were convoluted. American policymakers at the time had three goals: achieving naval parity with Britain in cruisers, setting a small total tonnage limit, and maximizing the number of cruisers weighing 10,000 tons and armed with eight-inch guns.

The United States obtained from Britain naval parity in capital ships at the Washington Conference in 1921 with relative ease, so American policymakers imagined the same situation would be repeated in Geneva in 1927. They were optimistic about British cooperation, oblivious to the fact that unlike 1921, when Hughes enjoyed impending superiority in capital ships, the American Navy was not about to overtake the British cruiser strength any time soon. Coolidge believed that his country's tremendous potential power would be enough to make Britain accept the parity. Coolidge possessed no other leverage to handle the negotiation if that bargaining chip did not work.<sup>77</sup>

On top of achieving parity, the United States also wanted a small total tonnage limit. As the conference's purpose was arms limitation, setting the bar as low as possible was natural. The American Navy's strategic needs determined the adequate level of armament announced at the conference. The United States had neither many merchant ships to protect in the open seas nor many overseas naval bases to maintain. The American proposal for cruisers' total tonnage limit was relatively small in consequence.<sup>78</sup>

American naval strategists wanted to build as many heavy cruisers

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<sup>76</sup> Hall, *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921-37*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936*, 188-89.

<sup>78</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 109.

as possible within the confines of such a small tonnage limit. They viewed Japan as the primary threat and arranged for a contingency in the Asia-Pacific region against the main battle fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy. In such a scenario, cruisers were supposed to function as lesser capital ships, projecting American naval power across the ocean. Therefore, American cruisers needed the capability to traverse the vast Pacific Ocean and pack a punch. Large displacement was necessary for a long cruising radius and sufficient defensive armor. Big guns were necessary for firepower, as guns of small caliber could not penetrate the armor of large warships.<sup>79</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, British policymakers had contradictory goals: averting the American claim of naval parity in cruisers by emphasizing Britain's greater need for trade protection, securing the total tonnage limit sufficient for the covering its vast empire, and minimizing the number of cruisers weighing 10,000 tons and armed with eight-inch guns.

Their position was based on "the special geographical position of the British Empire, the length of interimperial communications, and the necessity for the protection of its food supplies."<sup>80</sup> Britain presided over a global empire depending on intercontinental trade and maritime communications, while the United States was far more self-sufficient, both geographically and economically. For this reason, the former was in the face of greater demand for cruiser strength than the latter.<sup>81</sup> Following an in-depth analysis of major naval powers' necessity for

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<sup>79</sup> Gerald E. Wheeler, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor: The United States and the Far East, 1921-1931* (Eschenburg Press, 2017), 150-60; Emily O. Goldman, *Sunken Treaties: Naval Arms Control between the Wars* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 163-64.

<sup>80</sup> "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Houghton) to the Secretary of State," Document 18, 500.A15 a 1/52: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

<sup>81</sup> O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936*, 183.



cruisers, the Plans Division of the Admiralty concluded in March 1927 that Britain could not accept Anglo-American parity in cruisers.

	Britain	United States
Cruisers for Fleet Work	25	25
Cruisers for Trade Protection	54	25
Total	79	50

**Table 2.5. Necessary Cruisers for the American and British Navies<sup>82</sup>**

According to the analysis (shown in Table 2.5), cruisers had two functions: fleet work and trade protection. Fleet work was a cruiser's operation as a lesser capital ship. Five cruisers were required for every three capital ships for a balanced fleet. Since both countries were allowed to keep 15 capital ships by the Five-Power Treaty, each country needed 25 cruisers for fleet work. The number of cruisers required for trade protection was calculated on the basis of merchant ship traffic (in tonnage) and the length of sea lanes to protect. Since Britain had far more ship traffic, it required almost twice as many cruisers (54 for Britain, 25 for America) for trade protection. As a consequence, Britain could welcome neither the American call for parity in cruisers nor its insistence on a low total tonnage limit. "There can be no parity between a Power whose Navy is its life and a Power whose Navy is only for prestige," commented Winston Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, Britain preferred to fill its total tonnage limit with

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<sup>82</sup> The data used for the calculation was from April 1926. "Memorandum by Admiralty Plans Division," in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 75-77.

<sup>83</sup> "Armaments: Reduction and Limitation of: — The Naval Conference. — Memo: by Mr. W.S. Churchill (Chancellor of Exchequer)," C.P. 189, in CAB 24/187.

light cruisers, which would have a displacement of 3,500 to 7,000 tons and be equipped with six-inch guns. The Royal Navy had to deploy naval vessels to numerous overseas bases spread around the world, so making up the numbers was important. Cheap and versatile, light cruisers were valuable for conducting peacetime duties. In addition, heavy cruisers with a long cruising radius were not essential for the Royal Navy due to the presence of those overseas bases, in which the vessels could easily refuel and resupply en route to a distant destination.<sup>84</sup>

Everything considered, it was clear that the contradictory goals of the United States and Britain would create a difficult controversy over three crucial issues: naval parity, the total tonnage limit, and the existence of two distinct types of cruisers. Indeed, their delegations collided in all three issues as soon as the conference started. The American delegation came up with a simple proposal extending the Five-Power Treaty's ratio of 5: 5: 3 to cruisers, establishing Anglo-American naval parity. Meanwhile, the British proposal submitted by William Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, applied this ratio only to "in the class of cruisers with a displacement of 10,000 tons and carrying 8-inch guns."<sup>85</sup> Thus, only heavy cruisers were subject to the scope of Anglo-American naval parity, permitting Britain to build its fleets of light cruisers freely. In response to Britain's demand for extra naval power in light cruisers based on its strategic necessity, the United States adhered to the principle of equality between the two countries.

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<sup>84</sup> Brian McKercher, "'A Certain Irritation': The White House, the State Department, and the Desire for a Naval Settlement with Great Britain, 1927-1930," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 5 (2007): 840.

<sup>85</sup> Krystian Maciej Szudarek, "The British Government and the Naval Disarmament Conference in Geneva (1927)," *Studia Maritima* 27, no. 1 (2014): 101.

Equality. It seems incomprehensible that any doubt should now exist in regard to our having full parity, for this point has been explained to the proper British authorities for some time past; it would expedite matters if the British delegation would accept the fact that the United States, under an agreement or without it, will insist on its right to parity with the British Empire.<sup>86</sup>

The British delegation in Geneva noticed that Americans attached immense importance to parity in all aspects of naval power and tried to convince them that Britain was firmly committed to Anglo-American naval parity.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the British Cabinet in London refused to do the same, commanding the delegation to continue arguing for no total tonnage limit for light cruisers.

But we cannot admit by treaty that in regard to small cruisers the case of the British Empire resembles other Powers; or that parity of number means parity of strength. We cannot consent therefore to the [...] arrangement which placed us in a position of permanent naval inferiority.<sup>88</sup>

However, in the minds of American policymakers, naval parity was so entrenched as the principle in Anglo-American relations that such a deal could not bear fruit. American Secretary of State Frank Kellogg enunciated that the United States would never accept any proposal

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<sup>86</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Gibson) to the Secretary of State," Document 61, 500.A15 a 1/331: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

<sup>87</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Gibson) to the Secretary of State," Document 68, 500.A15 a 1/354: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

<sup>88</sup> "Sir A. Chamberlain to Mr. London (Geneva)," No. 446, W 6705/61/98, in *DBFP, Series IA, Volume III*, 683.

separating the cruisers into two classes (heavy and light) and imposing restrictions only on the former,<sup>89</sup> which, he believed, would practically have established British superiority in cruiser strength as a whole.

The second issue, the total tonnage limit, was no less contentious. The numbers from the American proposal (250,000 to 300,000 tons) were unacceptable for Britain. If the American Navy spent all of its allowed tons on building "treaty cruisers," the Royal Navy had to follow suit to maintain the naval balance of power. If so, Britain would only possess 30 cruisers, falling short of the number required for the defense of the British Empire.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, the British numbers (600,000 tons) were so huge that Rear Admiral Hilary Jones from the American delegation called them "astronomical" and questioned the sincerity of Britain's commitment to naval arms limitation.<sup>91</sup> For the United States, accepting the British proposal would have transformed a conference for disarmament into a conference for armament, as the American cruiser strength was far below the limit.<sup>92</sup>

As the negotiation reached a deadlock, the American delegation presented a modified proposal. It increased the total tonnage limit to 400,000 tons and allowed the American Navy to possess 25 heavy cruisers (250,000 tons). The remaining 150,000 tons were allocated for light cruisers. Britain declined this proposal because the numbers were still too low, and the American Navy would be superior to the British in heavy cruisers.<sup>93</sup> For conciliation, a committee of junior

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<sup>89</sup> "Mr. Chilton (Washington) to Sir A. Chamberlain (Received July 28, 8.45 p.m.)," No. 471, W 7179/61/98, in *DBFP, Series IA, Volume III*, 702.

<sup>90</sup> Szudarek, "The British Government and the Naval Disarmament Conference in Geneva (1927)," 102-04.

<sup>91</sup> "Rear Admiral Hilary P. Jones, US Navy, to the Secretary of the Navy," in *Simpson, Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 87.

<sup>92</sup> Andrade, "The Cruiser Controversy in Naval Limitations Negotiations, 1922-1936," 114.

<sup>93</sup> Szudarek, "The British Government and the Naval Disarmament Conference in Geneva (1927)," 111-12.

delegates from the United States, Britain, and Japan convened and produced a draft agreement. According to this document, the total tonnage limit was 550,000 tons, the maximum limit of heavy cruisers was 12 for both the United States and Britain, and all non-heavy cruisers could not exceed the displacement limit of 6,000 tons and the caliber limit of six inches.<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, this draft agreement faced opposition from the higher-ups on both sides. The Americans disliked the limitations on non-heavy cruisers, and the British were reluctant to accept naval parity in light cruisers.<sup>95</sup> In the end, it was impossible to determine a definite total tonnage limit acceptable to all.

The last issue was the American preference for heavy cruisers and the British preference for light cruisers. This issue was closely connected with the other two issues, so most of its details were already analyzed. Britain made many diplomatic efforts to restrict the American buildup of heavy cruisers.<sup>96</sup> Its obsession with another country's cruiser construction was caused by the fact that a fleet of light cruisers was not a match for a fleet of heavy cruisers, even if the sum of individual warships' displacement was the same. If the United States and Britain had freely built whichever ship they wanted within the total tonnage limit, the American cruiser fleet would have prevailed in a battle. Thus, Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, argued that nominal parity would result in actual disparity.<sup>97</sup> However, the United States did not regard its cruiser strength as a threat to

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<sup>94</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Gibson) to the Secretary of State," Document 97, 500.A15 a 1/417: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

<sup>95</sup> Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: I The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, 507=08.

<sup>96</sup> "Mr. London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain (Received July 1, 9 a.m.)," No.388, W 6111/61/98, in *DBFP, Series IA, Volume III*, 631; "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Houghton) to the Secretary of State," Document 95, 500.A15 a 1/414: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

<sup>97</sup> Szudarek, "The British Government and the Naval Disarmament Conference in Geneva (1927)," 125.

Britain at all, even if American cruiser fleets were mostly comprised of heavy cruisers.<sup>98</sup>

The interconnected nature of the issues at the Geneva Conference hindered the possibility of compromise between the United States and Britain over the cruiser controversy. Their delegations could not simultaneously satisfy the British Empire's extensive defense needs and the American goal of naval disarmament without infringing on the principle of parity. On the other hand, adherence to parity made any agreement about the composition of heavy and light cruisers for each country extremely difficult. Furthermore, as discussed before, setting a common total tonnage limit without a settlement about cruiser composition would have rendered the nominal parity meaningless because of heavy cruisers' advantage in combat. In such a situation, the traditional negotiation strategy of exchanging mutual concessions failed to work. After a series of fruitless negotiations for months, the conference dissolved in August without an outcome, recognizing that they were unable to break through all these dilemmas and reach an agreement.

## 2.4. The London Naval Conference, 1930: The Eventual Compromise over the Cruiser Controversy

The fiasco at the Geneva Conference reminded President Coolidge that additional leverage was required to overcome Britain's tenacious resistance to naval parity in cruisers. In 1921, the 1916 naval building plan was still underway, giving the Harding administration significant

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<sup>98</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Gibson) to the Secretary of State," Document 96, 500.A15 a 1/415: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1927, Volume I*.

leverage in the negotiations. In contrast, only eight heavy cruisers were planned in 1927, and only two had been laid down.<sup>99</sup> Thus, Coolidge was ironically compelled to promote naval buildup for the sake of disarmament. By doing so, he unwittingly ensured that his successor, Herbert Hoover, replicated the success of naval arms limitation at the Washington Conference. Just like Hughes renounced Wilson's naval building plan to show his commitment to disarmament, Coolidge allowed Hoover to stop Coolidge's plan and lead successful negotiations at the London Naval Conference in 1930. Coolidge submitted to Congress a new Navy Act mandating the construction of 71 warships, which could be suspended by an international naval conference in the future. Congress finally passed his bill in February 1929 after he reduced the enormous size of naval expansion to a much more reasonable level of 15 cruisers.<sup>100</sup> While Congress generally opposed costly naval buildup programs, it authorized the construction of heavy cruisers in the hope that their construction would soon become unnecessary.<sup>101</sup>

Meanwhile, British policymakers were stuck in a conundrum. The Geneva Conference had two consequences for Britain. The first was increased tensions in Anglo-American relations. At the conference, Britain was willing to risk damaging Anglo-American relations, the critical pillar of British policy in the Asia-Pacific region since World War I. British concessions to the United States were based on the idea that gaining American goodwill and cooperation would be beneficial to maintaining the British Empire. However, in the eyes of British policymakers, the negotiations in Geneva were headed in the opposite

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<sup>99</sup> O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936*, 189.

<sup>100</sup> Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 276-77.

<sup>101</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990*, 112-13.

direction. For this reason, “to become entangled in an undesirable set of conditions and limitations would be much worse in effect than a breakdown of the Conference,” commented Churchill.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, following the failure in Geneva, the atmosphere in Washington became acrimonious, as many American policymakers questioned Britain’s trustworthiness as a partner.<sup>103</sup> There was “the determination of many influential Senators and Congressmen to maintain at all costs in the future the freedom of the sea and the rights of neutrals in time of war.”<sup>104</sup> This trend underlined the risk that a British wartime blockade of enemy trade routes could lead to an Anglo-American dispute or even a military conflict. The likelihood of such a calamity was believed to be extremely low, but the gravity of such a scenario caused many British policymakers to bear that in mind.<sup>105</sup> After all, Britain did not have the choice of forsaking the partnership with the United States in its foreign policy.

The second consequence of the Geneva Conference was a greater burden of naval expenditure. Without an international agreement on the arms limitation of cruisers, Britain had no clear alternative to building heavy cruisers to keep up with the trend of building cruisers weighing 10,000 tons and armed with eight-inch guns. However, considering the range of sea lanes the Royal Navy had to cover, the cost would have been extraordinary. While Churchill contended that “we must build for our needs and they may build at their pleasure,”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “Naval Armaments: Reduction and Limitation of: — Note by Sir M. Hankey, covering Committee of Imperial Defence Proceedings and Memoranda on: —,” C.P. 193, in CAB 24/187, 201.

<sup>103</sup> O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936*, 194-98.

<sup>104</sup> “Sir E. Howard (Manchester, Mass.) to Sir A. Chamberlain (Received August 22),” No. 504, A 4935/133/45, in *DBFP, Series IA, Volume III*, 731-34; “Hankey: Diary 1927,” in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 87-88.

<sup>105</sup> Bell, “Great Britain and the London Naval Conference,” 49-56.

<sup>106</sup> “Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer,” C.P. 189, in CAB 24/187.



unilateral naval buildup was not an optimal solution to the defense of the British Empire. The fundamental problem was that its maritime security was inextricably linked to the naval policies of neighboring countries, most of which were inclined toward the buildup of heavy cruisers at the time. Thus, if Britain had prioritized building up light cruisers due to their utility for patrolling extensive sea lanes and cheaper construction and maintenance costs, British fleets of light cruisers would have been susceptible to attacks by enemy heavy cruiser fleets. Therefore, even though light cruisers were more suited to trade protection and interdiction of enemy trade, the Royal Navy was compelled to follow the trend of heavy cruiser construction.<sup>107</sup>

Britain's tricky situation contributed to its renewed willingness to negotiate to solve the cruiser controversy with the United States. In December 1928, the British Cabinet decided that its naval building program could be postponed, depending on the progress of possible Anglo-American negotiations.<sup>108</sup> Leadership changes proved to be an excellent opportunity for resuming diplomacy. In the United States, Herbert Hoover was inaugurated as president in March 1929. Hoover advocated arms limitation, like all American presidents in the 1920s. What differentiated him from the others was his belief that even unilateral restraint in naval buildup was helpful and that building naval vessels up to the limits of naval treaties may not be conducive to creating peace.<sup>109</sup> As a result, although he pursued naval parity with Britain, he was less preoccupied with not falling prey to the "perfidious Albion." A short time later, in June, Ramsay MacDonald became the

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<sup>107</sup> Marriott, *Treaty Cruisers: The World's First International Warship Building Competition*, 36.

<sup>108</sup> "Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, on Wednesday, 19th December 1928, at 4.0 p.m.," in CAB 23/59, 249-251.

<sup>109</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 113-16.

British Prime Minister. MacDonald tried to improve Anglo-American relations and reach a naval disarmament agreement while attempting to preserve British naval power.<sup>110</sup> He partially suspended British cruiser building programs as a sign of goodwill in July. Hoover returned the favor by suspending the construction of three cruisers. Preliminary negotiations before the London Conference took place alongside the improvement of Anglo-American relations. MacDonald and General Charles Dawes, the American Ambassador to Britain, began discussing arms limitation issues in the summer of 1929 to complete the long-awaited naval parity in cruisers.<sup>111</sup>

The central problem of the discussion was how to reconcile the opposing strategic priorities of the American (heavy cruisers) and British (light cruisers) navies. The most critical problem of Anglo-American relations, Britain's recognition of naval parity with America, was solved in the very early stages of the negotiation. MacDonald told Dawes in June that he was ready to give assurance on the parity question,<sup>112</sup> and later confirmed that naval parity in cruisers would be achieved between the United States and Britain.<sup>113</sup> Thus, determining exactly how to establish parity was the remaining task.

Borrowing from the initiative of diplomat Hugh Gibson, the head of the American delegation at the Geneva Conference, Hoover came up with the idea of using a hypothetical "yardstick" to measure the strength of naval vessels. It was "a formula that would assess the equivalent value of ships in terms of combat effectiveness instead of

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<sup>110</sup> Michael Hughes, *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World, 1919-1939* (Routledge, 2005), 82.

<sup>111</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 118-21.

<sup>112</sup> "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes) to the Secretary of State," Document 90, 500.A15a3/37: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1929, Volume I*.

<sup>113</sup> "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes) to the Secretary of State," Document 98, 500.A15a3/70: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1929, Volume I*.

relying exclusively on tonnage and gun dimension.”<sup>114</sup> Theoretically (and perhaps only theoretically), by adopting the yardstick, it was no longer required to squabble over setting a definite total tonnage limit or a quantitative limit for heavy cruisers. Instead, the countries could convert their desired cruiser fleets into indices of naval power and adjust the numbers with each other. As MacDonald was searching for a diplomatic breakthrough with the United States, he readily accepted its adoption.

Hitherto there have been difficulties between our experts on this subject arising out of the distribution of tonnage between large and small craft. We have agreed however that the somewhat differing situations of our two countries will be resolved by the construction of a yardstick and I am waiting for your proposals regarding this. [...] We now only need the yardstick to make our agreement complete and I still press the wisdom of striking whilst the iron is hot and the public are expectant.<sup>115</sup>

Despite their mutual consent, huge roadblocks remained on the way to its actual implementation, ultimately turning the idea of the yardstick into nothing but symbolism. To begin with, policymakers from both countries wanted to avert the perception that they conceded too much to their counterparts, even if the overall balance could be maintained by the yardstick. Opposing MacDonald’s proposal about the arms limitation of cruisers, which stipulated greater total tonnage for

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<sup>114</sup> Raymond G. O'Connor, "The "Yardstick" and Naval Disarmament in the 1920's," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, no. 3 (1958): 447.

<sup>115</sup> "The Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes) to the Secretary of State," Document 98, 500.A15a3/70: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1929, Volume I*.

Britain, he contended that “parity must not only be substantially real but must be recognizable as such by the people of both countries,” and the United States had to preserve the quantitative parity to some degree lest the American public think they were being cheated.<sup>116</sup> Likewise, MacDonald invoked the popular sentiment to refute the American proposal of 23 heavy cruisers for itself and 15 for Britain. He argued that “a superiority of eight 8-inch cruisers is an impossible proposition to take to our people,” and acquiescing in it would make “people turn and rend us.”<sup>117</sup>

Furthermore, it was uncertain how to create a scientific standard for measuring the strength of naval vessels. Hoover did not bother to ask naval experts about the feasibility of his idea before proposing it to the British side.<sup>118</sup> Pressured by the president, the General Board reluctantly created a mathematical formula based on ship age, gun caliber, and displacement. Still, naval power depended on numerous other factors that could not be easily reduced to numbers. For example, Admiral Hilary Jones argued that the distribution of overseas naval bases and the utility of merchant vessels in warfare should be also considered.<sup>119</sup> Even some civilian policymakers, such as Secretary of State Henry Stimson, were skeptical because too many unquantifiable factors existed.<sup>120</sup> In the end, Stimson’s skepticism proved true. The two countries failed to draw up a settled mathematical formula for the

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<sup>116</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes),” Document 124, 500.A15a3/113: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1929, Volume I*.

<sup>117</sup> “Letter from Mr. MacDonald to General Dawes,” No. 35, A 5598/30/45, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume I*, 50.

<sup>118</sup> “Our intention now is to try out upon our own naval experts the possibility of framing questions as to a technical yardstick in endeavor to ascertain whether such a method would be a useful preliminary.” “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Dawes),” Document 95, 500.A15a3/63: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1929, Volume I*.

<sup>119</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 118–21.

<sup>120</sup> O'Connor, “The ‘Yardstick’ and Naval Disarmament in the 1920’s,” 462.

yardstick throughout the London Conference. Amid the negotiations in February 1930, the United States and Britain eventually gave up their efforts to establish such a mathematical formula.<sup>121</sup>

Compared with its prosperous beginning, the humble end of the yardstick seems farcical. Still, the rise and fall of a hypothetical standard for measuring the strength of naval vessels was more than a futile business. Whereas the yardstick was hardly a practical tool for diplomacy and was discarded as soon as policymakers recognized its complicated nature, discussions regarding it positively affected the entire process of solving the cruiser controversy between the United States and Britain. On top of some beneficial psychological effects,<sup>122</sup> the concept of the yardstick broke the notion of naval parity in rigid, absolute terms. A significant reason for the failure of the Geneva Conference was the interconnected nature of the issues, which made it impossible to adopt the negotiation strategy of exchanging mutual concessions. However, if some amounts of heavy cruisers were interchangeable with some greater amounts of light cruisers, mutual concessions could happen no matter how unscientific or arbitrary the ratio was. Piecemeal concessions in a similar fashion solved the issues that seemed impregnable in Geneva. In consequence, the surface of the yardstick was more important than its content.

When the preliminary negotiations before the London Conference started in July, the initial position of the United States, written by the General Board, was to keep 23 heavy cruisers without a single light cruiser, which was basically the continuation of the American proposal

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<sup>121</sup> Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 133.

<sup>122</sup> "The real significance of the yardstick was psychological. It caught the popular imagination and helped dispel the aura of gloom and disillusionment that had developed from the repeated failures at Geneva." O'Connor, "The 'Yardstick' and Naval Disarmament in the 1920's," 463.

in 1927. The total tonnage for the American and British navies was from 200,000 to 250,000 tons. On the other hand, MacDonald planned to possess 60 cruisers (376,000 tons) in total, of which 15 were heavy cruisers. For the American Navy, he proposed 38 cruisers (300,000 tons), of which 18 were heavy cruisers. Both sides began to make concessions in August. As the disparity in total tonnage was too great to be adjusted even with a very generous yardstick, Britain lowered its goal of total cruisers to 50 (339,000 tons). In September, a month before MacDonald visited the United States, the General Board made new calculations in accordance with the British proposal and produced a draft agreement, deciding that the American navy should have a total tonnage of 315,000 tons to achieve naval parity. 210,000 tons would be assigned to 21 heavy cruisers (down from 23), and the rest would be light cruisers. The Royal Navy was offered an extra 24,000 tons in exchange for six additional American heavy cruisers.<sup>123</sup>

This draft agreement effectively functioned as a tentative Anglo-American compromise on the cruiser controversy before the main conference. In October, MacDonald arrived in the United States and discussed it with Hoover in Washington and Rapidan, Virginia. At the time, only one major issue remained. He was concerned about the disparity in heavy cruisers (21 American versus 15 British). Hoover offered to reduce American heavy cruisers to 18 if Britain prolonged the service of its cruisers (namely, continued operating outdated ones) by postponing their replacement until 1937. Although this issue was not settled during the visit, Hoover and MacDonald agreed to convene

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<sup>123</sup> "General Board: Senior Member Present to Secretary of the Navy," in Simpson, *Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1919-1939*, 105; Kaufman, *Arms Control during the Pre-nuclear Era*, 121-28; Wheeler, *Prelude to Pearl Harbor: The United States and the Far East, 1921-1931*, 180-81.

a naval conference regardless.<sup>124</sup>

The London Naval Conference from January to April 1930 put an end to the cruiser controversy that plagued Anglo-American relations for a decade. Determining the exact number of American heavy cruisers was expected to be the cornerstone of the cruiser issue, but this matter was quickly solved without difficulty. Inheriting most of the contents of the September draft agreement, the American proposal in February decreased the limit for American heavy cruisers to 18,<sup>125</sup> which was the condition Britain constantly claimed to be essential. Why did the United States make this concession without a *quid pro quo* from Britain? A few factors contributed to this decision. First, Hoover was convinced that Britain would commence a naval arms race if the conference failed and American cruiser construction continued.<sup>126</sup> Second, his disregard for naval officers softened the attitude of the American delegation, as many in the General Board tenaciously opposed the reduction.<sup>127</sup> Third, more American heavy cruisers meant more Japanese heavy cruisers as well, a situation not welcomed by the United States.<sup>128</sup> Last, as mentioned before, Hoover believed in unilateral restraint and did not put too much weight on the numerical value of specific limits.

An additional minor issue emerged from the American proposal. In place of the canceled heavy cruisers, the United States added six-inch cruisers with up to 10,000 tons of displacement. This modification to

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<sup>124</sup> McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930-1945*, 38-40.

<sup>125</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Stimson) to the Acting Secretary of State," Document 9, 500.A15a3/665: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1930, Volume I*.

<sup>126</sup> McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930-1945*, 61.

<sup>127</sup> McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930-1945*, 52-53.

<sup>128</sup> "The Chairman of the American Delegation (Stimson) to the Acting Secretary of State," Document 11, 500.A15a3/667: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1930, Volume I*.

the draft agreement slightly increased its total tonnage (from 315,000 to 327,000) and would have weakened British superiority in light cruisers. The Admiralty naturally objected to such a possibility. The American and British delegations soon reached a compromise. British objections relented, and in return, the United States reduced its American cruiser tonnage to 323,500 tons.<sup>129</sup>

Through the London Naval Conference, the United States and Britain effectively extinguished any possibility of naval rivalry or an arms race between them. A final naval conference in the interwar period was held in 1936, also in London. However, the main agenda of that conference was dealing with Japanese grievances against the system of international naval arms limitation, not Anglo-American naval parity.<sup>130</sup> While some general issues remained, such as the British war debt to the United States,<sup>131</sup> they buried the hatchet in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, the absence of direct clash did not mean there would be no points of contention between them in the future. As a matter of fact, they were already on the horizon.

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<sup>129</sup> Bell, "Great Britain and the London Naval Conference," 49-88.

<sup>130</sup> Stephen E. Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II* (Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>131</sup> This issue flared up in 1934, when Britain declared a de facto default after a series of disputes with the United States. McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930-1945*, 157-85.



## Chapter 3. Policy Coordination about Japanese Expansionism in the 1930s

### 3.1. The Manchurian Crisis, 1931–33: The Beginning of Anglo–American Discord over the Response to Japanese Expansionism

In September 1931, on the pretext of alleged Chinese bombings near the South Manchurian Railway in Mukden (Shenyang as of today), Japanese soldiers of the Kwantung Army under the leadership of Colonel Seishiro Itagaki and Lieutenant Colonel Kanji Ishiwara commenced aggressive military action in the region. Although this invasion was done unilaterally without the approval of the Kwantung Army's high command or the central government in Tokyo, the Japanese civilian government failed to properly check provocative escapades of Itagaki and Ishiwara. The intransigence of the army and the public support for military glory in Manchuria made it impossible for the cabinet led by Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijiro to prevent further escalation by keeping the situation under control.<sup>132</sup> The crisis thus escalated into a full-scale war between Japan and China to determine the territorial status of Manchuria, which culminated in the overwhelming Japanese victory and the installation of Japan's puppet state Manchukuo in the region.

Even though the United States and Britain were concerned about the situation unfolding in Manchuria and objected to forceful and unilateral attempt to change the regional status quo by the Japanese military, they were reluctant to get directly involved in a crisis which

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<sup>132</sup> Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (Macmillan, 1972), 131–34.

looked like an isolated incident in the Far East. Although Japan's advance toward Manchuria was unpleasant for Britain, the regional turbulence at the time was an inconsequential event with relatively low stakes for its empire. Amicable Anglo-Japanese relations remained an important pillar of British strategy in the Asia-Pacific region even after the abrogation of the alliance, and Manchuria was distant from the centers of British commercial and industrial interests in southern China.<sup>133</sup> The primary goal of the British foreign policy in the region was maintaining "really cordial relations with Japan, for in the absence of such relations our Far Eastern policy would necessarily fail. [...] His Majesty's Government's interest in the territorial status of Manchuria is infinitely less than [the British] interest in maintaining cordial relations with Japan,"<sup>134</sup>

Thus, in 1931, Britain lacked the willingness to stand on the side of the embattled Chinese government despite its diplomatic appeals. Nor did it have effective means to intervene in the Manchurian Crisis. In 1931, Britain's inadequate military preparedness could not provide enough forces to deploy to remote Manchuria. The Royal Navy's main fleet could not be dispatched to that location without compromising security in the European theater. The number of auxiliary vessels (destroyers and cruisers) was insufficient as well. In addition, the Singapore Base, which was supposed to be the cornerstone of the regional defense, was yet to be completed.<sup>135</sup> On top of these military

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<sup>133</sup> Ian Nish, "Japan in Britain's View of the International System, 1919-37," in *Anglo-Japanese Alienation 1919-1952*, ed. Ian Nish (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 37-38.

<sup>134</sup> "Memorandum by Sir V. Wellesley," No. 21, F 7766/1391/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 31.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (Penguin Books, 1972), 97-103; Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: II The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939* (Naval Institute Press, 1976), 144-45.

difficulties, poor economic condition caused by the Great Depression made a potential clash with Japan unpalatable to the British population. Domestic hardships such as the ongoing economic crisis that resulted in the formation of the National Government of 1931 and a mutiny in the Royal Navy attracted the attention of the general public, not some third-party dispute on the periphery of the empire.<sup>136</sup>

Such restraints compelled Britain to be reluctant to take decisive steps against Japan during the Manchurian Crisis, as they were likely to provoke it and start an unwanted conflict. As a result, Britain's initial responses to the outbreak of hostilities in Manchuria were reserved. In addition to Britain's internal considerations, the concern that taking sides in the conflict would inevitably generate ill will of either of the belligerent countries, the controversies over Japanese and Chinese intentions about the region, and the confusion about the nature of the conflict helped shape Britain's passive attitude.<sup>137</sup> Britain's responses stayed in line with the diplomatic measures of the League of Nations, whose lack of effective enforcement mechanism ultimately failed to curb Japan's rising expansionism. While Britain was firmly committed to principles of the League and played an essential role in its various efforts for diplomatic conciliation—the international commission for investigating the Manchurian Crisis was led a British citizen (Lord Lytton), Britain hesitated to take further steps to redeem the League's innate deficiencies regarding collective security measures.

American policymakers faced a similar situation on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Henry Stimson, the Secretary of State, was initially reluctant to issue an official statement on Japan's acts of

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<sup>136</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 283–84.

<sup>137</sup> "Sir J. Simon to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)," No. 66, F 155/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 101–102.

aggression because he was counting on the ability of its moderate politicians, especially Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijuro, to rein in militant factions of the army and restore the peace. Even after it became evident that Tokyo could not properly check the Kwantung Army's unilateral actions, America's economic downturn and military unpreparedness of the early 1930s made President Herbert Hoover seek no trouble with Japan. Even the advocates of the interwar American peace movement, who viewed the crisis as the threat to the international peace and argued for American actions against the Japanese aggression, did not seriously consider the use of military force.<sup>138</sup> America's circumstances that precluded a direct intervention in the Manchurian Crisis were similar to British ones. The American economy, deeply afflicted by the Great Depression, needed the lucrative Japanese market, which had been the destination of various American products such as cotton, steel, oil, and manufactured goods.<sup>139</sup> Its navy was also not in good shape due to the government's lukewarm naval shipbuilding efforts. At the time, the navy had not even reached the number of warships stipulated by the naval treaties. This dire situation made it impossible for the United States to seriously contemplating a military confrontation with Japan.<sup>140</sup> Thus, Stimson's only weapon at hand was moral and legal condemnation. On January 7, 1932, Stimson issued the Stimson Doctrine to both China and Japan, according to which the United States government would not recognize

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<sup>138</sup> Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific since 1783*, 153–55; Warren Cohen, "American Leaders and East Asia, 1931–1938," in *American, Chinese, and Japanese Perspectives on Wartime Asia, 1931–1949*, ed. Akira Iriye and Warren Cohen (Scholarly Resources, 1990), 2–8; Warren I. Cohen, *Empire without Tears: America's Foreign Relations 1921–1933* (Temple University Press, 1987), 110–12.

<sup>139</sup> Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932* (The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 64.

<sup>140</sup> Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895–1956*, 105.

the situation in violation of “the sovereignty, the independence, or the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic of China.”<sup>141</sup> In spite of his lofty words, Stimson’s avowed policy of non-recognition regarding the ongoing Japanese takeover of Manchuria was not accompanied by substantial countermeasures at the ready. His letter of warning to the aggressor could not bring about a meaningful change in the Japanese military’s overall course of action as a result.

Nevertheless, the conflict’s spillover to the Chinese mainland by the Japanese military’s provocative activities marked a minor but noticeable turning point in the general trend of the lukewarm attitude of American and British officials. Since the outbreak of the war in Manchuria, the enmity between Japanese and Chinese civilians had been constantly on the rise, which led to anti-Japanese boycotts and clashes in Shanghai. After the Japanese military tried to exploit this tense situation as a pretext for enlarging its presence in the city and the Chinese government refused to give in to the Japanese demands, a series of battles broke out between invading Japanese soldiers and Chinese defenders around the Shanghai International Settlement in January 1932. This event alarmed the Western powers with national interests in the region. Shanghai had been industrially as well as commercially far more important than Manchuria and operated as the center of the Western powers’ commercial interests in China. Thus, the outbreak of the Shanghai Incident (also known as the January 28 Incident) and the ensuing regional instability was a serious concern for both countries.<sup>142</sup> Shanghai had the largest American population within

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<sup>141</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Consul General at Nanking (Peck),” Document 10, 793.94/3437b: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1932, Volume III: The Far East*.

<sup>142</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933–1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Harvard University Press, 1964), 9–12.

China,<sup>143</sup> and three-fifth of the British foreign investment in China was located in Shanghai.<sup>144</sup>

With the lives and properties of their nationals now at stake, they began issuing stern warnings to the military adventurism of the Japanese military in Shanghai and arbitrating a ceasefire around the city. For example, President Hoover threatened Japanese Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo that Japan's access to American banks could be cut due to its violations of international agreements about Shanghai.<sup>145</sup> The United States and Britain worked together to peacefully settle the Shanghai Incident. Their ambassadors to Tokyo jointly delivered a proposal to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshizawa Kenkichi about the protection of the Shanghai International Settlement and the cessation of conflict.<sup>146</sup> Their ministers also cooperated in mediating subsequent peace negotiations between Japan and China, which eventually led to the armistice agreement and the conclusion of the incident in May.<sup>147</sup>

Unfortunately for China, vigorous American and British responses to the Shanghai Incident did not extend to the Manchurian Crisis in general. Without the willingness of individual great powers to actively intervene in restive Manchuria, all diplomatic efforts made by the League of Nations proved fruitless. Japanese representatives at the League Council repeatedly rejected its requests and resolutions calling for the withdrawal of the Japanese forces in November and December

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<sup>143</sup> Cohen, *Empire without Tears: America's Foreign Relations 1921-1933*, 113.

<sup>144</sup> Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 120-21.

<sup>145</sup> Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932*, 191.

<sup>146</sup> "The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Forbes)," 793.94/3902d, in Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941* (United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 160-61.

<sup>147</sup> Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 10.

1931. The League's other attempt to address the crisis was by sending an international commission of the representatives of the world's major powers (including the United States, which was not a member state of the League of Nations). Under the leadership of British politician Victor Bulwer-Lytton (Lord Lytton), they embarked on assessing the situation in the field. The Lytton Commission's report was published in October 1932, when Japan already consolidated its gains in Manchuria via Manchukuo. The Lytton Report and ensuing proceedings of the League Council tried to keep the possibility of a negotiated settlement alive. While they denied the recognition of Manchukuo as a sovereign state independent from China and still called for the withdrawal of the Japanese forces, they eschewed strong condemnation of Japan so as not to provoke it. Reluctant to forgo its spoils of war and antagonize the military, the Japanese government was unwilling to accept this olive branch. In February 1933, the Japanese delegation walked out of the council chamber in protest of the Lytton Report's official adoption, and Japan withdrew from the League itself the next month.<sup>148</sup> After blatantly disregarding the collective security system of the League, Japan faced no meaningful international pressure. Although the question of the legitimacy of Manchukuo remained unresolved, the atmosphere of crisis had subsided since the Tangku Truce in May 1933 from the perspective of Western powers.<sup>149</sup>

American and British attitudes toward the Manchurian Crisis were convergent in most aspects because same circumstances constrained

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<sup>148</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 721-51.

<sup>149</sup> Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 37-45.

their policymakers. Both countries lacked significant national interests to justify the risks of intervention in the region, willingness to exert their economic influence, military power at hand to punish Japan directly, and elbowroom for meddling in remote foreign affairs in the middle of severe domestic hardships. Apart from the Shanghai Incident, which elicited prompt responses due to the city's importance, no pressure for proactiveness existed for both sides. Thus, at first glance, it seems uncanny that there was any reasonable cause for serious diplomatic discord between the United States and Britain at the time. However, despite all these reasons for being uninterested in the other country's management of the crisis, the Manchurian Crisis generated a diplomatic episode full of mutual accusations and acrimony in Anglo-American relations, which is usually referred to as the Simon-Stimson affair.<sup>150</sup>

The Simon-Stimson affair was a diplomatic controversy between Henry Stimson and British Foreign Minister John Simon over the issue of their joint response to the Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Stimson's account of the event was that Britain continuously refused to cooperate with the United States by taking an equivocal stance toward Japan. According to his accounts, when Stimson announced his non-recognition doctrine in January 1931, Simon declined to follow suit despite his call for a joint response, declaring that the British government accepted Japan's assurance of the Open Door Policy and found it unnecessary to issue a statement corresponding to the Stimson Doctrine. He regarded Simon's attitude as a blunt rejection of his proposal, despite Britain's insistence that he had misinterpreted its

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<sup>150</sup> Keith Neilson, "Perception and Posture in Anglo-American Relations: The Legacy of the Simon-Stimson Affair, 1932-1941," *The International History Review* 29, no. 2 (2007).



foreign policy designed to handle the situation discretely in line with official proceedings of the League of Nations.<sup>151</sup> Another diplomatic discord between the two politicians occurred after the Shanghai Incident. In February 1932, Stimson suggested to Simon that the United States and Britain should issue a joint statement invoking the Nine-Power Treaty at the Washington Conference, which confirmed the Open Door Policy as an international obligation, as a message of protest against Japanese aggression. Although Simon did not formally decline his suggestion, the prolonged absence of a response from the British side convinced Stimson that Britain would not join the American initiative,<sup>152</sup> with which Stimson intended to pave the way for broader international support of his doctrine and moral reassurance of the Chinese government. Stimson believed that Britain's hesitation ruined the plan.<sup>153</sup>

From the British perspective, the gist of the Simon-Stimson Affair was not that Britain did not want to cooperate with the United States but rather that American diplomacy at the time looked hollow and untrustworthy. Without sufficient military or economic leverage at hand in the Asia-Pacific region, British policymakers perceived that the only realistic way to force Japan into submission was by acquiring support of the United States.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, they had profound doubt about the reliability of any American support. According to the assessment of British diplomat Victor Wellesley, the

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<sup>151</sup> William Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 191-92; Shizhang Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919-1937* (Greenwood Press, 1995), 139-40.

<sup>152</sup> Henry L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis: Recollections and Observations* (Harper & Brothers, 1936), 162-64.

<sup>153</sup> Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 12-13.

<sup>154</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933*, 725-26.

United States was “quite capable of backing out after we had agreed to give our support, leaving us to clear up the resultant mess.”<sup>155</sup> He was not alone in having such a cynical point of view. Other British officials left similar comments condemning the emptiness of American promises and the unreliable nature of American diplomacy. For example, Alexander Cadogan observed that “the Americans talk very big when there is nothing doing,” and J. H. Thomas remarked that “those States who were most anxious to put into force Article 16 of the Covenant [on collective countermeasures against an aggressor country] were always those whose practical interest in the application of sanctions was nil.”<sup>156</sup>

Stimson’s actions during the Manchurian Crisis only seemed to reconfirm these grievances from the British side. Before proposing an accusatory statement that would not be backed by substantial coercive diplomacy, Stimson did not adequately consult with his British counterparts in advance.<sup>157</sup> If the United States, a country with fewer national interests in the Asia-Pacific region than Britain, had decided to back out during the crisis, Britain would have been exposed to an infuriated Japan alone. In addition, although Britain agreed with the core principle of Stimson’s non-recognition doctrine, it was deemed inadequate to issue a separate statement with the United States (not a member state of the League of Nations) in the middle of ongoing League proceedings.<sup>158</sup> In the eyes of many British policymakers,

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<sup>155</sup> “Memorandum by Sir V. Wellesley,” No. 239, F 654/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 283–91.

<sup>156</sup> Neilson, “Perception and Posture in Anglo-American Relations: The Legacy of the Simon-Stimson Affair, 1932–1941,” 315.

<sup>157</sup> McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Pre-eminence to the United States, 1930–1945*, 121–22.

<sup>158</sup> Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933–1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 13.

Stimson did not properly take into consideration Britain's difficult international position. Instead, Stimson had "done his utmost to rush us into hasty and ill-considered action which would have gravely aggravated the situation in the Far East."<sup>159</sup>

To some degree, the episodes of diplomatic discord between the United States and Britain during the Manchurian Crisis can be attributed to communication problems and coordination failures at the working level. However, the story between Simon and Stimson showed that two macro-level contributing factors lay in the background, fostering tensions between the two countries. The first factor was identical to what was covered in the previous chapter: a heightened sense of America's leadership in managing global affairs and deciding the global pecking order. President Woodrow Wilson wanted his country's new status as the "second-to-none" naval power to be respected by Britain despite the ambiguity of the concept. Likewise, Stimson urged Britain to follow the American initiative, even though Simon's cooperation was not likely to change Hoover's unwillingness to impose economic sanctions on Japan. As a result, Stimson failed to convince Britain that the United States was committed to protecting partners under its leadership.

Thus, Anglo-American relations at the time were a follow-the-leader game gone awry, aggravated by the second factor: Britain's far higher stakes in the Asia-Pacific region. Due to Britain's vulnerable strategic circumstances in the region, the anticipated perils of the Stimson Doctrine's impracticality disproportionately affected the British side. Stimson's moral condemnation that did not entail military or economic backup only fomented more anti-American sentiment in

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<sup>159</sup> "Sir R. Lindsay (Washington) to Sir J. Simon (Received January 28, 9 a.m.)," No. 128, F 566/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 192.

Japan (just as Britain feared).<sup>160</sup> Britain was unwilling to subject itself to that risk. The British empire was already burdened by many problems, such as mounting nationalism in India, the management of increasingly independent Dominions, and its obligation to the League of Nations as the organization's de facto leader.<sup>161</sup> Accordingly, it was not a viable strategy for Britain to take on another challenge by blindly following the American leadership.

The Manchurian Crisis demonstrated that even in the absence of conflicting national interests between the United States and Britain, actions by a third party had the potential to disrupt Anglo-American relations. This potential was a significant strategic problem for Britain. At the naval conferences of the 1920s, Britain recognized its loss of preeminence in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, the stability of the British Empire in the Far East had depended on both American and Japanese goodwill.<sup>162</sup> However, increasing antagonism between the United States and Japan made it more and more difficult for Britain "to avoid rebuffing America and at the same time avoid incurring the hostility of Japan."<sup>163</sup> For this reason, Anglo-American responses to the rise of Japanese expansionism, especially British efforts to avoid any untimely confrontation with Japan before it was militarily and economically prepared, became the focal point of Anglo-American relations and the primary source of their diplomatic discord in the Asia-Pacific region.

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<sup>160</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933*, 747.

<sup>161</sup> Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919-1937*, 140.

<sup>162</sup> "Memorandum by Sir V. Wellesley," No. 239, F 654/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 283-91.

<sup>163</sup> "Memorandum by Sir J. Pratt," No. 120, F 490/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 183.

### 3.2. An Interlude, 1934–37: American Antagonism toward Potential Anglo–Japanese Rapprochement

The period from the Tangku Truce in May 1933 to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937 was one of relative tranquility in the Asia–Pacific region. However, unsettling global events were occurring in Europe at the time. The rise of revisionist European powers—Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Germany and Benito Mussolini’s Fascist Italy—recreated Britain’s nightmare of security threats from multiple theaters. With its limited naval capability, Britain could not simultaneously deal with concurrent challenges from Western Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Asia–Pacific region. The worsening European situation made it doubtful whether the Royal Navy could afford to send its main battle fleet stationed in the British Isles to the Asia–Pacific region in an emergency. Thus, establishing a *modus vivendi* with Japan emerged as a considerable policy option for Britain.<sup>164</sup>

While American objection to such an attempt was anticipated, some British policymakers considered Anglo–American cooperation against Japan during the Manchurian Crisis as only serving the national interests of the United States.<sup>165</sup> Stabilizing the regional situation by a diplomatic rapprochement with Japan looked like a viable policy for such officials. For example, Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, argued that “if it were possible to improve our relations with Japan the whole problem in the Far East would be much simplified, and it even might be possible to reduce the Far East in the order of

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<sup>164</sup> Greg Kennedy, “The Royal Navy and Imperial Defence, 1919–1956,” in *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856–1956*, ed. Greg Kennedy (Routledge, 2008), 138–39.

<sup>165</sup> “Memorandum by Sir V. Wellesley,” No. 239, F 654/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 283–91.

priority.”<sup>166</sup>

On the other hand, others interpreted the crisis, especially the Shanghai Incident, as undeniable signs of voracious Japanese ambition not confined to protecting its legitimate interests in Manchuria.<sup>167</sup> MacDonald and Simon regarded Japan’s growing call for a better ratio of naval power in relation to the Western powers and its apparent lust for more territories as evidence of its aggressive intentions. The controversy over the Amai Doctrine in April 1934 seemed to confirm their concerns. Responding to a question about the Japanese stance on foreign aid to China, Eiji Amai, the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, stated that Japan had a special responsibility to uphold peace in Asia. Furthermore, according to the statement, Japan also objected to any undesirable aid to China from the Western powers, including weapons, military facilities, and politically motivated loans. The United States and Britain were understandably alarmed by Amai’s assertive, if not provocative, statement. The Amai Doctrine aroused the possibility that Japan, as “a great Power in the East,” would increasingly behave like James Monroe’s America. Eventually, to alleviate their concerns, the Japanese government announced that the statement by Amai was not an official policy.<sup>168</sup>

Widespread suspicion about the nature of Japan’s vision for the Asia-Pacific region lingered after the controversy died down. Still, it remained uncertain whether the United States and Britain would take substantial measures to thwart future Japanese expansionism in the region. Although the British government renounced the post-WWI

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<sup>166</sup> Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II*, 103.

<sup>167</sup> “Memorandum by Sir J. Pratt,” No. 238, F 1263/1/10, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume IX*, 281–83.

<sup>168</sup> Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919–1937*, 180–83.

strategic assumption of no great power war involving Britain for ten years (the so-called “Ten-Year-Rule”) in the wake of the Manchurian Crisis, its weakened financial and economic situation continuously constrained its defense spending. Compared with that of Germany, the British military budget did not experience a substantial increase until 1936. Moreover, even that year, the budget was merely a fraction of Germany’s. Serious efforts for British rearmament had to wait until the late 1930s, when the clouds of war were gathering in Europe. While the Japanese budget increase was also anemic, diverting resources to the Asia-Pacific region in the face of the German challenge was a hard choice.<sup>169</sup>

	America	Britain	Germany	Japan
1930	699	512	162	218
1933	570	333	452	183
1934	803	540	709	292
1935	806	646	1607	300
1936	932	892	2332	313
1937	1032	1245	3298	940
1938	1131	1863	7415	1740

**Table 3.1. Defense Expenditures, 1930–1938 (Millions of Current Dollars)<sup>170</sup>**

The American government was also unwilling to confront Japan directly at the time. As the head of the State Department Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Stanley Hornbeck designed the American strategy

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<sup>169</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Random House, 1987), 317.

<sup>170</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, 296.

for the Asia-Pacific region to avoid becoming embroiled in a regional conflict. Hornbeck advocated a strong navy but did not intend to actively wield American national power as a tool of diplomatic pressure or coercion. Therefore, while he advocated the Open Door Policy and Stimson's nonrecognition doctrine, he urged a noncommittal and noninterventionist policy in the region.<sup>171</sup>

We need always keep in mind the fact that the powers vitally concerned in Far East matters are Japan, China, and Russia. [...] We need always keep in mind the fact that the United States has not any vital interest at stake; also, that it probably never will have. Therefore, we should take no steps which tend to involve or enmesh us in the politics of Japanese-Russian-Chinese Far East.<sup>172</sup>

Since neither the United States nor Britain were likely to make a move to counter Japan's regional ascendancy at the time, some British policymakers attempted to achieve a breakthrough in Anglo-Japanese relations by using a strategy of co-optation. The Anglo-Japanese Nonaggression Pact of 1934 was an unsuccessful diplomatic proposal to get back to the source of Britain's strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific region for two decades: political coordination with Japan.

The report of the Defence [sic] Requirement Sub-Committee (DRC) in February 1934 provided the rationale for rapprochement with Japan. The report set the priorities for the Imperial Defence [sic]

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<sup>171</sup> "Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hornbeck)," Document 826, 711.94/1012, in *FRUS, 1935, Volume III*; Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919-1937*, 171-87.

<sup>172</sup> "Hornbeck to Bill Bullitt," January 11, 1934, Hornbeck Papers, Box 454. Quoted in Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919-1937*, 175.



because it was impossible to guard every corner of the empire within the confines of a limited defense budget. Protecting the regional possessions of the empire and interests in the Asia-Pacific region was designated as top priorities. As to the issue of Japanese expansionism, the report pursued a two-pronged approach. It recommended finishing the construction of the Singapore Base as a countermeasure to potential Japanese aggression and, simultaneously, building bridges with Japan. Hostilities in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region (and perhaps India) were considered serious problems that could not be ignored. Since restoring the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was impractical, the proposed alternative was restoring friendly relations with Japan and standing by its side at the upcoming naval conference in London.<sup>173</sup>

In March, in line with the report's directives, Chamberlain argued for a national defense posture to cope with the increasing threat of Nazi Germany. He thought a rapprochement with Japan was necessary for that purpose, even at the expense of Anglo-American relations. Warren Fisher, the Undersecretary of the Treasury, consented to Chamberlain's foreign policy direction. The Treasury's goal was also conciliation with Japan. If military conflict broke out between Britain and Japan, the cost would be enormous, and Britain would become vulnerable to German or Italian blackmail. Furthermore, the Treasury expected that Britain could not defeat Japan without outside help.<sup>174</sup> Chamberlain and Fisher sought to improve Anglo-Japanese relations through a nonaggression pact.

When this proposal was first presented in the Cabinet meeting, it was given a warm reception from the majority. However, MacDonald

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<sup>173</sup> "Committee of Imperial Defence, Defence Requirements Sub-Committee Report," C.P. 64, in CAB 24/247.

<sup>174</sup> Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers*, 57.

raised an objection because, in his view, the United States was likely to interpret the nonaggression pact as an alliance in all but name.<sup>175</sup> Two days later, Simon, who initially seemed to support the proposal, changed his mind, and produced an antithetical analysis. According to his memorandum, the nonaggression pact's "effect on the United States would unquestionably be bad. [...] A political understanding designed to improve Anglo-Japanese relations and to raise the prestige of the Power universally regarded as America's principal enemy must obviously come as a shock to the Government and people of the United States."<sup>176</sup> In addition, Admiralty officials like Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey obviously disapproved of more cuts in naval spending.

Heated discussions persisted. On the one hand, they were a battle between those who advocated fiscal austerity and focused on the German threat, and those who supported rearmament and the global Imperial Defence.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, they were also a battle about whether a partnership with America was indispensable for Britain. Chamberlain and Fisher were highly skeptical of the likelihood of American support in the Asia-Pacific region. Thinking that the United States would not compensate for British interests sacrificed to satisfy Washington, Chamberlain did not balk at going against its wishes.<sup>178</sup> Fisher analyzed the postwar alienation between Britain and Japan as an outcome of misplaced trust in the United States. This trust was groundless because the United States would feel no grave national

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<sup>175</sup> Chihiro Hosoya, "The 1934 Anglo-Japanese Nonaggression Pact," *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1981): 495-97.

<sup>176</sup> However, Simon changed his mind once again in July. "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," C.P. 80, in CAB 24/248.

<sup>177</sup> Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II*, 103-04.

<sup>178</sup> "Letter from Mr. N. Chamberlain to Sir J. Simon," No. 14, F 6189/591/23, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume XIII*, 24-25.

security threat from the outside due to its isolated geographic location and, in turn, would be reluctant to come to Britain's rescue in an emergency. For this reason, he recommended pursuing a regional policy independent of the United States.<sup>179</sup> By contrast, opponents of the nonaggression pact pointed out its inevitable negative impact on friendship with America, which they regarded as indispensable for a successful regional policy.<sup>180</sup>

An unexpected event occurred in July. In a meeting with British Ambassador Robert Clive, Japanese Foreign Minister Koki Hirota told him that Japan was interested in signing nonaggression pacts with the United States and Britain. Hirota's message raised fresh hopes about an Anglo-Japanese rapprochement. The British government agreed to start unofficial diplomatic talks with Japan about a nonaggression pact in September.<sup>181</sup>

Unfortunately, the Japanese Navy's rebellion against perceived unfavorable terms of arms limitation at the naval conferences in the 1920s was a crucial obstacle to improving Anglo-Japanese relations. Grievances with the restrictions on Japanese naval power always existed in the navy, but they blossomed after the Manchurian Crisis. The Japanese success in establishing an exclusive sphere of influence in Manchuria emboldened the proponents of naval expansion, who believed Japanese naval power enabled such success. Admiral Kanji Kato and his supporters called for more naval power, to whom civilian policymakers succumbed at last. Breaking away from the Washington Conference's 5:5:3 ratio and achieving naval parity through a common

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<sup>179</sup> "Memorandum by Sir Warren Fisher on defence requirements and naval strategy," Appendix I, A 4114/1938/45, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume XIII*, 924-930.

<sup>180</sup> "Memorandum by Mr. Orde on Mr. N. Chamberlain's proposals," No. 15, F 6190/591/23, in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume XIII*, 31-34.

<sup>181</sup> Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919-1937*, 498-503.

total tonnage limit among America, Britain, and Japan were decided as the minimum conditions for a settlement. Because those naval officers already knew that other countries were extremely unlikely to embrace such a demand, they effectively sabotaged the system of naval arms limitation. As a result, the Second London Conference from December 1935 to March 1936 failed to reach a negotiated settlement due to the intransigence of the Japanese delegation. Nevertheless, the navy was undisturbed by Japan's estrangement from the West, convinced that it could match the American and British navies in the Asia-Pacific region thanks to Japan's unique geographic advantages as the only naval power solely located in Asia.<sup>182</sup>

Furthermore, Japan was concerned about reaching the point of no return in diplomatic relations with the United States, just as Britain was. The Pearl Harbor moment was yet to come in the mid-1930s. The Japanese government did not want to give the Americans reason to think that Japan was contemplating secret political arrangements with Britain. Foreign Vice-Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu judged that while building friendly relations with Britain was good, going for a separate bilateral negotiation with Britain, excluding the United States, would be inimical to American-Japanese relations. Thus, the Japanese government explained in October 1934 to Britain that the true meaning of Hirota's message was promoting mutual understanding among the three countries, perhaps as an extension of the Four-Power Treaty. In short, no Anglo-Japanese treaty was under consideration by the Japanese government.<sup>183</sup> In the end, the idea of a nonaggression pact with Japan fizzled out. The discussions about it showed that the United

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<sup>182</sup> Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II*, 27-63.

<sup>183</sup> Hosoya, "The 1934 Anglo-Japanese Nonaggression Pact," 509-11.

States was inevitably at the center of all strategic considerations by Britain (and Japan as well).

Certainly, the United States detested British attempts to dabble in separate negotiations with Japan. From the American perspective, it looked as if Britain decided to act as a mediator between the United States and Japan instead of sticking to the American side when the Japanese Navy dared to demand naval parity. Moreover, the United States viewed Britain's *modus vivendi* with Japan as acquiescence in Japan's unjustifiable takeover of Manchuria.<sup>184</sup> When the news of a potential Anglo-Japanese diplomatic settlement spread to Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt became infuriated and reminded Britain of its precarious strategic situation.

Simon and a few other Tories must be constantly impressed with the simple fact that if Great Britain is even suspected of preferring to play with Japan to playing with us, I shall be compelled, in the interest of American security, to approach public sentiment in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in a definite effort to make these Dominions understand clearly that their future security is linked with us in the United States. You [American Diplomat Norman Davis] will best know how to inject this thought into the minds of Simon, Chamberlain, and MacDonald in the most diplomatic way.<sup>185</sup>

Such an American attitude presented a dilemma for Britain, which

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<sup>184</sup> Hosoya, "The 1934 Anglo-Japanese Nonaggression Pact," 511-12.

<sup>185</sup> "Roosevelt to Norman H. Davis, Chairman, American Delegation, London Naval Conference," in Edgar B. Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, Volume II: March 1934-August 1935* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 263.

had neither carrot nor stick to deal with Japanese expansionism alone. The United States steadfastly opposed any political arrangement that could be seen as legitimizing Manchukuo.<sup>186</sup> For this reason, co-opting Japan through a trilateral settlement was implausible. Meanwhile, the United States was unwilling to intervene militarily or economically in regional affairs, so Japan faced no immediate pressure to change its course of action. Without pressure from the outside, Japan had no reason to moderate its foreign policy. Thus, cooperation with the United States could not solve the problem of Japanese expansionism. Still, neither Britain nor Japan considered spurning Uncle Sam a viable policy. Since the United States was suspicious of collusion between them, the appeal of a separate bilateral settlement plunged from both sides. To sum up, diplomatic compromise in the Asia-Pacific region was only possible with the active involvement of the United States, but the equivocal nature of American diplomacy at the time did not allow such a possibility. While it is uncertain whether an active American involvement could have succeeded, given the growing influence of hawks in the Japanese government, the lack of it precluded any opportunity for compromise.

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<sup>186</sup> “Were we in no way whatever committed by previous statements and practice, it would still be a fact that diplomatic recognition by us (or by any other state) of a political entity such as “Manchukuo” is today would be unwarranted and could in no way bring great advantage to the recognizing state. [...] Therefore, the thing for us to do about the “non-recognition policy” is to do nothing about it: we should refrain from statements with regard to it but should persevere in the stand-pat position which is its essence.” “Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hornbeck),” Document 826, 711.94/1012, in *FRUS, 1935, Volume III*.

### 3.3. The Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-39: Lingering Anglo-American Mistrust despite their Developing Alignment

Relative tranquility in the Asia-Pacific region came to an end in 1937 when the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937, triggered the Second Sino-Japanese War. At first, this incident was an isolated military skirmish between Japanese and Chinese soldiers. However, hardline stances from both sides precluded a peaceful settlement of the incident, which soon escalated into a full-scale war. The Chinese army proved incapable of stopping the Japanese advance. At the end of July, the Japanese Army controlled the regions surrounding Beijing and Tianjin. The scourge of war eventually reached southern China, as Shanghai became a battlefield in August.<sup>187</sup>

The progress of the war in clear favor of Japan alarmed British policymakers. Even before the war, they recognized that Japanese military advances toward southern China would be inimical to British national interests in the region and the overall security of colonial possessions like Hong Kong and Singapore. Such a perception made it imperative to deter Japan. Nevertheless, whether embattled Britain could effectively counteract the Japanese move remained to be seen. As discussed before, the basic British military strategy in the region was to send its main battle fleet to the naval base in Singapore to enhance its regional military posture whenever necessary. However, implementing this strategy became progressively more complex over time since Japan was able to take advantage of any contingency in Europe. Theoretically, on the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War,

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<sup>187</sup> Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (Routledge, 1987), 42-43.

the Royal Navy, together with the French Navy as an ally, retained enough naval strength to overpower potential enemies. In the face of the ongoing naval buildup of fascist countries in Europe, however, difficulties in operating both in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region were expected. The most significant concerns of the day were a likely delay in the fleet's arrival and the reduction of its size, which would have undermined the effectiveness of the military strategy. The best Britain could hope for was maintaining a defensive military posture and constraining Japan through economic measures, but they also needed enough military backup to gain credibility.<sup>188</sup>

	Britain	France	Japan	Germany	Italy
Battleships	12	9 → 7	9	0 → 2	4 → 5
Battlecruisers	3	0 → 2	0	0 → 2	0

Table 3.2. Naval Strength of Capital Ships in June 1937 and 1939 (Estimated)<sup>189</sup>

Consequently, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and, eventually, the German invasion of Poland made Britain reluctant to use economic sanctions or a show of force to avoid a risky confrontation with Japan. This exacting situation incentivized Britain to deprioritize the Asia-Pacific region so that more national resources could be concentrated on managing the European situation. Accordingly, preserving the British Empire in the Far East depended

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<sup>188</sup> Malcolm H. Murfett, *Fool-proof Relations: The Search for Anglo-American Naval Cooperation during the Chamberlain Years, 1937-1940* (Singapore University Press, 1984), 29-33.

<sup>189</sup> The estimation was conducted by the Admiralty and contained an error: the actual number of Japanese battleships in 1939 was 10 instead of 9. Far East Appreciation, para. 315, DP(P)5, CAB 16/183A. Quoted in Murfett, *Fool-proof Relations: The Search for Anglo-American Naval Cooperation during the Chamberlain Years, 1937-1940*, 32.



more and more on the foreign policy of the United States. Winning a war with Japan required American support. Averting the war through military or economic deterrence of Japanese expansionism required at least the appearance of American support.<sup>190</sup> Even a compromise with Japan by recognizing its gains in China as *fait accompli* required tacit American support because any agreement about the regional order without American participation was meaningless.

Unfortunately, despite their distaste for Japanese expansionism and increasing hostility toward Japan after the breakout of the Second Sino-Japanese War, American policymakers were still unwilling to intervene directly in a war that did not significantly damage American national interests. Japan's being stuck in a quagmire of a war in China was viewed as a drain on its national capability. Furthermore, the rise of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was considered a graver threat, drawing their attention to Europe instead of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, they had to consider the vulnerable geographic position of the Philippines. With these restraints in mind, President Roosevelt and the officials of the Department of State took a cautious approach. They hesitated to provoke Japan with too strong measures, regardless of their moralist rhetoric about the war.<sup>191</sup>

Therefore, British diplomatic efforts for closer cooperation with the United States in responding to Japanese expansionism following the outbreak of the war did not make smooth progress. As the Marco Polo Bridge Incident began to erupt into a full-scale war, some British policymakers, especially Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, pursued

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<sup>190</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place 1900-1975* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 85-86.

<sup>191</sup> Waldo Heinrichs, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Risks of War, 1939-1941," in *American, Chinese, and Japanese Perspectives on Wartime Asia, 1931-1949*, ed. Akira Iriye and Warren Cohen (Scholarly Resources Inc., 1990), 148.

joint action with the United States against Japan. However, the hopes of Anglo-American cooperation were dashed when Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador to Washington, failed to gain American support for a joint statement to Tokyo in July. The American government replied that the United States was “heartily in accord” with the British proposal but desired a “parallel but independent,” rather than joint, foreign policy. The British efforts continued, but few of them yielded notable outcomes. Only the proposal on August 3 about a joint offer of good offices to the belligerents drew out some positive response from the American government, which did not want to neglect any prospect of peace at least in principle.<sup>192</sup>

Although potential windows of opportunity for partnership existed between the two countries, they failed to materialize in the form of substantial Anglo-American cooperation due to their mistrust. After the war spread to Shanghai on August 14, Britain urgently devised a multilateral ceasefire agreement stipulating the withdrawal of both Japanese and Chinese military forces from the city and entrusting the protection of the Japanese population in the Shanghai International Settlement to third-party governments. Britain invited the United States to join, but Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, refused on the ground that Japan did not seem to be interested in that agreement and stated that the American government would not “be favorably inclined toward any project envisaging military or police responsibilities.”<sup>193</sup> When Britain reiterated its call for joint efforts for a ceasefire agreement, Hull warned Britain to stop trying to drag the United States into the conflict.

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<sup>192</sup> Andrew Kelly, “The Sino-Japanese War and the Anglo-American Response,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 2 (2013): 29–33.

<sup>193</sup> “The Department of State to the British Embassy,” Document 502, 793.94/9756, in *FRUS, 1937, Volume III*.

[The] State Department is somewhat embarrassed at being pressed more than once to cooperate in this scheme. [...] Should messages come from London to the effect that the scheme has failed because the United States government refused to participate, [then they might] cause recriminations to arise and would give a check to Anglo-American cooperation.<sup>194</sup>

Britain's unsuccessful attempt at Anglo-American cooperation to contain the spread of fighting to southern China meant that the chances for a diplomatic settlement sharply decreased, along with Britain's confidence in regional stability. Despite Japan's effective annexation of Manchuria through the puppet state of Manchukuo, Britain believed in the possibility of stabilization of Sino-Japanese relations in the long run. It was based on the expectation that both countries would seek to benefit from the peaceful economic development of China.<sup>195</sup> However, the prospect of peace dissipated as the war progressed beyond its initial stage and developed into an existential struggle between Japan and China. Britain alone was powerless to stop the flow of history, but any American help remained in the distance.

In October, a positive signal for Anglo-American cooperation seemed to emerge. Roosevelt made his famous Quarantine Speech in Chicago on October 5, condemning aggression and emphasizing the necessity to stop it.

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<sup>194</sup> "Lindsay to Foreign Office," in *DBFP, Second Series, Volume XXI*, 258–59.

Quoted in Kelly, "The Sino-Japanese War and the Anglo-American Response," 32.

<sup>195</sup> Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919–1939*, 241.

It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. [...] There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace. America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.<sup>196</sup>

His choice of words appeared to imply something more substantial than American foreign policy up until now. If the “world lawlessness” referred to the rise of aggressive fascist countries, their “quarantine” could indicate countermeasures short of direct war, such as economic sanctions. Making such a conjecture, Eden anticipated substantial follow-up measures against Japan. Unfortunately, his inquiries about the intention of the American government regarding the president’s speech revealed that the speech was, in essence, little more than empty rhetoric.<sup>197</sup> Roosevelt denied considering economic sanctions, mentioning the sanction as a “terrible word to use.”<sup>198</sup> Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who was far less optimistic about the prospect of Anglo-American cooperation than Eden, regarded Roosevelt’s speech as “ballyhoo” and feared the situation that “the Americans [would] somehow fade out and leave us to carry the blame and the odium.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> “Address Delivered by President Roosevelt at Chicago, October 5, 1937,” Document 93, in Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941*, 386-387.

<sup>197</sup> “Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Welles),” Document 659, 711.00 Pres. Speech, Oct. 5, 1937/100, in *FRUS, 1937, Volume III*.

<sup>198</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 522.

<sup>199</sup> “Neville Chamberlain to his sister Hilda, 9 October 1937,” Neville Chamberlain Papers, NC18/1/1023. Quoted in Peter Lowe, “Britain and the Opening of the War in Asia, 1937-41,” in *Anglo-Japanese Alienation 1919-1952*, ed. Ian Nish (Cambridge

Roosevelt's evasive attitude despite his strong rhetoric was caused by a domestic political factor. Despite growing sympathies for the plight of the Chinese people,<sup>200</sup> the Neutrality Acts of the 1930s showed that the American public was still unwilling to be embroiled in the quagmire of war. Following the public sentiment, in November, Roosevelt also rejected Eden's proposal to display Anglo-American naval power in the Asia-Pacific region through a joint deployment of battleships, which could provoke Japan.<sup>201</sup>

Roosevelt's Quarantine Speech ended in British frustration, but the Japanese attack on American and British naval vessels operating in Chinese waters rekindled the hope of Anglo-American cooperation. On December 12, Japanese artillery shelled two British gunboats sailing in the Yangtze River—HMS Ladybird and HMS Bee. The American gunboat USS Panay was also bombarded by warplanes and sunk while carrying officials and civilians escaping the encroaching war. American public opinion naturally boiled up. British policymakers perceived this incident as an opportunity to involve the United States in regional affairs and accomplish some joint action against Japan. Even Chamberlain, a deep-rooted cynic about American diplomacy, remarked that the Americans came closer to actually doing something than he had ever known. Nevertheless, their high hopes turned out to be groundless. Although the United States was prompt in demanding apologies and reparations from Japan, it preferred to act independently

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University Press, 1982), 104.

<sup>200</sup> For example, the "war picture of a crying baby sitting on tracks in the middle of a blasted empty street had the same emotional impact on newspaper readers. [...] The Japanese bombings set off a wave of public sympathy for the Chinese, whose heroism and sufferings were reported by American journalists in Shanghai." Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933–1939*, 523.

<sup>201</sup> Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific since 1783*, 176.

rather than in cooperation with Britain.<sup>202</sup> The American government suspected that Britain intended to “entangle the United States in problems which were not properly its concern, and that we [the British] were trying to get that country to pull our chestnuts out of the fire.”<sup>203</sup>

A redeeming point of this incident for Britain was Roosevelt’s growing interest in Anglo-American naval cooperation through the exchange of information. Roosevelt recognized the change in the international situation for the worse and the possibility of America’s inevitable foreign entanglements. He thus began to make emergency plans for the future. For this purpose, Roosevelt secretly dispatched Captain Royal Ingersoll of the American Navy to London in January 1938 for a secret staff talk. He conducted conversations with British officials, discussing cooperation in various matters, such as the enhancement of their naval power in the Asia-Pacific region, the potential naval blockade of Japan, and setting up common codes and signals between the two navies. The Ingersoll Mission did not produce any concrete plans of action. However, their agreement about opening communication channels by setting up common codes and signals later facilitated wartime coordination.<sup>204</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the relatively amicable Ingersoll Mission, policy coordination between the United States and Britain continued to be difficult. For example, when Britain asked the United States in January about a naval protest against Japanese assaults on British police officers in Shanghai, the American government answered that it could bring forward already scheduled naval maneuvers around Hawaii,

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<sup>202</sup> Kelly, “The Sino-Japanese War and the Anglo-American Response,” 33–35.

<sup>203</sup> This was Eden’s assessment of the American unwillingness to cooperate. Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon: Facing the Dictators* (The Riverside Press, 1962), 616.

<sup>204</sup> Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937–1941* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 33–37.

but only on the condition of British reciprocation by preparing to deploy Britain's own fleet to Singapore. This was hardly a satisfying answer for Britain.<sup>205</sup> Another episode of unsuccessful cooperation occurred from December 1938 to February 1939, when American Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles told British Ambassador Ronald Lindsay the necessity of coordinating their economic action (i.e., sanctions) and asked him about the British opinion about this matter. In order to test the waters, Britain noncommittally proposed to abrogate their commercial treaties with Japan if the United States considered it as an appropriate measure. At the same time, however, Britain emphasized the sanction's impotence and the risks of Japanese retaliation. The American response was that it favored providing financial aid to China rather than taking direct action against Japan. British policymakers were not surprised by the American attitude at all because they already suspected that the United States did not earnestly pursue economic sanctions against Japan in the first place.<sup>206</sup> These events show the extent of mistrust between the two countries at the time.

Whereas Anglo-American relations developed at a sluggish pace, Anglo-Japanese relations deteriorated at a much faster pace. While British irritation at Japanese encroachment into China was constant throughout the interwar period, Japan's announcement of a new order in the Asia-Pacific region in November 1938 accelerated the concern about whether British and Japanese interests in the Asia-Pacific region could coexist. On November 3, the Japanese government issued

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<sup>205</sup> Antony Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41* (Routledge, 1995), 47-48.

<sup>206</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 65-66; Bradford A. Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline* (Oxford University Press, 1973), 160-62.

the following statement in a radio speech.

What Japan seeks is the establishment of a new order which will insure the permanent stability of East Asia. In this lies the ultimate purpose of our present military campaign. This new order has for its foundation a tripartite relationship of mutual aid and co-ordination between Japan, Manchoukuo and China in political, economic, cultural and other fields. [...] Japan is confident that other Powers will on their part correctly appreciate her aims and policy and adapt their attitude to the new conditions prevailing in East Asia. [...] Such the Government declare to be the immutable policy and determination of Japan.<sup>207</sup>

In a meeting with Ambassador Craigie on November 17, Japanese Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita explained the meaning of the new order for Britain. He frankly admitted that “a complete change had come over situation in China and that assurance given earlier might not be wholly applicable to new situation.” Arita justified this drastic change with Japan’s and East Asia’s necessity to build an economic bloc to ensure their survival among other powerful economic blocs formed by Western powers such as Britain, America, and Russia. He further argued that the Open Door Policy in China was unfair because areas under the control of other great powers were not subject to the same criterion, and Japan did not intend to exclude foreign countries from trade in China altogether.<sup>208</sup> Obviously, Arita’s words did not alleviate

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<sup>207</sup> “Statement by the Japanese Government, November 3, 1938,” Document 329, 793.94/14380, in *FRUS, Volume I, Japan 1931–1941*.

<sup>208</sup> “Sir R. Craigie (Tokyo) to Viscount Halifax (Received November 17, 9.30 a.m.),” No. 249, F 12133/11783/10, *DBFP, Third Series, Volume VIII*, 234–36.



British concerns about Japan's dominance of the Asia-Pacific region. With the notable exception of Craigie, who continued to have faith in a diplomatic solution until the eve of the Pacific War, most British policymakers began to identify compromise as surrender.<sup>209</sup>

At first glance, the alienation between Britain and Japan should have been conducive to Anglo-American relations. During the interwar period, the United States always harbored suspicion of an Anglo-Japanese rapprochement behind its back. The reduction of such a possibility removed a major obstacle to stable regional cooperation between the two countries. Nevertheless, although witnessing the growing Anglo-Japanese alienation, the United States largely stayed aloof from Britain's problematic situation in the Asia-Pacific region. The Tientsin (Tianjin) Incident from June to August 1939 demonstrated that Anglo-American cooperation was still somewhat illusory.

The Tientsin Incident was the most serious crisis in Anglo-Japanese relations during the interwar period. It was caused by three issues between Britain and Japan regarding the British concession in Tientsin. First, Japan wanted Britain to extradite Chinese resistance forces within the concession, who took advantage of the concession's extraterritorial status. Second, Japan wanted the concession to ban the *fapi* (the Chinese currency) and use the currency issued by the puppet regime sponsored by Japan instead. Last, Japan wanted British banks to hand over the silver reserves of the Chinese government banks. The assassination of an official of the puppet regime triggered a serious confrontation between Britain and Japan. The controversy over the extradition of the perpetrators escalated into the Japanese blockade of the concession in June. Japan put all three issues on the

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<sup>209</sup> Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline*, 155-58.

agenda of the negotiation to lift the blockade, turning the negotiation into a place to determine Britain's future relations with China.<sup>210</sup>

In the face of this predicament, the British government wished to acquire diplomatic support from the United States. Unfortunately, the American government was callous to Britain's predicament at the time. Hull announced the country's official position at a press conference.

This Government is not concerned in the original incident at Tientsin relating to the requested delivery of the four accused Chinese. It is concerned, however, with the nature and significance of subsequent developments, in their broader aspects, coupled with other past and present acts and utterances in other parts of China. This Government therefore is observing with special interest all related developments in China as they occur from day to day. I have nothing further to add today.<sup>211</sup>

Furthermore, when Britain requested American participation in discussions about the currency (*fapi*) issue to boost its bargaining power toward Japan, the United States also refused. Eventually, on July 26, American diplomatic support arrived belatedly. Roosevelt announced the termination of the American-Japanese Commercial Treaty of 1911 to encourage Britain to take a more hardline stance. It was done after the preliminary agreement on July 24 (the Arita-Craigie Agreement), in which Britain already yielded on the extradition issue by recognizing Japan's "special requirements" for security in China.

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<sup>210</sup> Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline*, 174-85.

<sup>211</sup> "Press Release Issued by the Department of State on June 19, 1939," Document 472, 893.102 Tientsin/385, in *FRUS, Japan, 1931-1941*.

The British government could have adopted a more aggressive stance in the preliminary negotiation if Roosevelt had been more proactive. On top of this, Roosevelt did not consult the British government before making the announcement, which complicated the negotiation process. Nevertheless, the British government was generally content with the American action because it evaluated the likelihood of American intervention as very low from the beginning. In August, unwilling to make further concessions on the other two issues, Britain decided to break up the negotiation.<sup>212</sup>

The Foreign Office feared that Britain and Japan might be embroiled in a series of retaliatory actions if the negotiation failed. Active American support was expected to be unlikely in that case, as the risk of entrapment was too high for the United States. Luckily, such an eventuality never materialized due to the diplomatic isolation of Japan at the time. Border conflicts with the Soviet Union since August 20 had tied the hands of the Japanese military. In addition, the nonaggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany (Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact) on August 23 frustrated the Japanese expectation of an alliance with Germany. Japan was forced to bide its time because no major great power was ready to join hands with it. Meanwhile, the German invasion of Poland in September and the ensuing world war drew the attention of America and Britain to the European continent. Consequently, except for the ongoing war in China, the Asia-Pacific region experienced the calm before the storm for the time being.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936–41*, 79–82; Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline*, 193–204.

<sup>213</sup> David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 61–62; Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline*, 198–99.

### 3.4. The Aftermath of the Fall of France, 1940–41: The Axis Japan and the Emergence of the American Leadership in the Asia-Pacific

In Europe, the apparent stalemate on the Western Front abruptly ended with the German invasion of Norway and the Battle of France, which lasted from April to June 1940. The German onslaught on the joint Allied forces resulted in a swift and decisive victory for the Axis powers. Upsetting the widespread contemporary expectation that the battles of the Western Front would be WWI-style attrition warfare around the open fields of Belgium and northern France, the German army commanded by innovative generals such as Erich von Manstein and Heinz Guderian encircled the advancing Allied troops with an armored flanking maneuver through the Ardennes Forest, catching the enemies completely off-guard.<sup>214</sup> With its main forces dissolved in besieged Dunkirk and the rest of the forces demoralized, the French government surrendered on June 22 after Paris fell to the advancing German army.<sup>215</sup> In Europe, the fall of France led to the creation of the puppet regime of Vichy France and German domination of continental Western Europe until the success of the Allied landings in Normandy four years later. Meanwhile, in the Asia-Pacific region, this early and unexpected knockout of France from the world war led to rapid political developments. They undermined the likelihood of compromise in the region and the foundation of the British diplomatic strategy of dividing regional issues, which had been maintained for two

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<sup>214</sup> “It was ridiculous to think that the French could be conquered by 120 tanks,” Winston Churchill remarked about the Battle of France. Margaret Lamb and Nicholas Tarling, *From Versailles to Pearl Harbor: The Origins of the Second World War in Europe and Asia* (Palgrave, 2001), 161–63.

<sup>215</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*, 75–77.

decades in managing Anglo-American relations.

The fall of France significantly changed the strategic assessments of every great power with stakes in the Asia-Pacific region. Most of all, it was a crucial turning point in Japan's assessment of its regional status. The German victory was a welcome gift for the Japanese government caught up in the enduring war in China. The cabinet led by Prime Minister and Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai saw this event as a possible breakthrough, as the regional influences of the Western powers were significantly reduced by their sudden fall from grace. With their home country in shambles, the colonies of France and the Netherlands in Southeast Asia could not stand up to Japanese pressure to guarantee raw materials. At the same time, as the mainland was embroiled in an existential struggle against Nazi Germany in the European theater, British colonial possessions in the Far East also needed additional help from the outside to hold back potential Japanese advances toward Southeast Asia. Moreover, although Japanese military strategists regarded the Soviet Union as a critical obstacle to Japan's free hand in the region, their diplomatic efforts for a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, which eventually bore fruit in April 1941, assuaged the fear of a potential two-front war with the Soviet Union in the north and Western colonial powers in the south. Consequently, after the fall of France, the central question for Japanese policymakers was how to prevent the United States, the only great power capable of thwarting Japan's ambitions, from intervening against Japanese attempts at building a regional order in the Asia-Pacific region under Japanese dominance.<sup>216</sup> Wary of possible Anglo-American reprisals, Prime Minister Yonai pursued a cautious approach

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<sup>216</sup> Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*, 99-103.

not to provoke the United States. However, invigorated by resounding German victories at the time, young military officers ardently urged closer cooperation with the Axis powers. Yonai succumbed to their demands, stepping down in July 1940. His successor, Prince Fumimaro Konoe, began looking for enhanced partnership with Nazi Germany and exclusive sphere of influence in the region, which soon evolved into the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.<sup>217</sup>

The American reaction to France's surrender was the opposite of the Japanese one. Germany's sudden triumph changed America's perception of the ongoing world war and the international situation in general. Even though the British Expeditionary Force, which had been deployed to continental Europe at the outbreak of the world war, was successfully evacuated from Dunkirk, the future of Britain appeared uncertain in light of the impending German invasion. The rising concern that the United States was now vulnerable to the threat of Nazi Germany as the master of Western Europe galvanized the United States into a national sense of emergency. For example, American public opinion dramatically shifted toward the support of the Allied powers after the French government surrendered. Before the Battle of France, national survey results showed that fewer than 30% of the respondents favored aiding Britain and France. Even in the heat of the battle, the public opinion moved little. According to a survey performed in late May of 1940, only 33.6% came out for the support of the Allied powers. However, the ratio of supporters had skyrocketed since the fall of France. Throughout the following year, around two-thirds of the respondents preferred helping Allied war efforts to maintaining neutrality. The ratio of supporters exceeded 70% in March and

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<sup>217</sup> Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period* (Praeger, 2002), 139–40.

October.<sup>218</sup> Therefore, already before the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, the popular sentiment heavily tilted in favor of the Allied powers.

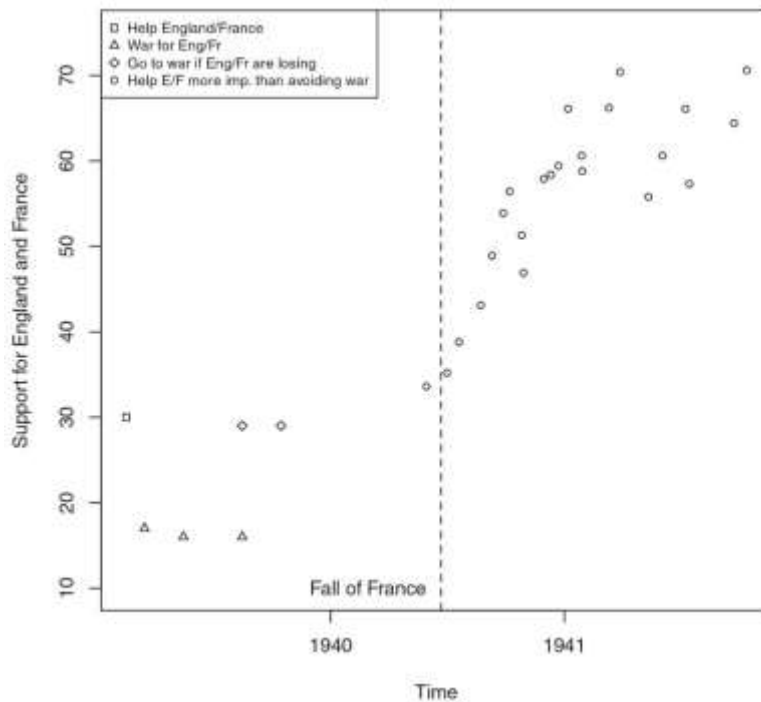


Figure 3.1. Public Opinion on Aiding England and France<sup>219</sup>

Franklin Roosevelt did not fail to capitalize on this nationwide awakening to the ongoing global crisis. Before the fall of France, he already requested extra defense budgets of four billion dollars, which Congress approved readily. Moreover, Congress voted for another five-billion-dollar appropriation in the wake of the French surrender. The aggregate defense budget of the American government in 1940 amounted to 10.5 billion dollars, which was larger than the entire

<sup>218</sup> Bear F. Braumoeller, *The Great Powers and the International System: Systemic Theory in Empirical Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 143–44.

<sup>219</sup> Braumoeller, *The Great Powers and the International System: Systemic Theory in Empirical Perspective*, 144.

federal budget of the last year. Using these new funds for military use, Roosevelt intended to pursue the dual policy of reinforcing the decrepit American military and simultaneously providing Britain with war supplies.<sup>220</sup> He appointed the National Defense Advisory Commission to assess and address the American military's necessities, which many isolationists and pacifists suspected to be more than just an office to boost domestic military preparedness.<sup>221</sup> Whether or not Roosevelt was eventually willing to direct the United States toward the path of war, he had become more assertive in voicing support for the Allied powers following the fall of France. When he addressed the graduating class at the University of Virginia on June 10, he outlined to the general public his dual policy regarding the ongoing world war.

In our American unity, we will pursue two obvious and simultaneous courses: we will extend to the opponents of force the material resources of this nation, and at the same time we will harness and speed up the use of those resources in order that we ourselves in the Americas may have equipment and training equal to the task of any emergency and every defense. All roads leading to the accomplishment of these objectives must be kept clear of obstructions. We will not slow down or detour. Signs and signals call for speed—full speed ahead.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> According to David Reynolds, "Roosevelt used the German onslaught in the West to intensify his dual policy of American rearmament and material aid to Britain and France." Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*, 78–79.

<sup>221</sup> Howard Temperley, *Britain and America since Independence* (Palgrave, 2002), 138–40; Benjamin D. Rhodes, *United States Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918–1941: The Golden Age of American Diplomatic and Military Complacency* (Praeger, 2001), 169–71.

<sup>222</sup> "Address at University of Virginia," The American Presidency Project, Accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-university-virginia>.



In sum, after the fall of France, the United States gradually took off its mantle of isolationism in terms of both rhetoric and action. While the European theater was the focal point of American commitment to the Allied cause, the growing Anglo-American partnership eventually changed their interaction patterns in the Asia-Pacific region.

Meanwhile, Britain had its share of political developments, all of which served to create a more conflictual international atmosphere in the Asia-Pacific region. France's quick defeat raised doubts about Britain's willingness to hold on without a great power ally. However, Winston Churchill, inaugurated as the new prime minister in May 1940 after the German invasion of Norway, wanted to dispel those doubts. Churchill was far more bellicose and obstinate than Chamberlain. Despite the his country's uncertain future, Churchill pledged that Britain "shall listen to no peace proposals emanating from Hitler" and would continue to fight the Axis powers until "wronged and enslaved states and peoples have been liberated and until civilisation is free from the nightmare of Nazism."<sup>223</sup> Because it became clear that Britain alone could not defeat Nazism, acquiring support from the United States emerged as an essential goal of British foreign policy, whether such help was realistic or not. At least to boost morale, Churchill argued that America would aid Britain, portraying an overly optimistic image of the United States.<sup>224</sup> As the necessity of Anglo-American cooperation was dogmatized after the fall of France, Britain was no longer capable of doing anything that would anger the United States.

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<sup>223</sup> David. Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 298-303. Quoted in Lamb and Tarling, *From Versailles to Pearl Harbor: The Origins of the Second World War in Europe and Asia*, 163.

<sup>224</sup> David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 106-07.

Therefore, as Japan increasingly approached Nazi Germany and, in turn, Britain regarded Japan as a country in league with the Axis powers, the feasibility of any diplomatic settlement between Britain and Japan vaporized.

Initially, in the summer of 1940, the British attitude toward Japan was even more cautious than usual because of continuous hardships in the European theater. Germany's aerial invasion of the British Isles from July to October, the Battle of Britain, threatened the country's very survival. Japan began the Burma Road Crisis in mid-June to exploit Britain's revealed weaknesses. Robert Craigie, the British Ambassador to Japan, received a "friendly communication" from the Japanese Foreign Ministry to close the road connecting the British colony of Burma to the Yunnan province of China. This long and rugged road, so-called the Burma Road, had been the principal route for transporting war materials to China since the outbreak of the war. From December 1939 to May 1940, the value of the goods transported into China exceeded two million pounds.<sup>225</sup>

Sharply divided in opinion, British policymakers intensely debated whether Japan was willing to wage war with Britain over this issue and whether the United States would provide support in that event. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, regarded the Japanese demand as just a bluff. In contrast, Craigie emphasized the unlikelihood of American military aid and the necessity of avoiding confrontation with Japan.<sup>226</sup> One step further, he proposed a comprehensive diplomatic settlement in the Asia-Pacific region to finish the ongoing war in China, ensure Japanese neutrality in World War II, and assisting Japan in its postwar

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<sup>225</sup> "The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State," Document 51, 893.24/757: Telegram, in *FRUS, 1940, Volume IV*.

<sup>226</sup> Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941*, 140-44.

reconstruction.<sup>227</sup> Ultimately, the American government's position was the most critical. Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador to America, inquired about the American opinion of the Japanese demand, the possibility of military aid, and the joint mediation of the Sino-Japanese War. Roosevelt and Hull kept their ambiguous stances. They believed that aggressive measures would likely spark an unwanted crisis in the Asia-Pacific region. However, appeasement would embolden Japanese expansionists.<sup>228</sup> Thus, without offering support, Hull urged Britain to make a concession only under *force majeure*. In addition, regarding Craigie's proposal, he neither openly opposed it nor offered American collaboration.<sup>229</sup>

Left alone, in July, Britain promised Japanese Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita the closure of the Burma Road for three months, blocking the transport of weapons and war materials such as oil and trucks.<sup>230</sup> When reporters asked Hull about his opinion on the agreement, he commented that it would "constitute unwarranted interpositions of obstacles to world trade."<sup>231</sup> Enraged at his comments, Chamberlain fulminated against the American government's all-show-and-no-go attitude.

I confess that when I read Cordell Hull's comments on our decision to close the Burmah [sic] Road for 3 months my blood boiled. [...] Before replying to the Japs we pointed out to the

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<sup>227</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 113-14.

<sup>228</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 239.

<sup>229</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 114.

<sup>230</sup> Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941*, 150.

<sup>231</sup> "Statement by the Secretary of State, July 16, 1940," Document 176, in Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941*, 562.

U.S.A. Govt. we could not afford to take on Japan in addition to Germany and Italy alone, but that if they would be prepared to stand by us we would take the risk. Their answer was that they understood our difficulties but we *must not count on any material help from them* [emphasis in original].<sup>232</sup>

The Burma Road Crisis showed that Anglo-American cooperation still had a long way to go. Nevertheless, after this episode of discord, Britain went through a turning point in Anglo-American relations in the Asia-Pacific region, reversing the direction of the country's regional strategy regarding Japanese expansionism from lukewarm co-optation or cautious resistance to resolute containment.

The reason behind this reversal was the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940, through which Japan joined the Axis powers. Japan's main purpose was to deter an expected American intervention in the Asia-Pacific region and receive German assistance in the war in case of a deterrence failure. Japanese policymakers believed in the possibility of victory in a regional Anglo-Japanese war but not in a war against the United States and Britain simultaneously. Observing that the mantle of isolationism was breaking apart in the United States, Japanese policymakers concluded that it had to prepare for the latter situation.<sup>233</sup> They failed to consider the ramifications of the Tripartite Pact on the dynamics of Anglo-American relations. Although Japan did not yet declare war on Britain, Japan made itself Britain's core, as opposed to the periphery, problem by joining the Axis powers. Since Britain regarded them as implacable enemies to be destroyed at all

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<sup>232</sup> "Letter from Neville Chamberlain to Ida," 20 July 1940, Neville Chamberlain Papers NC18/1/1166. Quoted in Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941*, 151.

<sup>233</sup> Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*, 114-15.

costs, subduing Japan emerged as a strategic objective, to which future Anglo-American cooperation was directed even at the expense of its great power status in the Asia-Pacific region.

Furthermore, also in October, the destroyers-for-bases deal solved the long question of whether the United States could become a reliable partner capable of providing military aid to Britain. Churchill broached the subject of importing American destroyers as soon as he became prime minister in May, but Roosevelt paid little attention to his plea. Churchill tried for months to persuade the United States about the importance of destroyers in protecting convoys from German submarines. Eventually, in August, Roosevelt changed his mind. He decided to provide Britain with 50 “obsolete” and “useless” destroyers after witnessing its successful defense against the German Luftwaffe, which convinced Roosevelt that Britain would prevail in the Battle of Britain and keep fighting the Axis powers. To forestall domestic opposition, he wanted to gain air and naval basing rights in eight British territories in the Americas. Britain was initially willing to offer only civil aviation landing rights as payment, but accepted the American terms without much haggling because of its dire situation.<sup>234</sup> The deal did not bring immediate military benefits for the Royal Navy, but the political signal of Anglo-American military cooperation was evident. Other instances of military cooperation between the two countries soon followed, from Anglo-American staff talks in the same month to the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941.

Indeed, Britain could not afford to initiate a war with Japan in the Asia-Pacific region in the middle of the ongoing one in Europe. Thus, Britain chose to impose economic sanctions to contain Japan. The

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<sup>234</sup> Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*, 83–87.

British government established the Far Eastern Committee (FEC) to have oversight of the economic sanctions on Japan throughout the British Commonwealth in October 1940. The objective of the FEC was to prevent Japan from economically assisting other Axis powers by maritime transport and to weaken Japanese military capability through trade restrictions, especially those of raw materials its war machine heavily depended on. At the same time, the FEC tried not to provoke Japan too much by completely severing trade ties, as drastic measures were likely to force Japan to invade British colonies or the Dutch East Indies out of desperation. The Sub-Committee on Economic Matters of the FEC designated Japan as a dangerous destination and regulated general trade levels, restricted exports of some strategic materials (e.g., tin and rubber from Malaya), and embargoed the sales of key commodities (e.g., jute from India and nickel from Canada).<sup>235</sup>

The effectiveness of economic sanctions relied heavily on the coordination of exporting countries, and coordinating sanctions with the United States was a grueling task for Britain. For example, to its chagrin, despite having a far better economy, the United States was far less active than Britain in preemptively purchasing resources in the market before the Axis powers got their hands on them. The number of products placed under export licenses in the United States also fell behind.<sup>236</sup> Until the summer of 1941, American tardiness in enforcing economic sanctions frequently frustrated Britain. For example, in November 1940, the Foreign Office proposed banning non-Japanese oil tankers from transporting oil to Japan, which would have depleted the Japanese oil reserve by one million tons annually. However, the

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<sup>235</sup> Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War: A Study of British Policy in East Asia, 1937-1941*, 292-94.

<sup>236</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 133-35.

American government temporized for months and implemented it belatedly in March 1941 after Britain unilaterally did so.<sup>237</sup> As a result, even as Anglo-American cooperation progressed in general, the issue of economic sanctions still created some Anglo-American discord.

Discord between the United States and Britain during the 1930s is hardly a news story, but the difference in the pattern is noteworthy. Throughout the decade, Anglo-American discord emerged primarily due to inaction. Both countries knew that joint responses to Japanese expansionism were required to keep it at bay, but in many cases, little happened because they could not agree on what to do. On the other hand, in the events above, Britain tried to lead by example, whereas the United States failed to follow British action adroitly. Britain's new tendency to put far less weight on a prearranged bilateral agreement before action unavoidably entailed the loss of British policy autonomy in the Asia-Pacific region. When Halifax notified the Foreign Office in July 1941 about the American plan for a complete economic embargo on Japan without warning in case of the Japanese occupation of southern Indochina, Anthony Eden feared the worst.

While we are reluctant to discourage the United States from strong measures provided they are prepared to face the consequences, we feel that such an embargo imposed at one blow [...] would face the Japanese with only two alternatives, either to reverse their policy completely or to exert maximum pressure southwards [even at the risk of war].<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 150-51.

<sup>238</sup> PRO FO371/27881 F6101/12/23 Eden to Halifax 13 July 1941 tel.4016. Quoted in Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 163.

Eden nevertheless concluded that Britain had to follow the American initiative, even though he believed the embargo did not serve British national interests.<sup>239</sup> Regional leadership was the price of Anglo-American cooperation. However, on the whole, transferring it to the United States was not a negative development. Britain could not afford it, given its hardships in Europe and the absence of an official Anglo-American military alliance. Thus, it was sensible to let the United States take the lead, which was now the only country capable of constraining further Japanese expansion.<sup>240</sup> Britain's best course of action was to implement any decision by the American government promptly and thoroughly, until the fateful moment of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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<sup>239</sup> Best, *Britain, Japan, and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*, 162-65.

<sup>240</sup> Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, 231.



## Chapter 4. Conclusion

This study analyzed the diplomatic frictions between the United States and Britain in the interwar period in order to figure out their impacts on the course of the Anglo-American power transition. For this purpose, this study looked into two major issues at the time that negatively affected their diplomatic relations. Chapter 2 observed the controversies caused in the middle of the negotiations for naval arms limitation around the 1920s, Chapter 3 examined the conundrum of Anglo-American policy coordination about Japanese expansionism in the 1930s.

The analysis of these two issues indicated that a high level of strategic alignment between the United States and Britain did not make it easy to resolve more specific problems in detail. Beliefs about the values of disarmament and fiscal austerity commonly existed among American and British policymakers, but they failed to expedite the negotiation process for naval arms limitation. The American presidents involved in this process—Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover—all had such beliefs in principle, but Wilson and Coolidge pursued naval buildup in response to perceived British intransigence. Also, in the case of the Simon-Stimson affair, the United States and Britain made similar judgments about the Manchurian Crisis and faced identical domestic constraints impeding any effective intervention in the crisis. Still, the seemingly trivial matter of respecting American diplomatic initiative aggravated Anglo-American relations.

On top of this, at least in the short run, a growing level of strategic alignment did not facilitate cooperation. This counterintuitive situation occurred in the late 1930s, when Britain was increasingly wary of

Japanese encroachments on the Chinese mainland. The prospect of any satisfactory diplomatic settlement with Japan decreased in line with the Imperial Japanese Army's march south. As a result, the British perception of the regional situation became increasingly analogous to that of the United States. But the American policymakers were much slower to become willing to offer a helping hand to Britain, generating additional source of diplomatic frictions and frustration from the British side. Without the groundbreaking historical event of the German Blitzkrieg, the eventual settlement of the diplomatic frictions since the 1930s and the establishment of the "special relationship" between the United States and Britain would have taken much longer.

Solely from the standpoint of examining whether power transition was peaceful in general, the diplomatic frictions in the interwar period may seem trivial. Despite all the fuss between the two countries at the time, the United States and Britain successfully negotiated their naval affairs at the end of the 1920s and formed a common front against Japan on the eve of the Pacific War. Specific problems in the detail did not change the overall course of history. However, it should be also considered that increased strategic alignment is sometimes proposed as a way to defuse a specific problem that may incur a devastating confrontation in the period of power transition.

For example, one of the reasons behind America's engagement policy toward China was to avoid conflict related to China's "special concerns" about its territorial integrity, such as the future of Taiwan, which already flared up in 1995 (the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis). In response to China's economic rise, the Clinton Administration tried to ensure a peaceful relationship with China by integrating it into the America-led global economic system and combining the prosperity of

the two countries together.<sup>241</sup> As China tilted more and more toward heavy-handed authoritarianism and anti-American diplomatic attitude, contrary to the engagement policy proponents' initial expectations, skepticism has grown among scholars as to whether the project of liberalizing China and turning the country into America's friend was promising in the first place.<sup>242</sup> The experiences of the United States and Britain analyzed in this study add another food for thought to this academic discussion. Even if China had eventually aligned itself with the United States, the pending issues between them could have been just as acute.

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<sup>241</sup> James C. Hsiung, "The U.S. "All-Out Engagement" China Policy and Its Implications for Beijing and Taipei," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 26, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>242</sup> Aaron Friedberg, "Engagement with China Was Always a Long Shot," *Foreign Policy* (2022).

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## 국문 초록

미국이 영국의 국력을 초월하고 중국에는 영국이 누려왔던 국제체제에서의 최강국 지위를 차지했음에도 양국간에 비교적 평화로운 관계가 유지되어왔다는 점은 다양한 이론적 관점에서 많은 학자들의 학문적 관심을 이끌어냈다. 그러나 기존의 연구들은 여러 요인들이 어떻게 종합적 차원에서 양국간의 전쟁이나 심각한 군사적 충돌을 예방하게 되었는지에 초점을 맞추었다는 한계를 보였다. 미국과 영국 사이에서의 1920년대의 해군력 제한을 위한 협상과정과 1930년대의 일본의 팽창주의에 대한 정책조정을 둘러싼 논란에 대한 분석을 통하여 본 논문은 전간기 영미 세력전이 와중의 외교적 마찰을 들여다보고 해당 사건의 양면적 측면에 대한 한층 높은 수준의 이해를 시도하였다. 본 논문의 연구 결과에 따르면 일반적 차원에서의 영국과 미국 간 전략적 제휴가 점점 심화되는 와중에서도 양국의 세부적인 외교적 마찰은 계속 잔존하였다. 이러한 마찰이 평화적 세력전이의 진행을 치명적으로 방해하지는 않았지만, 전략적 제휴의 향상이 국가들 사이의 개별적인 논쟁점을 해결하는 데는 효과적인 수단이 될 수 없음을 시사한다.

**주요어:** 영미관계, 전간기, 자유주의적 국제질서, 세력전이론

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