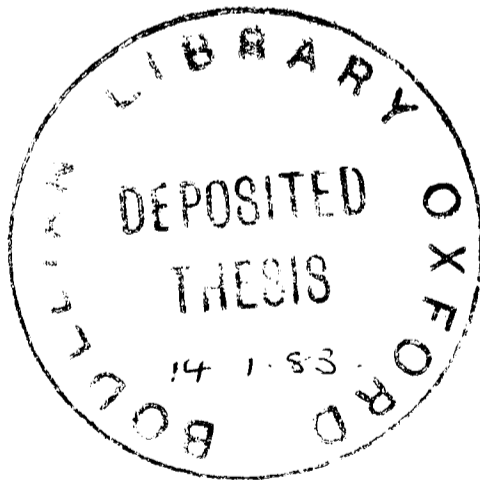


BRITAIN, AMERICA AND THE SEARCH
FOR
COMPREHENSIVE NAVAL LIMITATION
1927-1936

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the regulation of naval competition between the major naval powers, and especially between Britain and the United States, under the régime of the Washington and London naval treaties, and the attempts to extend and maintain naval limitation in the period 1927 to 1936 in the face of Anglo-American rivalry and, later, the threats from Japan and Germany.

Based upon British and American public and private sources, it traces the interaction of the two nations, and their relationships with other naval powers, from 1927 - when Anglo-American relations reached a nadir after the failed 'Coolidge Conference' in Geneva and the subsequent abortive 'Anglo-French Compromise' - to 1936, when naval limitation ended but by which time Anglo-American antipathy was fading in the face of mutual external threats. The naval conferences of Geneva (1927) and London (1927 and 1935-36), and the parallel naval side of the long-running Disarmament Conference and its Preparatory Commission are reviewed with their attendant preparations in London and Washington, and the influence of domestic factors - public opinion, financial stringency, and personal and political prejudice - are examined. The central role of the naval balance in the relationship between the interwar Great Powers is stressed, and the importance of the naval negotiations to both governments and public opinion echoes our contemporary concern for the preservation and management of the strategic balance.

While the Washington-London naval system failed to halt naval rivalry, it achieved the unforeseen consequences of permitting Britain to gracefully concede naval supremacy to the United States, under the guise of conceding 'parity', with a minimum of friction or indeed recognition of the fact. Additionally, it demonstrated by its breakdown the vulnerability of an arms limitation system that was neither geographically nor technically comprehensive.

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In Britain, the Public Records Office is the inescapable and near-inexhaustible repository of the Cabinet, Admiralty and Foreign Office papers upon which so much of this thesis is based. Permission to quote from such documents is appreciated. Among collections of private papers consulted, pride of place must go to Churchill College, Cambridge, where the Bridgeman and Hankey papers are essential to the study of this period. The use of these papers, and those of Lord Vansittart for which permission was graciously granted by Lady Vansittart, is similarly greatly appreciated. Scattered among a mass of irrelevant material, a number of nuggets were

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION: SEA POWER IN THE 1920s

The scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow on 21st June, 1919, was an appropriate symbol of the ending of an era: the age of European control of the oceans. For five centuries, sea power had been exercised almost exclusively by European nations, as the instrument and the expression of their mercantile, and later their territorial, expansion throughout the globe. The cataclysm of the First World War, however, not only destroyed the old order of Europe, but it ended the global hegemony of the European powers. In 1914 significant naval forces were operated by six European Great powers; only two non-European nations, Japan and the United States, operated naval forces, and these were on a small scale.¹ Moreover of the European Great Powers, one possessed a navy whose size and strategic position gave her a leverage on world politics without precedent. Great Britain controlled the four maritime routes of access from continental Europe to the outer world: the English Channel, the North Sea, the Straits of Gibraltar, and the Suez Canal. In the pre-war world of European hegemony, control of these four narrow seas amounted to control of the globe. The Pax Britannica could be maintained without any need to establish local superiority afloat in the several theatres of European imperialism. Ultimately, British control was secure in any quarter of the world as long as Britain controlled the jugular veins of Europe with an overwhelming preponderance of naval force: and as long as no important centre of naval power existed outside Europe.²

1. See Appendix.

2. Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History (New York, 1890), pp.31-2; Mahan, The Interest of America in International Conditions (New York, 1910), p.61; Harold and Margaret Sprout, Toward a New Order of the Sea (Princeton, N.J., 1940), pp.16-17.

The predominance of Britain in the greater, extra-European world was, however, already beginning to crumble before 1914. The root of her malaise, her relative industrial decline, was as plainly evident then as it is today. During the three decades preceding the war, Britain's position as an industrial power shrank rapidly as other nations overtook her in the industries and technologies upon which military strength ultimately and unavoidably was founded. In Europe, Britain's industrial production fell behind Germany's by the early 1890s; but more significantly, the United States was increasing its economic might to a level far beyond the capabilities of the old world with its limited resources. By 1913, Britain was producing only one-quarter of America's steel output; the United States' share of the world's manufacturing capacity was greater than that of Britain and Germany combined.¹

These new industrial powers built navies for a variety of reasons. In the United States, construction of a modern fleet began in the 1880s in the interests of prestige. American navalism acquired momentum through Mahan's teaching of the importance of sea power in continental defence, through the brief burst of imperialism which propelled the United States into the Spanish-American war, and through the expansion of American foreign trade as her burgeoning industry sought new markets. By 1913, with an American fleet equal in size to Germany's, British naval power in the Western Hemisphere was a thing of the past. Although Britain maintained naval facilities at Halifax, Bermuda and Jamaica, which had in the past, in 1812-15, successfully been used to blockade the United States, the function of these was now to support a small cruiser squadron with a double function to act as a colonial police

1. Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery (London, 1976), pp.185-191; D.C.M. Platt, 'Economic Factors in British Policy during the "New Imperialism"', Past and Present No.39 (1968), p.137; P.Mathias, The First Industrial Nation. An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1914 (London, 1969), pp.399-400.

force or 'fire brigade' for the West Indies, and to support British trade in South America by 'showing the flag' and enhancing British prestige. In the years immediately before the outbreak of war even this force was withdrawn to home waters in the face of the threat of German naval construction. In the words of a contemporary observer,¹

Because of that formidable and threatening Armada across the North Sea, we have almost abandoned the waters of the Outer Oceans. We are in the position of Imperial Rome when the Barbarians were thundering at the frontiers. The ominous word has gone forth. We have called home the Legions...

The preoccupation with Germany was a product of a radical change in Britain's foreign policy which had come about in 1905; the abandonment of strategic isolation from the continent, a policy which had been pursued continuously since 1815. It also reflected the Anglo-German naval rivalry which the two countries pursued from around 1902. This building race escalated to a point where it became so costly, and so obsessive to British policymakers, that it led to the abandonment of the then cardinal doctrine of British naval policy, the Two-Power Standard. In 1909 the Admiralty came to realize that building against the combined strength of the two next largest naval powers, Germany and the United States, was impossible financially and in terms of shipbuilding capacity; and that it made no foreign policy sense to assume a Germano-American alliance in any case. The abandonment of the Two-Power Standard did, however, finally signify acceptance of the end of British sea control outside Europe.²

In the absence of a British naval capacity outside European waters, one way of ensuring the integrity of the Empire and the security

1. Editorial in The Standard, 29 May, 1912.

2. P.M. Kennedy, Rise and Fall, pp.205-237.

of its communication was by alliance with extra-European powers. Britain pursued this policy both by cultivating friendly relations with the United States, and by a formal alliance with Japan.¹

The Anglo-Japanese alliance of 30 January, 1902, marked the end of British 'splendid isolation'. Although the alliance was expressly confined to the Far East, it greatly strengthened Britain's strategic position elsewhere by removing the need for Britain to compete in Far Eastern waters with the growing strength of France, Russia and Japan herself. Maritime predominance in the Far East would be difficult for Britain to maintain in the future; but even to attempt to do so would be folly in view of greater challenges in Europe. Britain's maritime commerce in East Asia was hardly of the same order of priority as the security of her national home territory. From Japan's viewpoint the alliance offered her protection against the potential emergence of Franco-Russian predominance in East Asia, the recognition of her status as a regional Great Power, and the possibility of gradually inheriting the formidable if insecure British position in the region.

When European war broke out in 1914, the Japanese alliance showed its value. Japan quickly eliminated the strong German presence in China and the Pacific, and assumed responsibility for the security of British supplies in the Indian as well as the Pacific Oceans. Nevertheless the alliance was less than entirely satisfactory for Britain. Japanese expansionary ambitions were evident, and it was unlikely that these would be satisfied with the geographically limited German Pacific possessions.

1. This dual policy is described in Sir Max Beloff, Imperial Sunset, i, Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921 (London, 1969); Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905 (Norwood, Mass., 1941) and G.W. Monger, The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907 (London, 1963). The reasons for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance are examined in I.H. Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (London, 1966) and L.K. Young, British Policy in China, 1895-1902 (Oxford, 1970).

In China, Japanese trade threatened to displace British, and Japan's 'Twenty-One Demands' of 1915 amounted to a claim to hegemony over much of China. Meanwhile the Dominions viewed Japan with considerable suspicion: Australia and New Zealand out of fear of her expansionism, Canada out of concern that the alliance would result in the deterioration of Imperial relations with the United States. Moreover the Pacific colonies, like the United States, were hostile to Asian immigration - including Japanese immigration; and this hostility was widely known and resented in Japan. To many in Britain and her Empire, the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War both demonstrated that it was Japan herself, and not Russia or a European coalition, that posed a threat to the British position in the Far East; and that position could only be secure as long as the alliance lasted.¹

The relationship with the United States was equally complex. During the Venezuelan confrontation of 1895-6, when America possessed only three modern battleships, Britain could not send units from home waters to confront the US Navy: conditions in Europe were too critical.² Thereafter Britain pursued a policy of outright appeasement, deferring to American wishes over the projected isthmian canal, the boundary between Alaska and Canada, and elsewhere. The principal factor in Anglo-American relations was, however, the old problem of Canada. The future of Canada seemed to both Canadians and Americans to be inextricably linked to that of the United States, and the indefensible 3,000-mile common frontier made the Dominion hostage to its neighbour in the event of an Anglo-American conflict. Canada was placed in the position of acting as an intermediary between the two powers, arguing

1. A.J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow (London, 1961-70), i, pp.236-7.

2. P.M. Kennedy, Rise and Fall, pp.211-12.

the American case in Whitehall for a common policy on Japanese immigration, and opposing the Anglo-Japanese alliance until a clause was inserted exempting Britain from involvement in an American-Japanese war. The defeat at the polls of Premier Wilfred Laurier in 1911 saw, however, the decline for the time being of Canadian anti-Imperial feeling, and the defeat of American attempts to bring Canada into a North American free trade area.¹

One area of Anglo-American relations which was of considerable portent for the future was the legal question of neutral rights - freedom of the seas to neutral traders without interference from belligerents. Britain, dependent in large part upon the weapon of blockade, had traditionally relied upon the ability of her navy to intercept and restrict neutral shipping in time of war, while the United States - except for the period of the blockade of the Confederate States in the Civil War - had advocated neutral rights. At the London Conference on maritime law in the winter of 1908-9, the British conceded much legal ground to the Americans, apparently upon the assumption that neutrality was increasingly likely for Britain in the event of a European war.² However, the Declaration of the London Conference, which would have limited 'contraband' liable to confiscation by a belligerent almost entirely to finished armaments, was rejected by the House of Lords when it was presented for ratification in 1911.³ The controversy was to be renewed with far greater urgency when war broke out in Europe in 1914.

The First World War was a period of great frustration for the

1. Beloff, Imperial Sunset, i, pp.169-70.

2. Beloff, ibid., p.171.

3. Hansard, House of Lords, 5th Series, Vol.7, cols.432-476 (9 March, 1911).

Royal Navy, and of great opportunity for the navies of Japan and the United States. The naval war against Germany was fought in two principal theatres: the North Sea and the Atlantic. The North Sea saw the confrontation at long distance of the world's greatest battle fleets, the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet in Scotland awaiting the emergence from its lairs at Kiel and Heligoland of the German High Seas Fleet. Although this stand-off amounted to victory for the British, with their control of the exits from the North Sea unchallenged, it was unsatisfactory in the eyes both of the British public and Admiralty, who hoped for a new Trafalgar, a decisive engagement between the two fleets which would place British naval primacy beyond challenge in Europe and facilitate amphibious operations against Germany to shorten the war. When a battle did take place, off Jutland in June 1916, the eagerly-expected annihilation of the enemy did not take place; the inconclusive battle saw heavy British losses, and the Grand Fleet returned to its stations to continue the policy, psychologically unsatisfactory but strategically sound, of distant blockade. Shaken by the apparent defeat suffered by the Royal Navy, the British Cabinet went as far as to consider whether Japan should be asked to send battleships to British waters to supplement the Grand Fleet.¹

In the other major theatre, the North Atlantic, a very different type of naval warfare took place. With her maritime commerce halted by the blockade of the North Sea, Germany turned to submarine warfare against Allied commerce. Such a strategy brought the Allies within measurable distance of defeat; against the submarine, the superior force of the Royal Navy's battle fleets were useless. The U-boats were only countered by the employment on a massive scale of destroyers and escort vessels, which could only be supplied in sufficient numbers by the United States.

1. Roger Dingman, Power in the Pacific (Chicago, Ill., 1976), pp.24-5.

The Royal Navy had entered the World War looking forward eagerly to the chance of facilitating victory by destroying the enemy's fleet in a single, decisive battle. It ended the war in 1918 fighting a defensive war, in a manner unimaginable four years earlier: trying to keep the sea lanes open, to contain the enemy, and buy time while the land war wore him down. It had needed American assistance to fight the first Battle of the Atlantic; and it had seriously considered after Jutland whether Japanese help was also needed. The Royal Navy therefore felt in 1918 a sense of great disappointment.¹ It had succeeded in performing its role in the war's grand strategy, in containing the German Navy, blockading her coast, and maintaining British commerce. But it had failed at each attempt to deliver a decisive stroke against the enemy - at Jutland and in the Dardanelles campaign. Moreover, although the Royal Navy's principal opponent was vanquished and, at Scapa Flow, utterly destroyed, Britain's command of the seas was in question as never before. The threat was two-fold: qualitative, as new weapons, types of ships and techniques had evolved to challenge the superiority of the big gun; and quantitatively, as the numerical strength of the British fleet was approached by the forces of her principal naval allies, the United States and Japan, whose expansion during the war years was proportionately far greater than the wartime growth of the Royal Navy.

1. See the letter of Adm. Sir David (later Earl) Beatty to 'a friend', 12 Nov., 1918, in W.S. Chalmers, The Life and Letters of David Earl Beatty (London, 1941), p.341.

The revolution in naval technology that threatened the Royal Navy's maritime supremacy was one whose origins dated from before 1914, but the proof of the new weapons was only possible in the conditions of World War.¹ The submarine, the mine and the torpedo had all been tested in the nineteenth century; the aircraft in the early years of the twentieth. Nevertheless, in 1914 the big gun was still regarded as the principal and decisive instrument in naval combat. The new weapons had had little impact in recent naval wars - the Sino-Japanese, the Italo-Turkish, and in particular the Russo-Japanese war. The Battle of Tsushima which decided the outcome of the latter conflict represented the type of combat for which the Royal Navy was prepared. The battle was simply a gunnery duel, and the Japanese victory was a result of gunnery superior in its range, accuracy, rate of fire, and calibre of projectile. The use of torpedo-boats was peripheral to the battle; the submarine, the mine and of course the aircraft were not utilized. The 'lessons' of Tsushima, in accordance with the legendary habit of armed forces of preparing to fight the previous war, were translated into the all-big-gun battleship, the Dreadnought, which preoccupied the British and German navies in the pre-war years. The investment in such craft gave a very poor return in the European conflict; but fortunately for Britain the over-estimation of the value of the capital ship was an error common to all navies, allied or not. Each naval power surviving after 1918 was still constructing capital ships in an effort to produce an invulnerable, all-dominating battle fleet. To the extent that the new weapons were incorporated into post-World War naval strategy, they were used as supplements to, not as substitutes for, the battle fleet. Destroyer flotillas and later aircraft carriers were used to screen, reconnoitre

1. For the evolution of the new weapons, see Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, 1, pp.328-341.

for and supplement the firepower of the big ships, but the idea of a concentrated 'mass' of power as the deciding factor of a naval struggle was still prevalent.¹

It became accepted during and after the war, however, that the value of such a fleet might lie as much in its deterrent value, both in peace and war, as in its employment in battle. This was reflected in a growing realization that combat between the two battle fleets would only be joined if both sides wished it - a most improbable event, likely to be dependent on both fleets' commanders believing that they had sufficiently superior forces or tactical advantages to be able to gamble all on a single engagement. Without such a coincidence of circumstances, it was likely that fleets would not join battle directly. The protection of the weaker fleet from the stronger in the security of its home base could now be guaranteed by the new defensive technology - mines, submarines and aircraft; so that the weaker fleet could now select the time and place of battle as much as the stronger fleet. With a stalemate of indeterminate length therefore likely, as in the North Sea in 1914-18, the focus of naval operations moved instead to maritime trade: attempts to enforce or prevent blockades.

The pattern of postwar naval building, and therefore of naval rivalry, reflected this new reality. It was necessary to build vessels both for fleet use, and for detached service for trade and colonial defence. The number of vessels required for the fleet, though, logically was limited to the number of vessels required to deter the potential enemy's fleet. The number of vessels required for trade and colonial defence depended upon a much wider range of factors, which included not only the opposing forces but also the many variables which influenced the vulnerability of

1. Rear Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Sea Power in the Modern World (London, 1934), pp.80-99.

a country's sea trade.

In anti-trade warfare, the attacking forces, however weak, had enormous advantages. The wartime experience of both cruiser and submarine attacks on trade had demonstrated that a large number of defending vessels were required to hunt down a single attacking vessel. It was therefore desirable to have a defending force many times the size of the attacking opponent; the extent of this superiority necessary for security was a matter of opinion (or of the availability of finance). It also varied with the length of the trade routes which were to be protected, the amount of shipping travelling along them, the use or not of a convoy system, the number of bases available, and the length of coastline or the number of colonies vulnerable to raids. Attempts to calculate the forces required for security according to complicated formulae incorporating these factors were a common feature of interwar naval planning and negotiations. The politicians and Admirals concerned might equally well have asked, 'How long is a piece of string?'

Attempts by naval powers to limit the forces used in trade warfare therefore faced much greater problems than those involved in limiting the forces used in the 'strategic deterrent forces' or battle fleets. Weapons which to one power were defensive were potentially offensive when seen through the eyes of its rivals. This was true not only of cruisers, but of submarines: these craft were frequently vaunted by smaller powers as the great equalizers of modern warfare, which enabled the smallest maritime power to defend itself against the greatest battle fleet. If effective defence of trade required superior even greatly superior, forces, then each nation seeking security for its maritime trade would be locked into an ever-increasing spiral of competitive building, which could not be halted without one or more of such powers accepting the vulnerability of its sea trade. This was

in marked contrast with the limitation of battle fleets, where 'security' could be achieved by the establishment of rough parity or sufficiency of forces.

In order later to assess the debates on naval limitations, it will be helpful first to examine in detail the types of ship which were being discussed, and their uses and usefulness.

The capital ship, the heart and focus of each fleet, had changed enormously in a little over ten years. Before the construction of the Dreadnought in 1908, a displacement of around 10,000 tons was universally recognized as the most efficient size for a balance of offensive power and defensive armour. This grew to the 41,200 tons of the battle cruiser, Hood, laid down in 1916 after the battle of Jutland and completed for the Royal Navy in 1920. The 12-inch gun, which had been considered adequate for many years as the principal armament of the battleship, grew to the 16-inch guns of the largest post-Jutland designs. At the same time that the size of the battleship's main armament was increasing, the need for defensive protection against enemy projectiles increased. This took two forms: increased thickness of armour plate, and increased engine-power for speed. As these two were mutually counteracting, two types of capital ships had evolved in the immediate post-war years, the more heavily armoured battleship and the faster and more manoeuvrable battle cruiser. The two types would typically have a similar offensive armament, but while the average speed of a typical battleship in 1918 was around 21 knots, the more powerful battle cruisers averaged 31 knots. The battle cruiser design was much criticized after Jutland, where its great vulnerability, in spite of its speed, against battleships was demonstrated; but this was perhaps an unfair criticism of a weapon in that particular case, had been badly used.¹ The primary duty of a

1. Marder, op.cit., v, pp.311-12.

well-employed battle cruiser was to act as a kind of super scouting ship, fast and powerful enough to push through a reconnaissance in the face of an enemy's armoured cruisers. They were not intended to be engaged against other capital ships, a mistake to be repeated in a later war when the Hood was sunk by the slower but more heavily armoured Bismarck.

The slower battleships faced new threats after the First World War which added to their need for protection.¹ The threat of aerial bombardment led to increases in the use of armour plating along the decks and top surfaces of battleships, which had been less vulnerable to gunfire; and the threat of torpedo attack led to the development of 'bulges', outer hulls added along and below the water-lines, which were intended to absorb the explosions of torpedo warheads. In post-war debates about ship design and size, the need for such additional defensive protection was frequently advanced as a principal reason for increasing, or at least not decreasing, the displacement of battleships; but this argument appears fallacious in the light of the growth of the capital ship before the emergence of the torpedo and bomb threats, from around 10,000 tons to the 28,000 tons of the war period. Such growth was due solely to the desire for a ship at once more powerful than, and impregnable to the artillery of, an opponent. Competition could not end so long as any power made it a matter of policy to possess larger ships than others. At the end of the war, this competition appeared likely to continue.

The changes in design of the capital ship were matched by equally great changes in the next most powerful category of ship, the cruiser. The roles of this type of vessel were two-fold. First, cruisers operated in squadrons with the main battle fleet, acting as scouts, decoys, and protective screens against torpedo-carrying vessels on behalf of the main force of capital ships. Secondly, cruisers were the principal surface

1. Richmond, op.cit., pp.80-86.

vessels engaged in the guerre de course of trade warfare and the implementation of blockades. In these latter roles, cruisers would be detached from the main fleet, often operating in small squadrons from overseas bases.

The experience of the First World War had demonstrated that the threats to commerce were of two quite distinct kinds. The use of German cruisers as surface raiders in 1914/15 had caused havoc with British communications in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and had required the use of obsolete, 'second-class' battleships to supplement the cruiser squadrons which hunted down the raiders. If cruiser warfare on the 1914/15 pattern was to be repeated, it was likely that each power would attempt to employ cruisers more powerful than those of its potential adversary. If that was so, competition in the size, armour and armament of cruisers was likely to follow the same pattern as the development of battleships had taken. Large, well-armed and armoured cruisers were similarly required for duty with the main fleet if they were likely to see combat with other armoured ships.

On the other hand, the submarine warfare in the Atlantic had shown that much smaller, unarmoured ships could be employed for anti-submarine and convoy escort duties; while smaller vessels were equally effective for blockades and offensive operations against enemy trade, and for colonial use as 'police' vessels.

There emerged, therefore, a division among cruiser designs between vessels designed to fulfil a cruiser's basic duties economically, with a light hull and armament; and vessels designed for combat with other cruisers, which were subject to the same competitive pressures for increased size as were the battleships they showed every sign of growing towards. At the end of the First World War the great majority of cruisers in service with each major navy displaced between 3,000 and 5,000 tons

armed with six-inch guns;¹ but Britain had already laid down, and the United States was preparing to emulate, ships twice that size. The first of the British Hawkins class, laid down in 1917, displaced 9,750 tons and carried seven 7.5-inch guns. The size of these ships was dictated entirely by the objective of operating 'bigger and better' ships than vessels of the same class operated by other powers. The argument was to be advanced, principally by the United States in international negotiation, that a large displacement was necessary for vessels to operate over very long ranges, particularly for those powers lacking in overseas bases; and that larger ships were needed for the comfort of seamen (and companies of marines) serving in tropical climates. Both arguments had little appeal to Britain, which operated 3,000-ton cruisers successfully over very long ranges and in all climates.

After cruisers, the most controversial class of naval vessel in the interwar period was the submarine. In the war, submarines had been used almost exclusively for offensive purposes: that is, they had proved themselves to be inefficient or inadequate at 'defensive' tasks such as trade protection and countering seaborne invasion or blockade.² For each of these tasks, surface or air craft had proved more efficient. On the other hand, the submarine had proved itself to be a powerful instrument for attack upon merchant shipping, proving - for both Germany in the Atlantic and for Britain in the Baltic - to be a very effective resort

1. The six-inch gun, the standard main armament of cruisers and secondary armament of capital ships, may seem a small weapon compared to the twelve, fourteen and even sixteen-inch calibre guns used on battleships; but it would be considered a very large piece of field artillery on land (equivalent to the modern 155m. howitzer). A six-inch projectile weighed about 100 lbs., and could be fired for ten miles or so. The eight-inch gun, used on some larger cruisers, fired a 250-lb. projectile over 14 miles, and had greater penetrative power than the six-inch gun. The six-inch gun, however, could be carried on a vessel in greater quantity and could be fired much more rapidly.

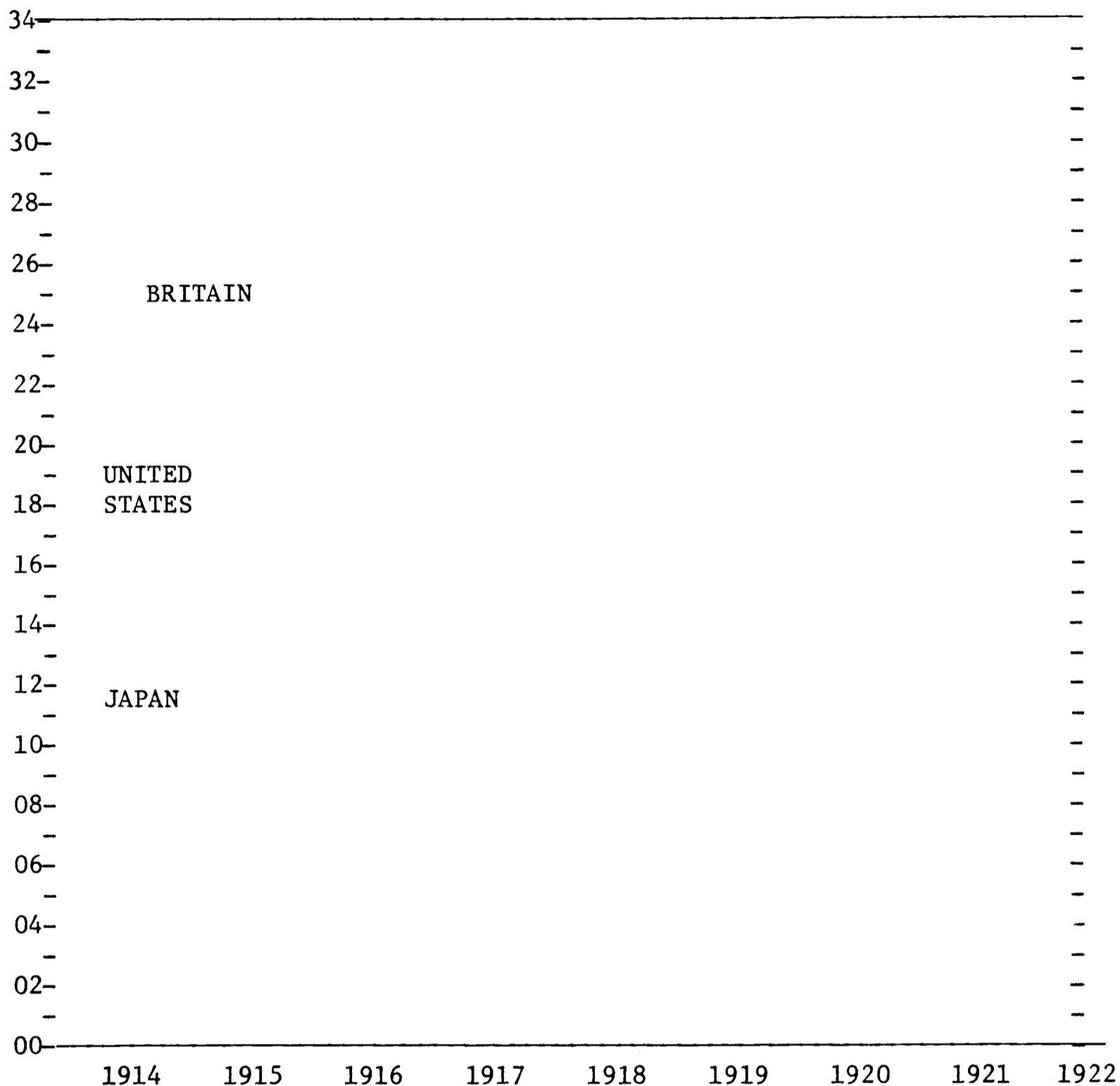
2. Richmond, op.cit., pp.177-8.

for a nation whose surface forces had been banished from a stretch of sea by superior enemy forces. A First World War submarine for use in European waters typically displaced between 500 and 1,000 tons on the surface, or 50% more when submerged; at the end of the war vessels of up to 2,000 tons were built, the extra size allowing useful operation at trans-atlantic range. The submerged performance of submarines was not good: the British 'L' class, for example, built in large numbers between 1917 and 1924, displacing 800 tons, could manage only $10\frac{1}{2}$ knots submerged, and could not remain under-water for longer than twelve hours, or much less if it was running at full submerged speed. Nevertheless, the ability to approach a target undetected made the submarine a very effective weapon, and its value had to be measured not only in terms of its own destructive power, but in terms of the quantity of its opponents it tied down. This took many forms: the booms, nets and mines needed to secure bases and anchorages; the need for a convoy system, with its attendant disruption of trade, in order to reduce losses; and of course, the large number of destroyers, cruisers and other escort vessels required both by merchant shipping and by the battle fleets for defence against the submarine threat. These costs, and the one-sided usefulness of the submarine, made this weapon the particular target of those who in the inter-war period sought to 'humanize' war. Britain and America, the two powers possessing both the largest naval and merchant fleets and the most influential disarmament lobbies, both pressed for the abolition of the submarine by international agreement. Those naval powers to whom the use of the submarine was much more advantageous, not unnaturally opposed the idea.

The use of destroyers, and other flotilla or torpedo craft, reflected the new developments in naval technology. The destroyer was, when introduced at the turn of the century, a small vessel of a few hundred tons displacement, designed expressly to destroy even smaller torpedo boats,

steam launches of perhaps 80 tons, which had posed a new menace to capital ships of the fleet in the last years of the nineteenth century. The small size of torpedo boats combined with their high speed and use in large numbers in flotillas made it relatively easy for them to pass through the range of fire of capital ships and attack from close quarters. To counter this threat, vessels equally fast and manoeuvrable were required, but able to mount guns capable of destroying the torpedo-boats. These torpedo-boat-destroyers evolved in step with the development of the torpedo-boat; and the introduction into general service of the submarine - effectively a more expensive and less vulnerable type of torpedo-boat - made it necessary greatly to increase the numbers of the destroyer flotilla. The experience of the Great War showed that the value of destroyer flotillas was equally great in defending merchant shipping - especially in convoys - as in protecting the battle fleet. The need to defend convoys over long distances produced, as with the submarine, a requirement that destroyers be large enough to be self-sustaining and self-contained at transoceanic range. By the end of the war, the typical destroyer in British or American service averaged 1,250 tons displacement, with four-inch guns as well as torpedo tubes and smaller guns. Each flotilla might have a 'leader' vessel, either a light cruiser or a purpose-designed vessel, a Flotilla Leader of perhaps 1,500 to 1,800 tons displacement, effectively a large destroyer with command and control facilities. Destroyers could, therefore, operate independently of the main fleet and saw service in larger numbers than any other type of vessel in the inter-war period.

Figure 1: Naval expenditure as a percentage of total national expenditure.



Taken from R. Dingman, Power in the Pacific, p.162.

Note: Due to the use of votes of credit which did not differentiate between army and navy expenditures, the percentage for Britain cannot be computed for the war years. Data of comparable accuracy is not available for Japan for 1922.

The First World War saw not only changes in the technology of naval power, but also changes in its balance. During the war, the main thrust of Britain's effort had been on land, the army fighting in Flanders. The main expenditure of the United States and Japan during those years - even during the period of the American Expeditionary Force in France - was upon naval expansion. The difference in the emphasis upon naval expenditure in each country is illustrated in Figure 1 (p.18).

The build-up of the American navy had been slow before the outbreak of war in Europe.¹ After forty years of neglect, the launch of the Dreadnought and the arms race between Great Britain and Germany caused the Roosevelt and Taft administrations to turn to updating the US Navy, but only eight modern dreadnoughts had been built before the outbreak of war in 1914.²

The danger that the war might endanger security led to Congress passing the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916.³ This authorized a three-year building programme aimed at constructing ten battleships, six battle cruisers, ten 'scout' cruisers, fifty destroyers, sixty-seven submarines and thirteen miscellaneous vessels to be laid down before 1 July 1919. The United States was firmly set upon the course of seeking what Woodrow Wilson called 'A Navy impregnable to the Navies of the World'. During 1917 and 1918 the implementation of this plan was held up while shipyards met the most urgent wartime requirement, as many merchant vessels and destroyers as possible for the European convoys; but in 1919 the General

1. George T. Davis, A Navy Second to None (New York, 1940); Harold and Margaret Sprout, The Rise of American Naval Power (Princeton, N.J., 1933), passim.

2. Davis, ibid., pp.169-70.

3. Davis, ibid., pp.213-223; Sprouts, The Rise of American Naval Power, pp.229-339; Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1946), pp.326-336.

Board of the Navy, the senior deliberative body of the American Navy,¹ urged not only that the 1916 programme be completed, but that it could be doubled.² The completion of such a building programme would have increased the United States Navy to nearly 800 combat ships of post-Jutland design, compared with the 200 or so ships in service at the time of the armistice, when another 200 - mostly destroyers - were under construction.

The policy of the General Board was the outcome of an intense debate within the US Navy in 1918. While the United States was still at war, the following basic naval doctrine had been accepted:

The Navy of the United States shall be a self-contained organization designed to exercise, in the Pacific, a commanding superiority of power, and in the Atlantic, a defensive superiority of naval power against all potential enemies who may seek to expand their spheres of interest over, or to impose their sovereignty upon, any portion of the American continent or Islands contiguous thereto, not now in their (possession), or who may unjustly interfere with our international rights or our trade expansion.³

This statement assumed the need to prepare for a new war, or that the Great War was not a war to end all wars, as was popularly believed. The most likely theatre for such a war was the Pacific. This was prepared, however, when the shape of the postwar world was in doubt. The 'most likely dangerous combination' against the United States, the document estimated, would be an alliance of Germany, Austria and Japan; and it went on to consider what steps should be taken to secure the Western

1. See pp.28-30.

2. US Congress, 65th Congress, 3rd Session, House of Representatives, Naval Affairs Committee, Hearings on the Naval Estimates for 1919, p.495. Office of Naval Intelligence, Memorandum on Building Programmes, 1916-30, MS. Department of State (henceforth D/S) 500.A 15a3/662¹/₂, 31 January, 1930. (National Archives)

3. US Navy, London Headquarters, Planning Section, Memorandum No.21, U.S. Naval Building Policy, May 1918: US National Archives, Record Group 45, US Navy Department, Secretary's Files, File TD; quoted in D. Trask, Captains and Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-18 (Columbia, Mo., 1972), pp.286-9.

Hemisphere should Germany win in Western Europe as it had done in Eastern Europe. The loyalty of Japan as an ally was strongly questioned.

Later in 1918, though, the outcome of the war became clear, and post-war planning had to be based upon the likelihood that the only naval powers capable of challenging the United States would be Britain and Japan. This was reflected in a rapid growth of suspicion of America's British ally. In November, 1918, after the Armistice, the US Navy's Planning Section - based, due to wartime exigencies, in London - presumed that 'additions to the British fleet must be made with reference to the United States as a possible enemy'; therefore, conversely, 'any additions made the U.S. Fleet must be made with reference to Great Britain as a potential enemy'.¹

The relative strengths of the two countries' navies were nowhere near being in balance at the end of the war. The US Navy was still a very junior partner in the Allied naval war effort, its vessels detached to British ports and operating under British overall command. The challenge to British superiority lay in the vessels currently under construction or authorized, rather than those already in service. The estimated strengths of the Allied powers' battle fleets before and after the completion of building programmes then planned, without reference to the US General Board's desire to double the American programme, is shown in Table 2 (p.22):² from these figures it can be seen that by 1923- 24, the United States would be approaching the British battle fleet in numerical strength, even without the suggested doubling of the American 1916 programme. Indeed, she would surpass the British fleet if she fully implemented the 1916 building programmes and Britain failed to reply.

1. Planning Section, Memorandum No.67 '(U.S.) Building Program', 21 Nov. 1918; quoted by Trask from the papers of Adm. William S. Benson, U.S.N., Library of Congress.

2. Tables from A. Marder, op.cit., v, pp.247-8.

TABLE 2

A. Vessels in service, 1 January, 1919:

	Battleships	Battlecruisers	Total
Great Britain	33	9	42
United States	16	-	16
Japan	7	7	14
France	7	-	7
Italy	5	-	5

B. Estimated strengths, 1923-4.

(a) Vessels in service.

(b) Vessels in service and under construction if programmes already authorized, January 1919, were fully implemented -

		Battleships	Battlecruisers	Total
Great Britain	(a)	24	6	30
	(b)	33	10	43
United States	(a)	21	6	27
	(b)	29	6	35
Japan	(a)	8	8	16
	(b)	11	11	22
France	(a)	12	-	12
	(b)	16	-	16
Italy	(a)	4	-	4
	(b)	6	-	6

The numbers do not give the full picture, however. The American vessels would be both more modern and carry a greater armament, thus giving a margin of superiority to the United States battle fleet. The maintenance of British superiority would require either new British construction, or that the United States should settle voluntarily for second place. The former required expenditure which Britain, exhausted by the war, could ill afford. The second required a major turnabout in American public opinion.

Debates on naval policy in the United States after the war focused upon three separate questions. The first was whether the United States should pursue naval equality with, or superiority over, Britain - the drive for 'a navy second to none', which the future Republican Secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby, advocated. The second was whether to pursue naval limitation, either as a means of achieving American equality or superiority of arms at low cost, or as a means of averting the need for the 'navy second to none'. The third, running through the other two questions and inextricably linked with the League of Nations question, was the role of the post-war United States Navy: as a guarantor of American national interests or as a tool of collective security through the League. Almost any combination of views on these three questions could be held without logical contradiction; and in Congress, within each party, all combinations were represented. A majority in both parties, however, favoured for various reasons the continuation of naval building in the short term, and for the long term were not prepared to let America stay number two in the ranking of world sea power.¹

Before the 1920 election, the Democratic Administration was led by a President and a Secretary of the Navy who supported the League, but believed that it needed a large US Navy as an instrument for enforcing collective security. Wilson was equivocal about arms limitation: he included it in his 'Fourteen Points' address of January 1918, as part of his plan for the post-war world, but he did not press for it while he was preoccupied with getting America into the League and with retaining

1. Daniels, The Wilson Era, pp.451-84; Herbert Hoover, The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson (New York and London, 1958), pp.279-293; and Edmund Ions, Woodrow Wilson, The Politics of Peace and War (London, 1972), give good brief accounts of the League fight in Congress. The debates over collective security versus isolationism are assessed in a collection of outstanding articles edited by Alexander de Conde, Isolation and Security (Durham, N.C., 1957), and in Roland N. Stromberg, 'The Riddle of Collective Security, 1916-20' in G.L. Anderson (ed.), Ideals and Conflicts: Studies in Twentieth-Century Diplomacy (Lawrence, Kan., 1959).

the support of the 'Big Navy' elements in Congress. Until the Administration changed in Washington, arms limitation simply did not appear on the American political agenda: there were simply too many other pressing matters.

Awareness of the new American navalism caused British suspicion of the United States to grow reciprocally with American fears of British intentions. In October 1918, just before the Armistice, Sir Eric Geddes, the British First Lord of the Admiralty, travelled to Washington for talks on naval matters.¹ Suspicion of the United States at this time turned out to have been correct in one sense: President Wilson was already negotiating secretly with the Central Powers, but had not yet informed the Allies. Certainly mutual Anglo-American distrust in naval affairs conditioned the Washington talks, but there was as yet no sign that America was regarded by Britain as a potential enemy. Geddes aimed to persuade the United States to increase her naval building, and to reduce her construction of merchant ships. In return, Britain would increase her own merchant shipbuilding, and reduce her naval construction. The ostensible reason for this was the urgent need for more convoy escort vessels as long as the war continued; the real reason was that America was building far more merchant tonnage than Great Britain, although she had a far smaller pre-war merchant fleet. The British feared a post-war American attempt to dominate seagoing trade. They did not yet fear post-war American naval strength.

The speed of the German collapse in October 1918 took all the combatants' navies by surprise. After the Armistice there was more time to contemplate the new naval balance. Sir William Wiseman, a principal British delegate to the Peace Conference, wrote in preparation for the Versailles assembly:

1. Trask, op.cit., pp.303-312; Dingman, op.cit., pp.43-4.

Against this improvement [caused by the war] in [American] attitudes [to Britain], we must put the growing consciousness that after the war there will only be two great powers left - Great Britain and the United States. Which is going to be the greater, politically and commercially? In that constantly recurring thought may be found much of the Anglo-American friction that arises.¹

At the same time, speculation about American intentions, and growing apprehension about US sea power began to appear in the British press.² Observers could hardly be blamed for comparing the naval balance between the two countries with the pre-war naval race. By July 1919, Colonel House, President Wilson's special emissary in Europe, reported gloomily 'the relations of the two countries [the United States and Britain] are beginning to assume the same character as that of England and Germany before the war'.³

The third major naval power, Japan, had benefitted from her participation in the war in a similar manner to the United States.⁴ Japan had been able to build up the size and proficiency of her navy without sustaining losses to enemy action; and she had taken over, under the

1. Sir William Wiseman, undated memorandum, 'The Attitude of the United States and President Wilson towards the Peace Conference', Balfour Papers, FO 800/212.

2. See, for example, the articles by Archibald Hurd in the Fortnightly Review, 'The U.S. and Sea Power, A Challenge' (Vol.111, Feb. 1919, p.175); 'Shall we suffer eclipse by sea? American progress' (Vol.113, June, 1920, p.849); 'Naval Supremacy: Great Britain or the U.S.?' (Vol.114, Dec. 1920, p.916). British press comments were usually cited and commented upon in the New York Times: these are listed in the New York Times Index under 'England, Navy'; 'Sea Power', etc.

3. Charles Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (New York, 1928), iv, p.495.

4. Dingman, op.cit., pp.48-63, Captain Malcolm D. Kennedy, The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-1935 (Manchester, 1969), pp.35-47.

Anglo-Japanese alliance, the sole responsibility for Allied naval control in East Asia. Japanese relations with Britain were excellent; but she, like Britain, saw the United States as a potential threat after the war. If all the ships of the 1916 US programme were completed, the Pacific naval balance would tip very strongly against Japan. If Japan was to retain naval superiority in the North-West Pacific, she would have to respond to American building in kind. The objective of naval planners during the war had been the 'eight-eight' fleet: eight battleships and eight battle cruisers. Now it looked as though a battle fleet of sixteen vessels might not be enough to assure control of Japanese home waters; even more construction might be necessary.

The desire of the Imperial Navy to expand, however, had to be offset against a number of other factors. The Army was politically more powerful in 1918-19, largely because it was embroiled in the Siberian intervention following the Bolshevik Revolution, and because the primary requirement of Japanese strategy was to ensure access to the markets and raw materials of the mainland: seaborne trade was relatively unimportant. Moreover, a political crisis occurred in September, 1918, as rice shortages led to food riots throughout the Japanese home islands, and a new government under Prime Minister Hara Kei came to power committed to relieving social problems rather than augmenting the nation's defences. Under these volatile circumstances, the Navy chose a tactical withdrawal from their expansion plans. They agreed with the Army and the Treasury to withhold their building programmes for two years. In return, they secured a commitment from the Cabinet to increased spending on the Navy to secure 'the perfection of national defence' after the fiscal year 1920. By that time, it was believed, the Peace Conference and the actions of Britain and American would have determined the nature of the new international balance, so that Japan could with greater certainty assess her defensive needs.

During the Versailles Peace Conference, there took place in Paris a protracted series of negotiations between British and American naval representatives which have been well documented by Professor Marder and others.¹ After a series of fruitless meetings between the political and professorial heads of the two countries' navies,² a preliminary agreement was drawn up between Colonel House and Lord Robert Cecil, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who was to play a prominent role throughout the naval negotiations of the next several years. The United States was ready, Colonel House declared, to 'abandon or modify' the 1918 programme suggested by the General Board of the US Navy - the proposed doubling of the 1916 programme - once a Peace Treaty was signed and the League of Nations in being. Moreover the United States would consider postponing work on the ships of the 1916 programme until after the Peace Treaty, in order to allow time to discuss future naval relationships. In return the British agreed to abandon their opposition to the Monroe Doctrine being excluded from the scope of the League of Nations Covenant. Most importantly, the two nations agreed that 'some arrangement as to the relative strengths of the fleets ought to be arrived at'. This was the first tentative commitment by the two major naval powers to the idea of determining naval relationships by agreement rather than by competition.

Limitation of armaments by international agreement was enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles, but under its terms only Germany was made to disarm. This was done 'In order to render possible the initiation of

1. See, for example, Warner P. Schilling, Admirals and Foreign Policy, 1913-1919 (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1953), pp.230-293. Professor Marder's analysis is in Vol.V of From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, pp.230-247.

2. These were, for the United States, Josephus Daniels (Secretary of the Navy) and Admiral William Benson (Chief of Naval Operations); and for Britain, Walter Long (First Lord of the Admiralty) and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Rosslyn Wemyss (First Sea Lord).

a general limitation of the armaments of all nations'¹ which would be facilitated by the League of Nations. German objections to the unilateral imposition of disarmament were met with the statement that the measures were 'the first steps toward that general reduction and limitation of armaments which they seek to bring about as one of the most fruitful preventives of war, and which it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to promote'.² In Article 8 of the Covenant of the League (Part One of the Peace Treaty), the League's Council was obligated to formulate plans for reduction 'to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations'.

Action to implement these good intentions had to await the outcome of the political battle in the United States over ratification of the Peace Treaty and American membership of the League of Nations. This continued until resolved by the outcome of the Presidential election of November, 1920, preoccupying the attention of all elements of the US government and legislature, and preventing any progress on arms limitation for eighteen months.

At this point, it may be convenient to examine the procedures by which peacetime naval policy was formulated in Britain and the United States, in order later to follow the development of naval limitation policies in those countries.

The central body governing US naval policy was the General Board

1. Preamble, Part V of the Versailles Treaty.

2. Allied reply to the German observations on the Peace Terms of 16 June, 1919: Cmd. 153, 1919.

of the Navy, a committee of senior Admirals, serving and retired, averaging a dozen in all, and chaired by their most senior officer.

Its membership was partly comprised of officers appointed by the Secretary of the Navy, and partly of officers holding membership ex-officio by virtue of their positions as Chief of Naval Operations, President of the Naval War College, Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence, or Commandant of the Marine Corps.¹ The General Board had no executive power, which was vested exclusively in the Secretary of the Navy and Chief of Naval Operations. These two men, respectively a civilian Cabinet member appointed by the President on political grounds and the professional head of the navy appointed on grounds of seniority and ability, had to carry out naval policy and answer to the President for it. Nevertheless the General Board was the deliberative body which advised the Secretary of the Navy on most aspects of naval policy. As the Secretary of the Navy was usually appointed for his political acceptability rather than for any expertise or ability in naval affairs, the Board's advice was found to be indispensable by each successive Secretary, not only for practical reasons but also politically when defending a policy in public.

Among the General Board's responsibilities were the determination of the Navy's requirements and negotiating positions for international conferences; and the preparation of the navy's requests for construction funds, worked out usually two years before the start of the projected construction and forwarded to the Bureau of the Budget for consideration with each year's naval budget. The Bureau of the Budget was responsible for the preparation of the budget for all departments of the federal government, and the Navy Department's requests for funds were therefore

1. In 1932 the regulations were changed to exclude ex-officio members of the Board; in practice, the holders of the four offices were in any case appointed to the Board by the Secretary of the Navy.

subject first to the control of that office. In the Bureau of the Budget, consequently, a lengthy bargaining process took place between the Treasury on one side and the spending agencies vying for funds on the other.

The Bureau's completed draft budget was then sent to Congress, where it was subject to Committee hearings and further modification. Each house of Congress had a Naval Affairs Committee which sought with differing degrees of determination at various times to control naval policy by budgetary control. The balance of power within the American political system during the period of this study was such, however, that the major outside political influence on naval policy came not from Congress, but from the President - although a President's actions could be constrained or determined by the needs of his political relationships with Congress. The President had powers enough to exercise complete directions of naval policy if he chose. As Commander-in-Chief, he could give orders to the Chief of Naval Operations or the General Board. He appointed the Secretary of the Navy, an office held throughout the interwar period by weak and colourless individuals who carried out the President's wishes faithfully while lacking the political independence and authority to shape policy or to stand up to the President. The President was ultimately responsible for shaping the budget, which Congress could alter significantly only with great difficulty. Lastly, he had the power to appeal directly to public opinion on naval as on other issues, and could claim a national mandate in a way which no other actor in the political process could match.

With these powers, it was natural that the political direction of naval policy should come from the White House. When a President gave a clear lead, as did Herbert Hoover (for arms limitation) or Franklin Roosevelt (for rearmament), his policy prevailed in the absence of resolute and unanimous congressional opposition. On the other hand,

Presidents were inevitably concerned with a myriad of complex issues, and a President might not devote a high priority to, or have a clearly defined, naval policy. Where this was the case, as with most naval questions not directly affecting an administration's overall economic or foreign-policy strategy, the General Board usually played the dominant role in formulating the policy to be pursued.

In Britain the deliberative body which corresponded to the US Navy's General Board was the Board of Admiralty. There were major differences, though, in the composition, functions and political influence of the two boards.

The Board of Admiralty was comprised of representatives of the Government, the civil service and the Navy. It was chaired by the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Cabinet Minister equivalent to the US Secretary of the Navy, but who unlike his American equivalent actually sat upon the policy-making board. Other politically-appointed members were the holders of the two junior naval posts in the government of the day, the Civil Lord and the Parliamentary and Financial Secretary of the Admiralty.¹ The civil service was represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Admiralty, the senior permanent civilian administrator;² while the remainder of the Board was made up of active naval officers, the 'Sea Lords'. These were usually six in number: the Chief of the Naval Staff, more commonly known as the First Sea Lord, was the professional head of the Navy; his Deputy and the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff also sat upon the Board, along with three other Sea Lords, each of whom had supervisory responsibility

1. The Parliamentary and Financial Secretary only became a full member of the Board in 1929. The Civil Lord would customarily answer for the Admiralty to whichever House of Parliament the First Lord did not belong, i.e. he was a Peer if the First Lord was a member of the House of Commons, and vice-versa.

2. After 1921.

for certain departments within the Admiralty.¹ The Board met weekly, with additional meetings from time to time as required, much as the British Cabinet did - another difference from the General Board, which met irregularly when summoned by the Secretary of the Navy to tender advice on a particular question. Also like the British Cabinet, the Board of Admiralty had a number of sub-committees, standing and ad hoc, of which the most important was the Financial. Chaired by the Parliamentary and Financial Secretary, this moulded the budget requirements of each department into a single draft request, known as the Sketch Estimates.² These were reviewed by the full Board, which customarily made alterations in accordance with the changes of government policy, and the finished sketch estimates were then forwarded to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in December of each year. Negotiation with the Treasury would then have to be completed in time for Parliament to receive the Estimates in February, in time for approval by the start of the financial year on 1st April, whereupon the preparation of the next year's requests would begin again in the Admiralty.

Parliament had no specialized committees dealing with naval affairs, and the majority of the Government of the day made it impossible for the Estimates to be significantly altered once they had been submitted. Nevertheless, British governments were keenly sensitive to Parliamentary criticism, and naval questions, being intimately bound up in Britain with so much of her Imperial and foreign policy, came in for more scrutiny and debate than most issues. Moreover both Houses of Parliament contained

1. The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff did not sit upon the Board between 1929 and 1935.

2. The Admiralty's Estimates were presented in the form of separate Votes for the services of different departments of the Navy; E.G. Medical Establishments and Services (Vote 3); the Fleet Air Arm (Vote 4); Education and Training (Vote 5); etc. The most important Vote for the purpose of this narrative was Vote 8, for 'Shipbuilding, Repairs, Maintenance, Etc.', which covered both the Naval Dockyards (Vote 8(i), personnel; 8(ii), Material) and contract work on construction (Vote 8(iii)).

a number of former naval officers, and the presence of the country's most distinguished former naval commanders made the House of Lords in particular a most formidable body for the review of naval affairs. Nevertheless, although Parliament could be a significant influence, through the mechanism of pressure upon the Government of the day, it could not control navy policy. This rested firmly with the Cabinet, and in particular with a joint standing committee of Cabinet ministers and service chiefs, the Committee of Imperial Defence. The CID had the status of a Cabinet Committee, and at no time in the inter-war period was a CID recommendation overturned by the full Cabinet. It owed this powerful position to the fact that it included all the ministers with a departmental interest in defence policy: the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign, Colonial, Dominions and India Secretaries, the Service Ministers and, as chairman and arbiter, the Prime Minister. Prime Ministerial interventions were few, though usually decisive. Inevitably, because of the need to see naval policy in the context of the much broader totality of governmental policy, Prime Ministerial rulings tended to act against the narrow, strictly professional desires of the Admiralty. Specifically, the Prime Minister had to offset the wishes of the Navy against the desire of the Treasury, the Foreign Office, and much of the British public for arms limitation.

The pressures favouring naval limitations in Britain had different origins from those acting on the US Government; but they were equally great. During the war, the Army had had the first claim upon defence resources. Now it appeared that the Army's new-found predominance was likely to continue: it was heavily committed in Ireland, Russia, the Middle East, and in the occupation of Germany. The Navy was expensive

but had little to do. Not only was the Army able to claim a much larger slice of the defence cake, but that cake itself was steadily diminishing. From 1918 Britain had had universal manhood suffrage: the new, poorer members of the electorate were voters whose first priority was for spending on social services, not on defence. The domestic spending departments - Health, Education and Works - thereby stood to gain at the expense of the Admiralty, which they did steadily under the Lloyd George coalition.¹

A third influence on the British naval budget, more immediate in its impact upon spending than either the army or domestic spending, was of course the Treasury. In August 1919, Lloyd George ensured that the Treasury would have ultimate control over each spending department restored to it when he established the Cabinet Finance Committee. In war-time, the Treasury had existed largely to find the money necessary to conduct the war, not to ration it. From now on, the Treasury would not only ration expenditure, but would directly determine what spending was permissible in which areas. Retrenchment was the order of the day, with Britain needing to service the enormous debts - mostly to America - that had piled up during the war.

At its first meeting, the Cabinet Finance Committee proposed that the Navy's estimates be cut almost to pre-war levels: a maximum of £60 millions, compared to a net expenditure of £334 millions in the financial year 1918-19.² The size of the fleet should be reduced, the Committee

1. For useful accounts of the internal politics of the Lloyd George coalition, 1918-22, see R. Rhodes James, Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900-1939 (London, 1970), pp.95-134; Kenneth Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Stage Army: The Coalition Liberals, 1918-22' in A.J.P. Taylor, ed., Lloyd George: Twelve Essays (London, 1971); D. McCormick, The Mask of Merlin (London, 1963), Chs. 12,15,17; and M. Kinnear, The Fall of Lloyd George: The Political Crisis of 1922 (London, 1973).

For Lloyd George's role in the formulation of post-war naval policy see J.K. McDonald, 'Lord George and the Search for a Postwar Naval Policy' in A.J.P. Taylor, ed., op.cit.

2. CAB 27/71, War Cabinet Finance Committee Meeting, 11 Aug., 1919.

ruled, to 'at least the pre-war standard'. In order to avert the danger of granting naval superiority to the Americans, the government should actively pursue arms limitation with the US government; but even if no limitation proved possible, the budgetary limitation must be adhered to. Lastly, the Navy - and other services - should assume when making their cuts that no war was likely for the next ten years. The Committee's recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet, and Lord Gray, the former Foreign Secretary, was sent at his own request to Washington to discuss the possibilities of limitation.

This was not the decisive blow against the Royal Navy which it appeared at first sight to be. In the first place the Finance Committee's ruling that the 'pre-war standard' should be taken as a yardstick for the size of the fleet was open to alternative interpretation: did it mean the pre-war number of ships, or the pre-war standard of superiority over the next largest fleet? Secondly, Grey's mission to Washington was a spectacular failure: with Wilson ill, Congress enmeshed in the League fight, and the US Navy Department not wishing to jeopardize its building programme, no-one would talk with him about naval limitation.² Thirdly, in November, 1919, the post of First Sea Lord fell to Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Beatty. Beatty refused to accept that he should preside over the surrender of British naval supremacy, and held out with the First Lord of the Admiralty for a naval budget well above the £60 million level. After a lengthy political battle, during which the Navy lived off a vote on account for nine months of the disputed financial year, the House of Commons approved Estimates of £157 millions. It was argued that this figure included a great deal of war expenditure which still had

1. CAB 23/15/610A, War Cabinet meeting, 15 Aug., 1919; CAB 23/12/618, Cabinet meeting, 19 Aug., 1919.

2. Dingman, Power in the Pacific, p.93.

to be liquidated; and that fuel oil stocks, run down in the war, had to be built up together with their storage facilities. These factors, however, only served as camouflage for the temporary victory of the Admiralty. They had been able to defer the massive cuts the Treasury wanted, pending decisions upon the broad principles which should govern naval policy in the post-war era. Without such decisions, it was easy to defend the wartime size of the Navy.

In 1920 Beatty and the Board of Admiralty faced the need for further reductions in naval expenditure. Rather than risk confrontation and political unpopularity in this year, they accepted more cuts in expenditure. New construction had now ceased, and the Board sought only to preserve the existing fleet's size and personnel level. The 1920-21 budget was agreed at £84 millions, the second year running in which the Navy's budget had been virtually halved. But while maintaining this uncontroversial policy, in effect running down the Navy at their own pace rather than at the unseemly haste of the Treasury's pace, they were preparing to reopen the battle for British battleship construction.¹

The Admiralty's case was based on two premises. The first was that the United States would continue to build all the vessels projected in the 1916 programme, and that the Japanese would similarly complete all her proposed capital ships of the 'eight-eight' programme. If so, the Royal Navy would have an inferiority of one vessel to the United States by 1925, Naval Intelligence estimated; and Britain would have no chance of challenging Japan in East Asia, thereby presenting British interests there as hostages to Japanese goodwill.

The second factor was the argument, advanced by Beatty, that post-Jutland battleships designs like the 42,000-ton battlecruiser Hood

1. Dingman, op.cit., pp.113-4; S. Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars (London, 1968-76), i, pp.220-1.

represented an advance in naval technology equivalent to that posed by Dreadnought. If Britain built no new capital ships, by 1925 she would possess only one post-Jutland-designed ship, Hood itself, while the US would possess twelve and Japan eight. Furthermore, all the new American and Japanese ships would be more powerful than the Hood, being armed with 16-inch rather than 15-inch guns. The Board of Admiralty concluded, therefore, that a new construction programme of eight ships over the next two years was necessary, at a cost of £84 millions. To prepare public opinion for the resumption of building, Beatty took the unusual step of making a public call for the start of four capital ships during the coming year.¹ Beatty misjudged the timing of his public appeal, though. It coincided with a painful public controversy over the Battle of Jutland, provoked by the publication of Jellicoe's memoirs.² These were sufficiently controversial to cause the Admiralty to prepare an official report of the battle; but when this proved critical of the Royal Navy's tactics, material and command, it was suppressed amid much furore.³

The controversy over Jutland brought to the forefront of public attention the question of the value of the capital ship, in particular in the light of the experience of the war. To this was added, by Beatty's ill-timed public appeal, the issue of whether to build against America. To satisfy the increasing calls for a full investigation of these issues, Lloyd George intervened to propose that the Committee of Imperial Defence review the whole field of naval strength and building, including the issues of sharing control of the seas and the future of the capital ship

1. The Times, 7 Dec., 1920.

2. Admiral Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, The Grand Fleet, 1914-1916 (London, 1919).

3. The Times, 24 June, 27, 29, 30 Oct., 4, 9, Nov., 1919. Other accounts of the battle were published at this time in Carlyon Bellairs, The Battle of Jutland: The Sowing and the Reaping (London, 1919); and Sir Julian Corbett, History of the Great War: Naval Operations (London, 1920), iii.

in view of aircraft and submarine development.¹ The sub-committee charged with conducting this investigation became known after its chairman as the Bonar Law Enquiry.

The Bonar Law committee's report, after taking evidence for two months, still did not resolve the questions either of the future of the battleship or whether Britain should build against America.² On the first question, the committee heard insufficient evidence to support the contention that the capital ship was obsolete; although a large number of younger naval men, notable Captain Herbert Richmond, had expressed their belief to the committee that the capital ship was no longer the determinant of the command of the seas. On the second question, the committee maintained that it was essential to avoid a building race with America, but equally that failure to lay down new ships would both damage British prestige and naval power, and would make it more difficult for Britain to undertake negotiations with the United States aimed at limiting naval rivalry.

This equivocal position was reflected in the views of the new First Lord of the Admiralty, appointed by Lloyd George in February 1921. Arthur Lee, Lord Lee of Fareham, was appointed to ensure retrenchment, and would not, it was assumed, champion the building programme wanted so badly by the Admirals. Lee was, however, soon persuaded by Beatty that if naval limitation was to be achieved, Britain had to prepare a bargaining position vis-a-vis America by laying down new battleships. When the 1921-2 naval estimates were agreed in March 1921, they maintained a similar level of expenditure to the previous year - £84 millions - but they included £2.5 millions 'for the replacement of obsolete ships' -

1. The investigation was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Austen Chamberlain, on 9 Dec., 1920: Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.135, col.2507.

2. The Bonar Law Committee's hearings are in CAB 16/37, records of the Subcommittee on the Question of the Capital Ship in the Navy, 1920-21.

enabling a start to be made upon preparatory work for four new battleships. In a memorandum for the Cabinet, Lord Lee outlined two chief reasons for undertaking the new construction: that it was essential for naval morale, and that it was necessary in order to give Britain a bargaining position at future naval limitation talks.¹

Britain was therefore drifting towards seeking naval limitation in 1921, not out of commitment to the idea or even with a clear set of objectives in such a policy, but because it was a way to evade unpleasant decisions. It was a way to escape from new building commitments, but at the same time a justification for new building. It was a way to resolve future British naval policy, without having to formulate it at the risk of political and interdepartmental controversy. Most of all it offered those who were prepared to believe in the prospect, the hope of enabling Britain to retain her maritime position without having to work for it.

In the United States, it will be recalled, naval limitation was an issue which by 1920 had become completely subordinated to the question of American membership of the League of Nations. The Administration's thinking was revealed in the annual report for 1920 of the Secretary of the Navy: that while naval limitation was desirable, it was unthinkable for America while she stood alone outside the now-working League of Nations.²

The League as an issue in American politics was resolved by the Republican victory in the Presidential election of November, 1920. The new President, Warren Harding, had studiously avoided committing himself on disarmament during either his Senate career or his Presidential campaign; he promised only that on issues splitting the Republican party,

1. ADM 167/63, Lee memorandum, 28 Feb., 1921. Some indication of the background to this may be found in Alan Clark, ed., A Good Innings. The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham (London, 1974), pp.206-7.

2. Department of the Navy, Annual Reports for the Fiscal Year 1920. Report of the Secretary (December, 1920), pp.2-4.

like the future of the Navy, he would consult 'the best minds'.¹ After his election but before his inauguration, Harding produced the equally noncommittal assertion that 'A big navy and a big merchant marine are necessary to the future of the country', but that 'partial but not permanent disarmament' was desirable.²

At this point, with Wilson still in office as a 'lame-duck' and ill President, the powerful Republican Senator Borah of Idaho intervened.³ Borah had led the 'irreconcilable' Republican Senators against the League, but his record on naval matters was less consistent. He had supported the naval expansion of the 1916 Act, but later had attacked the League on the grounds - among many others - that it would perpetuate British naval supremacy and thus force America to construct an undesirably large navy. Moreover, as a Western 'Progressive', he had repeatedly denounced the armaments 'trusts' of the East Coast. He was therefore in a quandary when the League appealed to the Wilson administration to send a representative to Geneva to discuss arms limitation, even if America remained outside the League's organization. A pro-League Democratic Senator, Thomas Walsh of Montana, proposed that the Senate ask President Wilson to send a representative to the League for arms talks. In order to counter this, and to support arms control talks while avoiding the League of Nations framework for them, Senator Borah introduced a resolution to the Senate on 14 December, 1920, which called for direct negotiations between the United States, Britain and Japan, aimed at halving the naval construction of those powers for the next five years.

1. Harding's Senate career is detailed best in Andrew Sinclair, The Available Man (New York, 1965), pp.57-84; and Randolph C. Downes, The Rise of Warren Gamaliel Harding (Columbus, O., 1970), Chaps.11-13. Downes also gives an excellent account (Chaps.21-25) of the 1920 election campaign.

2. New York Times, 5 Dec., 1920.

3. The subsequent episode is recounted in Robert J. Maddox, William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy (Baton Rouge, La., 1969), pp.88-90, and John C. Vinson, The Parchment Peace: The United States Senate and the Washington Conference, 1921-2 (Athens, Ga., 1955), pp.48-57.

The Borah resolution had an impact on American public opinion comparable to the effect in England of Beatty's public appeal and the Jutland controversy in the autumn of 1919. Suddenly naval policy was back on the political agenda: newspaper polls showed widespread support for arms limitation, and various politicians and naval officers expressed their support, qualified or outright, for limitation. When Borah's many enemies in the Senate amended Borah's resolution out of existence, he introduced a second resolution calling for the Senate Naval Affairs Committee to investigate the value of capital ships in the light of developments in naval technology, and to call a 'holiday' in their construction for six months while the investigation took place. Once again, a combination of 'Big Navy' supporters, League supporters, and miscellaneous political enemies of Borah stopped the resolution: but naval building had become a major issue. Moreover Borah had become an immensely popular figure who found, somewhat to his own surprise, that he was articulating the views of millions of Americans, and that he had touched off a disarmament campaign of major proportions.

The new President appeared to advocate a different approach to naval limitation from the one favoured by Borah when he first addressed Congress. On 12 April, he told Congress that the best way to 'lift the burden of excessive outlay' was 'the reasonable limitation of personnel... combined with economies of administration'. However, naval limitation - however desirable - could not be negotiated until America had finally signed a peace treaty with Germany. As long as America was technically at war, there were other more urgent foreign policy objectives.¹

Harding's priorities, and his apparent rejection of limitation of material in favour of limitation of personnel and possibly budgetary

1. New York Times, 13 and 19 April, 1921. Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (2nd ed., New York, 1942), pp.638-9.

limits, did not satisfy Borah. In May the Senate considered the Naval Appropriations Bill for 1921-2, which included funds for further ships in the 1916 programme. The President urged support of the Bill, maintaining the position that arms limitation was impractical in the current circumstances. Borah therefore introduced a further resolution requiring the summoning of a naval conference, while threatening to filibuster the Appropriations Bill. After two weeks of debate and with deadlock threatened which would jeopardize the naval building programme, the President backed down and accepted a compromise. Borah's resolution was to be passed and the Senate added extra funds to the Naval Appropriations Bill.

The initiative in Washington was now firmly in the hands of Borah, and those in Congress who favoured the summoning of a naval conference outside the forum of the League of Nations. The issue of invitations to such a conference was, however, rushed through faster than anyone in Congress had expected. President Harding made a public announcement of his intention to summon a Conference in Washington as soon as possible on 11th July, the day after the Naval Appropriations Bill was finally approved by the Congress.¹ The reason for this was the possibility that a conference might first be called by the British, and Harding and his Secretary of State, Charles Evan Hughes, considered it essential that if a conference took place, it should be in and under the aegis of the United States.² There were three good reasons for this. The first was that it seized the initiative in domestic politics for the President, whose prestige in the control of foreign policy and in the leadership of the Republican Party had been shaken by the Borah resolutions. The second was that it seized the initiative in international diplomacy for

1. New York Times, 11 July, 1921.

2. David J. Danielski and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds., The Autobiographical Notes of Charles Evans Hughes (Cambridge, Mass, 1973), pp.204-6.

the United States, which would derive a number of advantages, psychological and organizational, from having the conference held in Washington; it might also partly restore American prestige after the unhappy battle over the League. The third was that it enabled the United States to control the Conference's agenda, which might thereby cover a much broader range than might be the case at a British-summoned conference. Hughes was determined that Far Eastern Affairs should take first place on the agenda at the forthcoming conference. This would achieve two things. Domestically, it would make the conference look much less like Borah's achievement. Borah, indeed, strenuously opposed discussing naval limitation and East Asian affairs together, believing that rivalries over East Asia would ruin the chances of agreement on naval matters.¹ Internationally, the greatest potential danger to the United States, Hughes believed, was from the Anglo-Japanese alliance. This had strong support in both London and Tokyo, but was criticized at the 1921 Imperial Conference Conference by the Prime Ministers of the British Dominions. Hughes would have to try to replace this with a broader agreement on East Asian security which included the United States, and which at the same time would satisfy the Japanese and avoid the distrust of the Senate of 'entangling alliances'.²

The danger that Britain might call a conference first was a very real one. Lloyd George, casting around for a political solution to the alternatives of new naval building and financial entrenchment, had made enquiries of Washington and Tokyo in early July as to the desirability

1. New York Times, 26 July, 1921; Literary Digest, Vol.70 (23 July,1921), article by Borah, pp.5-7.

2. New York Times, 15 and 26 July, 1921; Sprouts, Towards a New Order of Sea Power, pp.135-50. The role of the Dominions, particularly Canada, is detailed in M.G. Fry, 'The North Atlantic Triangle and the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', Journal of Modern History, 39 (March 1967).

of holding a conference.¹ Lloyd George had in effect the same motives as Harding: a conference offered a way out of a domestic political difficulty. For Lloyd George, a conference might get both the Treasury and the Admiralty off his back. For Harding, it would keep Congress quiet.

The American Government's invitations were sent to the four principal foreign naval powers, Britain, Japan, France and Italy, who were also the principal wartime Allies; and, in addition, invitations to discuss Far Eastern questions were sent to China, Holland, Portugal and Belgium. Soviet Russia was pointedly excluded, as was Germany, disarmed and stripped of her Far Eastern possessions. Within a month, each country accepted; at the beginning of November the delegations gathered in Washington, and the conference opened on 21 November, the day after Armistice Day.

The story of the Washington Conference has been told too many times to warrant repeating in detail here.² It is essential to the understanding of the later development of naval limitation, however, to appreciate the circumstances that enabled Charles Evans Hughes to put forward on behalf of the United States at the outset of the Conference his radical proposals for limitation, and which enabled the other naval powers to accept them subject to very few modifications.

It has already been noted that President Harding had been forced into calling the Conference through his inability to control the Republican majority in the Senate. The greater the obstinacy of Congress, the greater the need for the President to reassert his control and prestige through a triumph in the foreign-policy field: a phenomenon of American

1. Roskill, Naval Policy, i, pp.300-2.

2. e.g. in Roger Dingman, Power in the Pacific (Chicago, 1976), Ch.12; Roskill, Naval Policy, i, Ch.8; Sprouts, Towards a New Order of Sea Power, Chapters 9, 10 and 13; John C. Vinson, The Parchment Peace, pp.130-168.

politics as true for Harding as for President Nixon more than fifty years later. The pressure from Borah and from those sections of opinion which supported him meant, however, that the President had few options to pursue which might lead to outcomes which could be portrayed as a triumph. As Roger Dingman has shown in his study, Power in the Pacific, Harding had to achieve both drastic reduction and establish the American navy as inferior to none in order to satisfy both wings of his party and of public opinion.

The achievement of such an agreement required, first, a very radical proposal from the United States: and this required that the Navy Department be overruled. The General Board, at the instigation of the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Robert E. Coontz, prepared in August a long list of the Navy's requirements at the forthcoming Conference.¹ Foremost amongst these was the establishment of a system of ratios between the major naval powers, which the General Board felt should be of the order of 10:10:5 for America, Britain and Japan, with the continental European powers being limited to well below the Japanese level. Secondly, they argued that the ratios should be reached not by stopping construction, but by building up to agreed levels through the implementation of existing building plans. The first of these would be unacceptable to Japan; the second would be unacceptable to Congress. Both were unacceptable to Harding.

Harding himself, therefore, worked closely with the Secretary of State in the remaining weeks before the opening of the Conference, the essential features of the plan being agreed between Hughes and the President.² The Hughes plan included a ten-year building 'holiday' on

1. US Navy Department, Operational Archives, General Board Proceedings: Limitation of Armaments, Policy and Discussion Book, August 1921; cited in Dingman, op.cit., pp.156-7.

2. Dingman, op.cit., pp.157-8 and 197-8. Mario Pusey, Charles Evans Hughes (New York, 1951), ii, pp.464-5. Robert K. Murray, The Harding Era (Minneapolis, 1969).

capital ships; it raised the level of the suggested Japanese ratio to the more acceptable level of 10:10:6; and it included lists of capital ships from each major naval power, including many still under construction, which were to be scrapped in order to greatly reduce the capital ship fleets.¹ Hughes proposed that the United States should abandon its 1916 programme and any suggestion of the 1918 expansion scheme. It would retain just eighteen capital ships of 501,000 tons, while scrapping thirty vessels - fifteen old pre-Dreadnoughts and fifteen new vessels under construction - of 846,000 tons. Britain should retain twenty-two capital ships of 604,000 tons, while, he suggested, scrapping nineteen older ships and the four newly-ordered battlecruisers of Beatty's programme, a total of 583,000 tons. Japan under Hughes' plan would keep ten capital ships of 300,000 tons, while scrapping or cancelling twenty-five ships under construction, proposed or obsolete. Hughes indicated, but without going into detail, that other classes of ships should be retained in similar proportions. Although this gave Britain an edge in numbers of capital ships, the United States would be approximately equal in combat effectiveness because of the more recent construction and more modern design of her ships.

The Hughes plan was a well-kept secret before it was sprung upon the world on 12th November. The British delegation, led by the former Prime Minister and wartime Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, had come expecting an American plan to be put forward, and had agreed that it was better to respond to other powers' suggestions than to put forward a British plan on this occasion. The indifference of Lloyd George, and the deep divisions between Admiralty and Treasury made it likely that no scheme would have the united backing of the British government; and

1. The Hughes speech was printed in full in the New York Times of 13 Nov., and The Times of 14 Nov., 1921.

bureaucratic divisions had prevented the CID from agreeing even on British negotiating priorities. The CID had discussed naval limitation issues only in the two weeks before the British delegation had sailed for Washington, and had failed to reconcile many of the divisions which had persisted in naval policy since the Armistice. There was no agreement as to what the optimum size of the fleet should be, as to its ratio with other powers, as to whether new capital ship construction was needed. The CID could only recommend to the British delegates that the British Empire must maintain a fleet 'at least equal to any other', and accepted Admiralty advice on certain technical questions.¹

The British delegates were therefore unprepared in every way for the shock of the Hughes proposals. When the British delegates met the next day, the man whose opinion was crucial to their acceptance of the Hughes proposals was the First Sea Lord, Admiral Beatty. In London, Beatty had argued in defence of a 'Big Navy' to the CID, where he had particularly urged the steady continuation of construction for replacement, and had refused to consider the cancellation of the four newly laid-down battle-cruisers.² In Washington, Beatty took a much more moderate position. Although he wished to see the battle fleet ratios determined by numbers of vessels rather than by total tonnage, Beatty said that he was satisfied with both the proposed ratio and the proposed numbers of ships to be retained or scrapped.³

Beatty's major qualifications to the Hughes scheme were twofold. First he opposed the ten-year period for the construction holiday, on

1. CAB 2/3, Meetings of the CID's Standing Defence Subcommittee, 14 Oct. and 21 Oct., 1921.

2. CAB 2/3, CID Paper 277b, Admiralty memorandum on limitation of armaments, 14 Oct., 1921.

3. ADM 1/8630, Meetings of the British Empire Delegation, Washington, 48th Conference, 13 Nov., 1921.

grounds of the cost of maintaining the idle shipbuilding capacity during that time, the impact on naval morale, and the steady erosion of efficiency of the ageing fleet. Beatty preferred a slow and controlled replacement programme, including some if not all of the four new battle-cruisers, or he feared that by 1932, when the proposed ten-year building holiday expired, the British fleet would be inferior in almost every respect to the American. Beatty's second objection was to the extension of the battle fleet ratios to 'auxiliary' vessels, that is, cruisers, destroyers and submarines. He argued that Britain's extensive colonial and commercial responsibilities entitled her to special consideration and necessitated the operation of large numbers of auxiliary vessels, the need for which was not related to other nations' strength in those categories. Thus the doctrine of 'absolute requirements', which persisted in British thinking throughout the next two decades, was first encountered in the context of naval limitation.

Beatty's position was adopted almost in its entirety by the British delegation, and while negotiation over auxiliary vessels and the building holiday lasted for another two months, Balfour's announcement at the next session of the full Conference that Britain accepted the Hughes plan 'in spirit and in principle' was an historic declaration. It signified British acceptance that she would henceforth share her naval superiority, and that she was prepared to greatly reduce her naval strength.

The final product of the Washington Conference was a naval treaty which reflected the broad outlines of Hughes' original proposal although omitting limitations on auxiliary vessels, combined with agreement on security in East Asia which amounted to a recognition by Britain and America of Japan's preeminent position in the North-West Pacific.¹ The naval treaty adhered almost exactly to the tonnage figures for capital

1. The text of the completed treaty is published in full in Sprouts, Towards a New Order of Sea Power.

ship fleets that Hughes had suggested, although at Britain's insistence two of her new battle cruisers of the 1921 programme were to be completed and substituted for older vessels. Similarly two American ships of the 1916 programme were to be completed in place of pre-Jutland ships. Otherwise, the Hughes figures for battleships were adopted as first outlined on 12th November. The new ships were to be limited in size to 35,000 tons; all vessels above 10,000 tons were controlled by the treaty, whether in the capital ship category or in the separate category of aircraft carriers.

Below 10,000 tons, no limits were agreed: the Beatty objection to maintaining comparative, rather than absolute, criteria was maintained steadily by the British delegates, and limits on the smaller classes of vessels did not appeal as greatly as limits on capital ships either to the Treasuries or the public opinions of the Washington Conference powers. Moreover, 'auxiliary' vessels were not as yet a source of competition; in the war, construction of cruisers and destroyers had been divided between the allies in a generally amicable and coordinated way, and most of the naval powers had a surfeit of wartime auxiliary vessels.¹ It was therefore easy to leave aside the limitation of auxiliary vessels as an unnecessary complication which might endanger the major political achievement of battle fleet limitation.

Beatty's opposition to the ten-year holiday brought about the one

1. During the war, division of labour between the Allies had been practised quite extensively in shipbuilding as in other aspects of the war effort. France, for example, had almost ceased naval construction, relying after the war on vessels delivered from Japan or transferred from Germany as reparations. The United States built no cruisers during the war years, devoting its shipbuilding effort principally to destroyers and merchant vessels, as indicated above. This meant that there were imbalances in the fleets of the powers - the lack of modern cruisers in the US Navy, for instance; but the total number of wartime vessels was such that the major problem for each Navy was manning and maintaining existing vessels in peacetime, not building new ones.

major intervention of Lloyd George at the Conference. In December, as the building holiday question threatened to hold up completion of the treaty, Lloyd George ordered Balfour to overrule Beatty and accept the ten-year period.¹ Flushed with his successful conclusion of an Irish treaty, and with no wish to see a further successful agreement prevented through such a seemingly trivial point as the length of the building holiday, Lloyd George disregarded the protests the Admiralty was making on both strategic and economic grounds.

Japan was brought into the naval treaty by a complicated deal involving naval limitation, non-fortification and consultation agreements. Japan had hoped to be accorded a 10:7 ratio in capital ships, which was unacceptable to Britain: Beatty wished to be able to match the Japanese fleet in the Far East while at the same time having enough strength in reserve to match any European naval threat in home waters. The 10:6 ratio that Hughes suggested was accepted by Japan in return for an agreement limiting the construction of naval and military facilities on islands in the West Central Pacific, designed to prevent the development of Hong Kong, Manila or Guam as naval bases.² This left Singapore and Pearl Harbour as the nearest ports to Japan that Britain or America could develop as naval bases. Singapore, the closest, was still over 3,000 miles from the Japanese home islands; neither could effectively threaten Japanese control of East Asia. In place of the Anglo-Japanese alliance so disliked by the United States (and Canada), a treaty known as the Four Power Pact was adhered to by Britain, America, Japan and

1. Documents on British Foreign Policy (hereafter DBFP), First Series, Volume XIV (hereafter 1/XIV), No.985, Lord Curzon to Balfour, 9 December, 1921.

2. Article XIX of the Washington Naval Treaty.

France, agreeing to respect each other's rights and interests in the Pacific and to undertake mutual consultation in the event of any threat to those interests. This was a poor substitute for a concrete alliance; but it was as far as the United States could go, and Britain would no longer commit itself on a Pacific question without the United States.

An additional, Nine Power Treaty was signed respecting mutual rights in China. The whole structure was designed to enable Admiral Kato Tomasoburo, the chief Japanese delegate, to defend the acceptance of a ratio lower than 10:7 to the volatile and nationalistic Japanese public and naval establishment.

The Washington Naval Treaty, finally signed in February 1922, marked the start of a new balance of naval power, a system in which competition was controlled but still actively pursued. The Washington Treaty remains to this day the only arms limitation treaty ever concluded which brought about a major reduction in numbers of deployed weapon systems. Yet the circumstances which facilitated the successful conclusion of that Treaty were exceptional, and need to be recognized in order to appreciate the later stresses upon, and breakdown of, the 'Washington System'. First, all the signatories had been, a mere three years before, allies in the greatest conflict hitherto known. Each had made great sacrifices - although not equal sacrifices - in the war; each had gained few spoils of victory from the war, and each Western power had a population united in war-weariness and hope for a lasting peace. The idea that the First World War had been 'a war to end all wars' still had widespread currency; the League of Nations exemplified the idealistic hopes of a new order on international relations. This idealism and longing for peace was combined with the aftermath of wartime popular goodwill towards the former Allies of each country. The combination placed pressures on the leaders of democratic states which could not be disregarded, and placed the formidable weapon of public opinion in the hands of the bureaucratic enemies

of naval power - the Treasuries of the maritime states, and their supporters the fiscal conservatives in the legislatures.

The second special influence in 1921 was the need for economic retrenchment which prevailed to a greater or lesser degree in each Western nation. The Western economy - including Britain, France, Italy and the United States - was recovering from a sharp post-war trade recession, which contemporary economic orthodoxy required that governments meet by retrenchment; at the same time, the European states faced national debts of unprecedented size, most of which was owed to the United States; external debt payments represented a larger claim on the British exchequer, for example, than the Royal Navy represented before the war. The re-establishment of Treasury control in Britain, by means of the Geddes Committee and the Cabinet Finance Committee, meant that cuts in the Royal Navy were inevitable. The determination to reduce government spending was equally prevalent in other countries, even where - as in the United States - the financial imperative was not present. The political commitment of the US administration to 'normalcy' required a major reduction in the level of government activity, and the Navy - responsible for 13% of total Federal government expenditure in 1921 - could not escape from the climate of retrenchment. These pressures made Admirals and navalists accept that, if their navies were to be limited or reduced, it was better to do it in agreement with their rivals than unilaterally. Limitation by agreement was for them the lesser of two evils.

A third element present in 1921-2 was the coincidental presence in both of the largest naval powers of purely political factors which caused their heads of government to favour a naval limitation pact. In Washington, the new Republic President was faced with the need to reassert his authority over a defiant Republican majority in Congress, and in particular to reassert Presidential control over foreign policy, which had been usurped by the Senate in the fight over the League of Nations. What better way

to do that than to outflank the Senate's leading foreign-policy expert, Borah, by proceeding further and faster than Borah himself on the one issue, arms limitation, where Borah was most at odds with the White House? In so doing by means of the rapidly-called conference and the far-reaching Hughes proposals, Harding was able to capture the wave of popular disarmament feeling for himself, present Congress with a fait accompli on one of the major issues of the political agenda, and demonstrate the power of the Presidency and the inability of Congress to resolve difficult questions through diplomacy.

In London, similarly, there were pressures upon Lloyd George to promote a naval agreement. The Coalition Government he led was subject to progressive disillusion and disintegration.¹ Lloyd George needed both to hold together the diverse strands of his government and to maintain his personal position through public support. He was faced in 1921 with two intractable problems of crisis dimensions, Ireland and unemployment, which rose to two millions by the summer of 1922. It was politically imperative to prevent naval policy being added to the sources of conflict within the coalition and the target of criticism from outside it. Yet naval policy promised to become such an issue, as the Admirals demanded construction, the Treasury demanded cuts, the Conservatives demanded protection of British naval superiority and the Liberals demanded that resources be diverted to social programmes. The only way to resolve these conflicting demands was by a naval limitation agreement.

In Japan, France and Italy, the motives for participation in the treaty were equally varied. Japan wished her predominant power in North East Asia to be recognized, and a high naval ratio-vis-à-vis Britain and

1. The cartoonist Low portrayed the Coalition as a two-headed mule, 'without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity'. David Low, Low's Autobiography (London, 1956), pp.94-5.

America to be legitimized by international agreement. At the same time, Japan could not yet hope to challenge either Britain or America in unrestricted naval competition, and must therefore make concessions in order to avoid such a development. A naval policy paper expressed Japan's dilemma as follows:

While the Navy considers the ratio of 10:7 as absolutely necessary, it also regards the successful conclusion of this conference as absolutely imperative. If the Conference should break up as the result of Japan's absolute insistence on her demands, a naval building competition, far keener than at present, will inevitably ensue....¹

The paper concluded that 'Trusting our plenipotentiary, therefore, we will accept as unavoidable his decision to lower our ratio below 70 per cent'. The Plenipotentiary concerned, Admiral Kato Tomosaburo, the Minister of the Navy, overruled the support of more junior officers for the 10:7 ratio, in continuation of the policy of Hara Kei, Prime Minister until his assassination on the eve of the Washington Conference, of pursuing a rapprochement with the United States.² Kato, like Hara, believed that in the era of total war, 'national defence could no longer remain monopolized by the military', but depended upon national economic strength as much as on armaments. Japan could only exercise military power 'commensurate to her national strength'. It was futile to compete with the United States; the prudent course was therefore to accept the Hughes plan, and to include as many safeguards as possible in the finished treaties through non-fortification clauses and political arrangements.

Kato's policy of avoidance of conflict with the United States was supported by the most prestigious Japanese naval figure, Fleet Admiral

1. Policy paper, 'The Naval Opinion', prepared by the Vice-Minister of the Navy, 28 Nov., 1921: MS Enomoto Papers, quoted in Sadao Asada, 'Japanese Admirals and the Politics of Naval Limitation: Kato Tomosaburo versus Kato Kanji', p.156, in Gerald Gordan, ed., Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1977).

2. Sadao Asada in G. Jordan, op.cit., pp.150-58.

Togo, who had defeated the Russian fleet at Tsushima seventeen years earlier. Their combined influence was sufficient to overcome or overrule the doubts of other more junior naval officers who felt the 60% ratio to be humiliating. It was not the leadership of the Navy, therefore, which objected to the Washington agreements, but the elderly civilians of the Imperial Diplomatic Advisory Council. The principal objections from that quarter were to the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which was perceived - rightly - as being due to American pressure. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the United States within the Four Power Pact did represent a beginning from which Kato hoped a new relationship of close cooperation with the United States could emerge. In 1922, Kato became Prime Minister, charged with carrying out the new policy of friendship with, or appeasement of, America. The failure of this policy must be left to other chapters.

The continental European powers were in a somewhat similar position to Japan. For both of them, a naval building race in 1921-2 was unthinkable; but the implications of permanent inferiority in acceptance of a low naval ratio was humiliating. The Hughes proposal that France and Italy each accept a capital ship quota of 175,000 tons was soon accepted in principle by both France and Italy, but with very different results in each case.¹ Italy was content, even flattered, to be granted equality with France. The proposed quota of 175,000 tons caused a stream of objections in France, however. At the start of the Conference, the French Prime Minister and chief delegate in Washington, Aristide Briand, accepted the Hughes plan in principle, although he soon returned to Paris, leaving Admiral F.J.J. de Bon, his principal naval adviser, in charge in Washington. On 15th December, de Bon put forward a claim to 350,000 tons of capital ships - i.e. 50,000 tons more than Japan had

1. Sprouts, op.cit., pp.181-9.

accepted! Hughes thereupon appealed to Briand, back in Paris, who accepted the proposed capital ship allowance. Briand had to make some concession to the aspirations of the French Navy, however, and this took the form of instructing de Bon to support the British in refusing to discuss any limitation of auxiliary vessels, in which categories France intended to maintain a large fleet and a large degree of superiority over Italy. France regarded auxiliary vessels in a similar light to Britain: as representing 'absolute' rather than 'relative' requirements because of her long trade routes and far-flung colonial Empire. This attitude, and her reluctance to concede equality to Italy, was to lead to great difficulties in the years to come as attempts were made to extend the Washington system of limitations to all naval vessels.

For the present, though, the achievement of reduction and limitation of battle fleets was hailed enthusiastically by the participants in the Conference, and with varying degrees of warmth by the publics of the nations concerned. The coolest popular reactions were by nationalist elements in Japan and to a lesser extent France, who felt that their countries' navies had been permanently and unjustly condemned to a permanent state of inferiority.

The Washington Treaty had, its supporters rightly pointed out, limited the naval forces of the major powers for the first time in history, and although only capital ships and aircraft carriers were included in the limitations, the capital ship was still accepted as the major unit of sea power. If Scapa Flow was the end of an era, the Washington Treaty made it appear that a new era of harmonious cooperation between the powers might have dawned, an era free from competition in armaments and thereby free from the threat of war. Those hopes were very soon to be proved false.

Chapter II

1927: FAILURE AND AFTERMATH

The reduction and limitation of battle fleets by the Washington Naval Treaty was a spectacular accomplishment; but it was only a partial solution to the question of naval rivalry, and naval limitation itself was only a part of the whole disarmament issue. In the naval sphere, the failure of the Washington Conference to deal with the 'auxiliary' classes of vessels left ample scope for naval competition to continue.

The Washington Conference revealed three areas of competition and antagonism between the five great naval powers. The rivalries between France and Italy in the Mediterranean, and Japan and the United States in the Pacific, seemed the most immediately menacing to the balance between the naval powers. The third possibility, of naval competition between Britain and the United States, was most formidable in terms of its potential consequences: and this third threat to peace dominated the fears and plans of statesmen and naval officers for much of the 1920s.

The roots of Anglo-American antagonism in the 1920s were several and deeply embedded. In one sense they reflected the tendency of alliances to be reversed after the decisive outcome of a general war. The particular circumstances of the Great War gave extra force to this tendency. Britain had gone to war largely to overthrow the latest, and until then the most formidable, attempt to break her control of the seas. The German Navy having surrendered, Britain now faced another challenge at least as strong as that of Germany. The new threat was heightened by geography: unlike Germany, America was immune from the threat of blockade or containment, but in a position to threaten British communications.

The United States had gone to war largely because she had been unable to protect the sanctity of her trade as a neutral. After the war she became as conscious as Britain of the need to be able to protect her trade, whether as a neutral or as a belligerent. Such protection could only be gained at the expense of Britain's control of the seas. America had both the resources and the geographical position to wrest control of seas from Britain, and many people in the United States urged just that. This 'Big Navy' party achieved a position of considerable strength in Congress and in the American press in the years following the Great War. With capital ships and aircraft carriers limited, the form the American challenge to Britain had to take was the construction of auxiliary vessels, and in particular, cruisers.

Disarmament, Security and the League

The architects of the League of Nations had assumed from its inception that it would attempt to solve the intractable problems of disarmament; but efforts by the League in this direction had to await the outcome of the American Presidential election of 1920. In 1921, with members of the League resigned to American non-participation for the time being, they resolved nevertheless to proceed with the task. A body called the Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments was established by the Council to consider the reduction of armaments and the private manufacture of weapons, and was instructed by the Assembly of the League that year to prepare a definite scheme for the reduction of armaments.

The first fruit of this new body was a draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, adopted by the Commission in August 1923.¹ This sought to facilitate the reduction of armaments by guaranteeing the security of

1. Published in the Report of the Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments, Part One (30 August, 1923), League of Nations, Geneva, 1923.

states through mutual military assistance. The objections raised by various states to the draft were, however, overwhelming: few nations, least of all Britain and her Dominions, wished to undertake unlimited commitments and forever renounce neutrality in the event of a conflict involving members of the League. Instead, the British Government suggested, the League should consider the summoning of a general conference, not restricted to members of the League, to consider the reduction of armaments.

The next stage was a League-sponsored meeting in February, 1924, at Rome to consider whether the principles of the Washington Naval Treaty could be extended to other states. To this were invited the ten states represented on the Council of the League,¹ plus all other states possessing capital ships, whether or not members of the League.² Of these, the United States would not participate, because of her sensitivity about the League, and Turkey would not while she was still technically in a state of war. Nevertheless some seventeen powers sent naval representatives to the 1924 Conference.

The Rome meeting proved the impossibility of one meeting considering simultaneously the naval balance in such theatres as the Baltic, Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, and South American waters. The lesser naval powers were just as sensitive as France had been at Washington to the imposition of inferiority upon them, and were unwilling to reduce their capital ship tonnage in proportion to the reductions agreed by the Washington Powers. Moreover the Soviet Union both refused to consider limitation while she lacked normal diplomatic relations with her neighbours, and indicated that she would seek a capital ship tonnage figure

1. Belgium, Brazil, the British Empire, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay.

2. The additional states were Argentine, Chile, Denmark, Greece, Norway, the Netherlands and the Soviet Union.

of 400,000 tons: i.e. a fleet larger than any but those of Britain and America. Faced with such irreconcilable problems, the Conference broke up without result after only ten days.

Later in 1924, the League made a third effort to solve the problem of security and disarmament. This time the forum was the Assembly of the League, where the British and French Prime Ministers, MacDonald and Herriot, urged the establishment of a mechanism for the settlement of disputes through the Permanent Court of International Justice. From this came the draft Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, which was recommended in October to the League's members for signature.¹ This laid out complicated procedures for the reference of all disputes to the Court, whose absolute jurisdiction was to be recognized by the contracting states; it also provided means for determining - automatically it was hoped - who was an aggressor in the event of conflict, and devising sanctions against such an aggressor which fell short of unlimited military commitments and which might therefore be acceptable where the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance was not.

The Geneva Protocol linked together the three related questions of security, arbitration and disarmament. Article XVII of the Protocol incorporated the British suggestion of a general disarmament conference: signatory states undertook to attend a conference for the reduction of armaments, open to all nations, which would meet at Geneva on 15 June, 1925.

To prepare itself for this planned Conference, the Council of the League formed itself, in October 1924, into a Preparatory Committee for the purpose of compiling a 'General programme for reduction and limitation of armaments'

1. The Protocol is exhaustively analysed in P.J. Noel Baker, The Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes (London, 1925). The texts of successive drafts of the Protocol, the Minutes of the Third Committee of the League Assembly, and the Debates of the full Fifth Assembly, were published by the League of Nations in a volume entitled Arbitration, Security and Disarmament (Geneva, 1924), League of Nations document no. C.C.O.1.

for communication to all governments three months before the Conference was to meet. In addition, a Co-ordination Commission was formed, comprised of the Preparatory Committee (that is, the representatives of those states belonging to the Council of the League), together with representatives of the League permanent committees on Economic, Financial and Transit questions; the ILO and the Permanent Advisory Committee on Armaments.

All these grand committees had no more effect than had the Temporary Mixed Commission or the Rome Conference. In December 1924, Stanley Baldwin became the British Prime Minister once again, and the Geneva Protocol was doomed to the same fate as the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance. Prodded by the Dominions and its own backbenchers, the British Government again decided that it could not take on automatic commitments in the event of conflict anywhere in the world. In place of the universal arrangements represented by the Protocol, Britain determined to pursue regional agreements for security, and in 1925 undertook the negotiation which was to result successfully in the Locarno Treaties upon European Security.

The Preparatory Commission. I: The Size of the Problem

Despite the rejection of the Protocol by the League's greatest power, the next Assembly of the League, in September 1925, decided to keep alive the idea of a disarmament conference. The Council was asked to make a preparatory study so that such a conference might be convened 'as soon as satisfactory conditions have been assured from the point of view of general security' - meaning as soon as the Locarno agreements had been ratified. Accordingly, on 12 December, 1925, the Preparatory Committee

was revitalized as the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.¹

The Preparatory Commission now consisted of the representatives in Geneva of the ten members of the Council; invited representatives of the three non-League great powers (America, Soviet Russia, Germany); and six other 'specially interested' European powers, chiefly neighbours of the Soviet Union. Hugh Gibson, the American Ambassador to Belgium, was appointed the US representative. Viscount Cecil, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chief representative to the League, became the British member of the Commission.

The meeting of the Commission was delayed until May, 1926, by diplomatic wrangling. When it finally met, it came up against a major difficulty. It had been intended that the League's Permanent Advisory Committee would advise the Commission on technical military and naval matters. The United States, though, objected to the involvement of a League of Nations body upon which they were not represented, and so the Preparatory Commission had to do its own technical work, necessitating the establishment of a network of sub-commissions.

At the first plenary session a lengthy list of questions emerged, needing preliminary resolution before any draft conventions could be prepared. Most of these ranged over questions of military manpower or technical definitions of land and air material. On the naval side, sub-commission 'A' considered, without result, whether naval limitation should be by the total tonnage of all ships in each Navy or by tonnage

1. The Preparatory Commission was required to consider a long list of questions referred to it by the Council of the League; these are printed in full in Survey of International Affairs, 1925, pp.73-5; and in League of Nations, Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference entrusted with the Preparation for the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Series I (December, 1925). League of Nations documents will hereafter be listed by the League publication number and date, in this case CPD.1 (December, 1925).

limits upon each class of ship.¹ It was clear that no instant formula for disarmament would be forthcoming from the Preparatory Commission. The continental Powers insisted that the various aspects of disarmament - land, sea and air weapons and manpower - were indivisible;² and as these Powers were obsessed with the 'German Question' and the balance of land armies in Europe, where the obstacles to agreement were greatest, it appeared that a general agreement might be postponed, for a considerable time. The naval Powers, on the other hand, considered naval disarmament to be the key to general disarmament.³ Japan and the United States accepted the British view that land and air armament questions could be solved like security questions by regional agreements of the Locarno type and strongly opposed the thesis of the Continental Powers.

In view of the numerical predominance of continental European nations at the Preparatory Commission, any attempt to deal separately with particular aspects of disarmament would have to take place outside the framework of the Commission, and it ran the risk of French and Italian non-cooperation. On the other hand, such a course would greatly enhance the probability of any agreement being acceptable to the United States Senate where feeling against participation in any programme sponsored by the League of Nations ran as high as ever.⁴

1. League of Nations document number (L. of N. Doc.) CPD.1(a) (August, 1926).

2. See the report of December, 1926, by Subcommittee A of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference (L. of N. Doc. CPD.28), p.16.

3. This view was expressed by, for example, Secretary of State Kellogg in a letter to Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur, 4 Jan. 1926, MS Department of State (in future, D/S), 500.A 15/42a.

4. J. Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security since Locarno (London, 1923), p.103.

In 1926 the British and American delegates speculated on the possibilities of convening a naval conference.¹ During the summer of 1926 Rear Admiral Hilary P. Jones, the senior American naval officer at Geneva,² paid a personal visit to London. He made courtesy calls upon the First Lord, Bridgeman, and upon the First Sea Lord, Earl Beatty, during which the subject of Anglo-American naval balance was raised. Jones reported that Beatty 'unequivocally agreed' to the extension of the Washington ratios to all categories of vessel, except only that Britain would not wish Japan to have as much as 60% of her cruiser fleet.³ It appeared from this that agreement might be reached rapidly at least between Britain and America, at a purely naval conference. Developments which persuaded President Coolidge that such a conference was urgently needed, were however, centred upon the US Congress.

In the course of 1926, the President became subjected to increasing pressure to embark on a programme of cruiser construction designed to maintain parity between the US and other Powers. In that year, the number of cruisers of all types, built and building, were as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>
British Empire	63	380,670
United States of America	40	334,560
Japanese Empire	43	289,701

However, within these totals the number of new 10,000-ton ships was:

British Empire	11 building	2 authorized
United States of America	2 building	6 authorized
Japanese Empire	6 building	4 projected

1. In addition to Hugh Gibson, Ambassador to Belgium, the US delegation included the following naval members: Rear Admiral Hilary P. Jones, Admiral Andrew T. Long, and Captain Adolphus Andrews.

2. Admiral Jones was a former Commander-in-Chief of the United States Fleet (1922-3) and was Chairman of the General Board (1925-7).

3. Memorandum by Jones on his London visit, 10 Nov. 1926, MS Confidential File, D/S. 500.A 15 a 258a.

4. Brassey's Naval Annual, 1927, p.64.

As a result of this disparity, the President came into conflict with the 'Big Navy' group in Congress. In his budget message to Congress for 1927, he omitted funds for the construction of the last three of a batch of eight cruisers authorized by Congress in 1924, justifying this on the grounds of 'inappropriateness' in view of the Geneva negotiations of the Preparatory Commission. The Congress insisted on inserting funding for the cruisers.¹ In February 1927, the navalists in Congress attempted to authorize ten new cruisers, of 10,000 tons displacement each. This Congressional threat to Coolidge's policy of limiting naval expenditure made a Conference to speed up disarmament very attractive.

Meanwhile, in London, the Board of Admiralty was concerned about the dangers of renewed naval competition. In December 1926 a memorandum submitted by the Third Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield, proposed international discussions on measures which would maintain British security while containing naval expenditure.² These included the reduction in size of future cruisers, introduction of the Washington ratios for eight-inch cruisers, restrictions on the number of destroyers and submarines, and extension of the life of capital ships. The discussion which followed on naval reductions led to a paper being forwarded to the Prime Minister setting out the case for holding a separate naval Conference.³ This stated the preference of the Admiralty for a separate Conference in Britain, where 'the uncertainties of Geneva would give way to the realities of London', and where greater control of the proceedings

1. New York Times, 9 Dec. 1926; A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1927, p.33.

2. ADM 1/8699-118/26, 21 Dec. 1926. See also Roskill, Naval Policy..., I, p.499.

3. ADM 167/75 (Board Minutes), 27 Jan. 1927/Minute 2286; ADM 167/76, Memorandum on Limitation of Armaments dated 24 Jan. 1927; also undated Admiralty memorandum, presumably Jan. 1927, Baldwin Papers, Section E.5, Vol.130.

by the British side could be secured. No doubt with the Washington Conference in mind, the memorandum added, 'other Powers would not be able to forestall us in making practical proposals'.¹

As in 1921, however, the Americans acted first, and on 10 February, President Coolidge issued invitations to the five Washington Powers,² and sent an explanatory message to Congress.³ As a concession to European concern for the future of the Preparatory Commission's efforts, the President proposed that the new Naval Conference should be held in Geneva as an extension of the Preparatory Committee. It was initially felt that the existing representatives at Geneva of the Five Powers would at some point form themselves into the new Conference - presumably after the next session of the Commission, scheduled to meet on 21st March.⁴ Japan, however, pointed out that her delegates at Geneva had no instructions beyond the Preparatory Commission, and France and Italy refused to join the proposed Conference.⁵ They argued that although an exception had proved possible for Capital Ships, they did not want all maritime armaments limited by treaty unless agreement was simultaneously reached on land and air weapons. They would not, therefore, go outside the framework of the Preparatory Commission; although the Italians indicated their interest in participation 'if they could be assured that the American Government would adopt as a basis of the discussions the principle of parity between Italy and France'.⁶

1. ADM 167/76, *ibid.*

2. Text in Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1927, i, pp.2-5; also CAB 23/54, Cabinet 10(27) with CP 59(27).

3. Text in FRUS, 1927, i, pp.6-8.

4. Memorandum by Hon. A. Cadogan, 11 Feb. 1927, W1052/61/98: Documents on British Foreign Policy (here after DBFP), Series 1A, Vol.III (hereafter 1A/III), no.333.

5. Herrick (Paris) to Kellogg, 15 Feb. 1927: FRUS, 1927, i, pp.10-13 and Fletcher (Rome) to Kellogg, 21 Feb. 1927, *ibid.*, pp.14-16.

6. Sir A. Chamberlain to Sir R. Graham (Rome), 1 March, 1927: DBFP, 1A/III, #30.

Even more ominous for the Conference's prospects, was the reply of the British Government. This was not published until 28th February, although it was informally communicated to the Americans three days earlier.¹ Britain was last to reply, partly because of the need to consult with the Dominions, but partly because of doubts expressed by Viscount Cecil and within the Foreign Office as to the wisdom of appearing to abandon the Preparatory Commission.² The language in which Britain accepted the invitation was most pointed in drawing attention to the 'well-known' views of the British Government 'upon the special geographical position of the British Empire, the length of inter-imperial communications, and the necessity for the protection of its food supplies'.³ Such language called into question the whole idea of equality with the United States, and in particular emphasized those elements of the British strategic thinking which saw the greatest threat to British security as the menace of surface raiders to shipping routes around the Empire. The answer to such a threat, before the emergence of long-range maritime patrol aircraft, lay in large numbers of cruiser-class vessels. Whether this was a realistic threat is, however, open to grave doubt. The British obsession with defence of her trade routes lay in her experience in the Great War.⁴

The Admiralty calculated that forty-five cruisers were the minimum required for effective direct trade protection. Of these, twelve could

1. FRUS, 1927, i, pp.22-23: Houghton (London) to Kellogg, 22 Feb. 1927; Memorandum for United States Government, by Sir A. Chamberlain, 25 Feb. 1927: DBFP, IA/III, #340, Enclosure; Hansard, Parl. Debs., 5th Series, H. of C., vol.203, col.29.

2. D. Carlton, 'The Naval Disarmament Conference of 1927', Political Science Quarterly, Vol.83(1968), pp.574-55 (Note 8), DBFP, IA/III, #S 333, 334.

3. DBFP, Ia/III, #340, Enclosure.

4. See, for example, speeches by W.C. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, on Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament held at Geneva from 20th June to 4th August, 1927 (League of Nations, Geneva, 1927) (hereafter referred to as Records of the Conference), pp.29, 37-8.

be expected to be refitting or refuelling at any given moment. This would leave approximately one cruiser for every 2,500 miles of the 80,000 miles of British trade routes.

The threat of starvation then, however, had not been brought about by surface raiders - chiefly converted merchantmen - which could be countered by cruisers, but by submarines, against which it had proved necessary to employ destroyers and depth-charges, rather than cruisers and 6-inch guns.

The British defence at the Conference of the 6,000 ton 6-inch cruiser, also seems surprising given that the threat was supposed to come from vessels which, on First World War experience and current practice, might also be expected to carry a 6-inch gun, thus affording no clear margin of superiority. Indeed, in the years 1922-1927, Britain laid down thirteen 10,000-ton cruisers and one of 8,300 tons. All were designed to mount 8-inch guns.¹ Under such circumstances the American side can be forgiven for viewing British intentions with considerable suspicion.

On the other hand, the British contended, with some logic, that if cruisers were not to be subdivided into two classes, of (say) approximately 6,000 tons maximum with 6-inch guns, and 10,000 tons with 8-inch guns, and there was only a general tonnage limit for cruisers, then the higher limit would be the standard for all cruiser construction. If all new cruisers were to mount main batteries of ten or twelve 8-inch guns, the net result would be a very great increase in combat power and in naval expenditure.

On 8th March, the American Administration announced that it regarded a Three-Power Conference as being better than no conference at all, and

1. League of Nations Armaments Yearbooks.

that consultations with Britain and Japan were proceeding.¹ A week later, formal confirmation of the invitation was despatched to the accepting Powers, and the French and Italian Governments agreed to send observers to the conference.²

Despite the mention of 'consultations', no serious preliminary negotiations were undertaken between the invitation and the opening of the Conference. On the American side, this failure to undertake the diplomatic groundwork reflected a reluctance to take the initiative at the impending Conference, despite the Administration's eagerness to have the Conference held.³ Considerable preparation was, however, proceeding within the US Navy Department. During March and April the General Board of the Navy prepared a report at the request of Navy Secretary Curtis Wilbur, outlining its requirements in any scheme of further limitation.⁴ After examining the naval policies of the five major naval Powers, the Board's report reviewed with satisfaction the success of the Washington ratios in establishing a balance in capital ships, and proposed their extension to auxiliary vessels. Anticipating the probable British claim to superiority in cruisers, it declared that 'Equality with Great Britain is the sole basis on which a just treaty limitation can be imposed'.⁵ In the cruiser class, as for destroyers and submarines, it was proposed that only total tonnage for the category should be restricted, with no qualitative restrictions governing the allocation of tonnage and armament

1. New York Times, 9 March, 1927.

2. FRUS.

3. See, for example, Adm. Hilary P. Jones to Adm. E.W. Eberle, 17 March, 1927: Jones Papers, Box 1; Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Library of Congress.

4. US Navy Department, Historical Branch, Operational Archives: Records of the General Board of the Navy, File GB-438, serial 1347, report of 27 April, 1927.

between ships in each class. It was hoped that a total tonnage for cruisers of between 250,000 and 300,000 tons for each of Britain and America could be agreed.¹

American hopes that Britain could be made to settle for equality in cruisers and other auxiliary vessels at the relatively low levels suggested in the General Board's Report, had some foundation in the history of the Washington Conference. At that Conference, the British delegation had, in the United States' eyes, committed itself to equality in principle with America in auxiliary vessels. This idea was grounded upon two things: first, it was France, not Great Britain, which had at Washington rejected extension of the capital ship ratios to auxiliary vessels; and secondly, Balfour had accepted the figure of 450,000 tons, put forward by the American delegation of the Conference as a suggested total for vessels auxiliary to the battle fleets of the two countries.²

On both points the actual British position was not what it appeared. The Admiralty in 1921 had strongly opposed parity in cruisers, and the British delegation to Washington had been able to avoid rejecting the proposal only because the French - fearing Italian claims - did so first.³ Balfour's acceptance of 450,000 tons as a limit applied exclusively to those auxiliary vessels attached to the battle fleets, while he had not intended such a figure to apply to vessels which in the Royal Navy operated independently of those fleets - specifically, the trade-route-patrol cruisers.⁴ These differences of outlook and interpretation were not recognized and reconciled before the Conference due to lack of preliminary

1. ibid. See also Bridgeman diaries, '1927 June-August', p.143, Churchill College, Cambridge.

2. A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1927, pp.40-1.

3. S. Roskill, Naval Policy between the Wars, i, pp.311-315; p.321; H. and M. Sprout, Towards a New Order of Sea Power, pp.161-70.

4. Toynbee, op.cit., p.41; The Times, 8 August, 1927.

consultation.

The Admiralty's plans were similarly prepared and adopted in isolation and without an attempt to find out what would be acceptable to the other Powers, and accepted by the Cabinet without serious debate.¹ The Admiralty sought further reductions in capital ship and aircraft carrier fleets, both by increasing their age limits and reducing the tonnage and gun calibre of future vessels. 8-inch-gun cruisers would be included in the capital ship category, by reducing the limits for cruiser construction to 7,500 tons with a 6-inch gun. Below this level, the Admiralty sought restriction by numbers of vessels in service, rather than by tonnage limits for any class; and for cruisers a complicated scheme was proposed, designed to safeguard British superiority in the class. Cruisers under 7,500 tons were to be divided between vessels used for fleet work, and vessels used for the control of communications. In the fleet category, there would be five cruisers allowed for every three battleships, thus extending the capital-ship ratios between Powers; but in the second category ratios would be based on the length of sea communications, measured by ton-mileage of shipping actually at sea on a given day. On this basis, Britain could claim more than twice as many trade-protection cruisers as the US Navy. The Admiralty added, moreover, that its minimum requirement of forty-five trade protection cruisers was absolute, not relative, and that 'no reduction can be accepted in this category'.² This British

1. CID, 227th Meeting, 20 May, 1927; Cabinet 34(27), 25 May, 1927; see CAB 23/55. The Admiralty's plan is filed in ADM 1/8715; the original draft is dated Plans Division, 14 April, 1927; circulated to Cabinet as CID Paper 808-B(CAB 4/16).

2. The Admiralty's figures produced the following table of cruiser allocation:

	Fleet cruisers on basis of 5:3 with battleships	Ton-mileage of shipping at sea 1 April, 1926.	Trade-protection Cruisers in prop- ortion to ton- mileage with 45 as British requirement	Total Cruiser fleets.
Britain	25	27,229,492,000	45	70
USA	25	12,379,311,000	22	47
Japan	15	3,757,721,000	6	21

claim to cruiser superiority became the centrepiece of the Conference's debates.

Whilst the two countries' naval authorities were preparing their claims for the forthcoming Naval Conference, the Preparatory Commission continued to meet in Geneva. The technical committees of the Commission had only shown up the many differences between the Powers. In attempts to break the deadlock, both Britain and France submitted quite different drafts for a General Disarmament Convention to the Preparatory Commission in March, 1927.¹

The British draft dealt separately with land, naval and air armaments, proposing a different basis of limitation for each category. The French draft, on the other hand, stressed the inter-dependence of the three fields, and attempted to include such factors as the population, natural resources and geographical boundaries of a country.² A number of specific differences also emerged in the two drafts; and apart from the question of how to account for trained reserves in land armies, the basis of naval limitation became the most contentious question at issue. The French contended that a single figure for the total tonnage of each Navy should be the starting point for the discussion of any possible limitation, whereas the British argued that limitation should be agreed separately for each of a number of different classes of vessel, differentiating nine such categories in a list which sub-divided accepted classes such as cruisers and submarines.³ The United States supported

1. Texts are printed in Cmd.2888 of 1927, Report of the British Representative to the Third Session of the Preparatory Commission. For the British and French reactions to each other's drafts, see DBFP, 1A/III, Nos.57,67,85 and 89.

2. A comparison of the two drafts is included in W.7564/28/98 F.O. Memorandum of 7 Aug. 1928, by J. Kirkpatrick; copy in PREM 1/72.

3. Kirkpatrick memorandum, *ibid.*; W.3080/61/98 (Mr. London [Geneva], T.G. No.54 L.N., 4 April, 1927): DBFP, 1A/III, No.110; Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, Series IV, pp.155-74; Cmd.3211 of 1928, Papers regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments, Nos.6 and 7.

the general principle of limitation by separate categories, but not the precise classification suggested by the British. A French compromise suggestion of four categories was rejected by the British, chiefly because it still lumped together in one class all 'auxiliary surface vessels below 10,000 tons'.¹ The Americans did not commit themselves on the suggested compromise, while the Italians, who had supported the original French proposal for total-tonnage limitation, expressed their dissatisfaction. Under these circumstances, the Preparatory Commission adjourned on 26th April, with a Report which made no attempt to reconcile or disguise the wide divergence of view between Britain and France.

The adjournment focussed hopes for naval limitation on the forthcoming Coolidge Conference. While the Preparatory Commission had only to lay down the principles of disarmament, the draft Convention being intended to establish the method, not the actual formula of limitation, the Geneva Conference was planned to deal with the apparently more difficult task of producing a definite convention. To draw up such an agreement, only Britain sent an appropriately strong team, headed by Viscount Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Viscount Cecil. They were accompanied by Vice-Admiral Frederick Field, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, and by an Empire delegation of representatives of each self-governing Dominion. Amongst these, New Zealand appointed Admiral Lord Jellicoe, a former Governor-General of that territory, whose presence did much to strengthen the Admiralty's hand within the delegation.² The United States delegation was restricted to individuals already connected with the Preparatory Commission, 'refraining from any effort to

1. Documents of the Preparatory Commission..., Series IV, *ibid.* DBFP, IA/III, No.126.

2. Full list in ADM/2609, and in The Times, 9 June, 1927.

produce an artificial impression by the selection of outstanding personalities'.¹ The principal delegates were once again Hugh Gibson and Admiral Hilary Jones, his naval adviser. They were accompanied by Admirals Andrew Long and Frank Schofield, and by Allen Dulles, a young Wall Street lawyer, as legal adviser, completing the delegation of five.

The Japanese delegation sent a similar balance of civilians and Admirals, led by the Governor-General of Korea, Admiral Viscount Saito, and the Japanese Ambassador to France, Viscount Ishii, a former Foreign Minister. The composition of the delegations, therefore, was very different from those at the Washington Conference. The civilian delegates were less senior and correspondingly more dependent on naval advice and instructions from home, leaving the naval advisors determined to sustain their professional freedom of action as the dominant figures at the Conference.²

The Geneva Naval Conference: The Proposals

The Conference opened on 20th June. After the formalities of electing a chairman (Gibson) and secretary (Hugh Wilson, the US Minister to Switzerland), the establishment of an executive committee to handle all serious business, and the sending of a respectful telegram to President Coolidge, the three delegations announced their conflicting proposals.³ Of these,

1. Kellogg to Coolidge, 27 May, 1927, ibidi. Attempts were made to produce a more illustrious delegation: see F.B. Kellogg to President Coolidge, 24 March, 1927, MS Coolidge Papers, Box 426, File 2758a, Library of Congress; Kellogg's own recommendations are in Kellogg to Coolidge, 27 May, 1927, Coolidge Papers, Box 426, File 2758a, reproduced in FRUS, 1927, i, pp.40-1.

2. See, for example, Bridgeman Diaries, p.143 - 1927 June-August. Churchill College, Cambridge.

3. The verbatim reports of the Plenary Session, together with the minutes of the executive and technical committees of the Conference, are published in Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament Held at Geneva from 20 June to 4th August, 1927, League of Nations, Geneva, 1927.

the American plan was the most detailed and far-reaching, while deceptively simple in method. It amounted to an application of the 5:3:3 ratio to cruisers, destroyers and submarines, with age limits for replacement and the limitation of the total tonnage for each type.¹ To ensure that the ratio would relate to a level of tonnage which would mean genuine limitation, rather than new construction, they put forward the following suggested British and American tonnage levels: cruisers, 250,000 to 300,000 tons; destroyers, 200,000 to 250,000 tons; and submarines, 60,000 to 90,000 tons. The British proposals were more complicated, and no figures were put forward to suggest the actual levels of limitation. The Bridgeman plan included the extension of the Washington ratio to only one category of auxiliary vessel, the 10,000 ton, 8-inch cruiser, and made no mention of total tonnage constraints. On the other hand, it sought limitation of the size and replacement ages of auxiliary vessels, the actual fleet sizes to be determined on the basis of the absolute, not the relative, needs of each Power. The British also called for further restrictions on the capital ship fleets, rather than waiting for their review in 1931 under the Washington Treaty.²

The Japanese scheme, which was less precisely outlined, followed the American plan in proposing limitation by total tonnage, but it aimed merely to preserve the status quo rather than aiming at ideal quotas. Japan sought to establish the future limit for each Power in the three categories of cruisers, destroyers and submarines at the level of their

1. The text of the US proposals are published in the Records of the Naval Conference..., op.cit. pp.20-21, and in US Senate Document No.55 (1927). Its details are discussed in London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 21 June, 1927 (W 5722/61/98), printed in DBFP, IA/III, No.365; CAB 27/350 (Minutes of Meetings of the British Empire Delegation), Second Meeting (21 June, 1927); and A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1927.

2. The text of the British proposals are published in the Records of the Naval Conference..., op.cit., pp.22-25, in the US Senate Document No.55 of 1927, and in the British White Paper Cmd.2964 of 1927.

existing strength, combined with their current building programmes.¹

The American and Japanese proposals were most unwelcome to the British Empire delegates, but over the next few days it became clear how isolated their position was. The initial reaction of the British was to seek a basis for compromise with the Japanese, who however confined themselves for the first phase of the Conference to expressions of goodwill, claiming that they were dependent upon receiving further instructions from Tokyo.² Meanwhile the 'experts' were set to work in the Technical Committee to see where and how areas of agreement could emerge, in the rather vain hope that if something could thereby be accomplished, the principles might take care of themselves.³

Vociferous opposition to the British position was mounted in the American, the continental, and even in the British press. The Americans had the best of the argument by pointing out that no revision of the capital ships agreement was possible without the participation of France and Italy; and by scorning the lack of any proposal to limit the small cruiser in the British scheme.⁴ The conclusion to be drawn was that Britain was seeking, not parity, but superiority over the United States.

On 29th June, the British Cabinet discussed the impasse, and after a lengthy debate⁵ issued a statement to the effect that it did not question

1. Texts in Records..., *ibid.*, pp.26-28, and US Senate Document No.55; the Japanese and American plans are compared in W5722/61/98, London (Geneva) to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 21 June, 1927, printed in DBFP, IA/III, No.365.

2. D. Carlton, The Naval Disarmament Conference of 1927, PSQ 1968, p.576; DBFP, IA/III, Nos.373-5 and 382.

3. W7351/61/98, FO 371/12673:R.Campbell (Geneva) to G. Villiers, 10 July, 1927.

4. Press comments are reviewed in series of letters and State Department despatches sent from Kellogg to Coolidge, in the Coolidge Papers, Library of Congress, Series I, File 20; 21 June to 28 June, 1927.

5. Described in Enclosure to No.379, DBFP, IA/III, letter of 27 June, 1927, Bridgeman to Baldwin. Reported in Hankey to Balfour, 29 June, 1927, Balfour Papers, BL Add.MSS 49704; Austen Chamberlain to Cecil, 5 July, 1927, Cecil Papers, BL Add.MSS 51079.

the American demand to parity, but reserved the right to build cruisers to meet its own needs.¹ This did not mollify the Americans, and on 5th July in the Technical Committee the British Admiral Field suggested that the only hope for combining the British requirement for numbers of cruisers with the reduction in total tonnage sought by the United States, lay in the American and Japanese delegations agreeing to limit the total tonnage of large cruisers. In reply, Admiral Jones delivered a statement which, he asked, should be 'construed as our maximum effort to meet the British viewpoint'. Jones would not discuss cruiser tonnage in excess of 400,000 tons for the duration of the Washington Treaty - that is, until 31st December, 1936. He insisted on the right of the United States Navy to operate twenty-five 10,000-ton cruisers, but was prepared to accept that the remaining cruiser tonnage might be in smaller vessels.² British anger was considerable, but suppressed.³ The next day, 6th July, Admiral Field announced the British requirement of seventy cruisers the Admiralty estimated it needed for fleet and trade protection duties.⁴ This equally angered Admiral Jones and the supporters of the American 'Big Navy' group, who were fully aware that neither President Coolidge nor the Congress would be prepared to build up the US Navy to such a level.⁵

In such an atmosphere, strains appeared within both the British and American camps. The CID discussed the situation in Geneva on 7 July, and

1. CAB 23/55, Cabinet 37(27) of 29 June, 1927; W 6026/61/98 of 29 June, 1927 (Tyrrell to London (Geneva)), printed in DBFP (Coolidge Papers, Series I, File 20).

2. Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament, op.cit., pp.109-10.

3. See W 7351/61/98, letter, 10 July, 1927, Ronald I. Campbell (Geneva) to G. Villiers, FO 371/12673.

4. See above, footnote 3, p.69. W 6340/61/98, London (Geneva) to Sir E. Howard (Washington), 6 July, 1927: printed in DBFP, IA/III, No.402; FO 371/12672; ADM 116/2609.

5. R.G. O'Connor, Perilous Equilibrium, pp.16-17.

a split emerged between Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain. Churchill, probably with the support of the service chiefs, proclaimed himself 'not over-anxious' with regard to a breakdown, while Chamberlain pleaded that Britain should try to save the Conference, fearing 'disastrous consequences' if the United States started to build against Britain.¹ For the time being Chamberlain prevailed.

In Washington, Secretary of State Kellogg surveyed the various figures that had been suggested at Geneva for the British total cruiser tonnage requirement, ranging from 462,000 to 596,000 tons and pointed out to the British Ambassador, Sir Esmé Howard, that to accept such figures would make the US Administration a 'laughing stock'. Howard remarked that in that case, the best thing was 'to let the whole conference go'.² Later, Howard raised the claim Admiral Jones had made on 5 July, of a United States requirement for twenty-five 10,000-ton cruisers. The figure was a considerable surprise to Kellogg, who was completely unaware of Jones's claim; like the British Admiralty's figures, this considerably exceeded the authorized US Navy cruiser force, currently planned at eighteen large cruisers.³ The confusion in the American camp over this was highlighted at the next Plenary Session of the Conference, when Gibson denied that the American delegation had intended to claim twenty-five large cruisers.⁴

To disperse some of the hostility and confusion resulting from the claims of the two sets of naval advisers, Bridgeman pressed in the second

1. CAB 2/5: CID 228th Meeting, Item 2.

2. Memorandum by Frank B. Kellogg on a conversation with Sir E. Howard, July 6, 1927: Coolidge Papers, Series I, File 20, Reel 28.

3. FRUS, 1927/I, pp.106-7: Memorandum by Kellogg, 14 July, 1927, DBFP, IA/III, No.440: Telegram from Sir E. Howard, 14 July, 1927.

4. Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament..., op.cit., US Senate Document No.55, 1927.

week of July for another plenary session. His objective in requesting such a session seems to have been to publicly justify the British claim to seventy cruisers, given the failure of the world's press to view the British claim sympathetically.¹ Bridgeman's public remarks about the 'gross misrepresentation of the British Case' in the press reflected the bitter feelings aroused in particular by the activities of lobbyists acting in Geneva on behalf of American shipbuilding interests. One of these men, William Shearer, was later to be the subject of a Congressional investigation, to the benefit of other naval negotiations.²

Meanwhile, attempts to produce a compromise were being pursued through other channels. The Japanese offered a number of suggestions aimed at a compromise.³ These included the idea, favoured by the absent Continental nations, that if cruisers and destroyers might be treated as a single category so that the existing American lead in destroyers might politically offset the British superiority in cruisers; secondly, they suggested that Britain might keep the extra small cruisers she required in 'over-age' vessels, exempt from treaty limits; and thirdly, they suggested that if satisfactory tonnage totals could not be agreed, the Powers should agree instead upon short-term building programmes, covering four years until 1931, to avoid competitive building before the review Conference planned under the Washington Treaty for that year.⁴ The

1. See W 7297/61/98 (FO 371/12673), R.H. Campbell (Geneva) to G.H. Villiers, 16 July, 1927.

2. DBFP, IA/III, No.412, W6462/61/98, Memorandum by Sir A. Chamberlain of a conversation with Ambassador Houghton, 8 July, 1927; W6141/61/98 (FO 371/12673), London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain 2 July, 1927. See below, Ch.3, pp.

3. Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament..., op.cit., pp.54-5; DBFP, IA/III, No.417, London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 10 July, 1927 (W6414/61/98)

4. D. Carlton, *ibid.*, pp.582-3.

Japanese, contrary to the fears of the British delegates,¹ actively sought a compromise settlement. Admiral Saito, in particular, sympathized with the British viewpoint, on the reduction of battleship size as well as on the number of cruisers, but he was constrained by instructions from Tokyo to remain scrupulously neutral. As a result, Japan was criticized in Britain for 'sitting on the fence'; such neutrality was, however, understandable in the light of Japanese fears of an alliance between the Anglo-Saxon Powers at Japan's expense. The unlikelihood of this possibility must have been brought home by the Anglo-American division at Geneva and afterwards.²

While the Japanese suggestions were being considered by the principal delegates, junior members of the three delegations, dubbed the 'YMCA' or the 'Boy Scouts' by Bridgeman, drew up a scheme on 12th July as a basis for further discussion.³ This centred upon two of the Japanese suggestions; a limit of 550,000 tons for all surface auxiliary craft (cruisers and destroyers) for the Anglo-Saxon Powers, with a 50% ratio for Japan; and numerical limits for 10,000-ton cruisers.⁴ This broad formula enabled the heads of delegations to organize a plenary session at which their respective viewpoints were aired in a conciliatory manner.⁵

The public airing of positions served to show to the world the core of the problem: Gibson refusing to discuss numbers of vessels until agreement was reached on total tonnage; Bridgeman refusing to discuss total tonnage until he had secured seventy cruisers for Britain. The

1. See, for example, DBFP IA/III No.416; Bridgeman Diaries, 1927, June-August, pp.145-6.

2. Captain Malcolm D. Kennedy, The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-1935, pp.111-114.

3. R.H. Campbell to G.H. Villiers, 16 July, 1927: W 7297/61/98, FO 371/12673.

4. London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 12 July, 1927: DBFP IA/III No.429.

5. London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 13 July, 1927: DBFP IA/III, No.429.

Japanese suggestion for agreement on building programmes, was ignored by Gibson in his speech, and was not taken up again until the eve of the Conference's final failure. Gibson did, however, indicate that if the British and Japanese could come to some agreement, the United States could be expected to endorse it.¹

As a result of Gibson's hopeful suggestion, a series of informal talks were conducted between the British and Japanese. By 17th July Bridgeman was able to report that a formula had been worked out which seemed to satisfy both parties, and on the next day, that the Americans might accept the compromise.² British requirements would be met combining cruisers and destroyers at a level of 500,000 tons plus 25% of over-age vessels, subject to maximum percentages of cruisers and destroyers. Eight-inch cruisers would be limited at twelve vessels for Britain and eight for Japan, and submarines at some low level of parity between the three Powers.

Such a compromise, although endorsed enthusiastically by Bridgeman and Cecil, was not welcome to the British cabinet. Chamberlain thought that the Japanese 'have misunderstood our proposals for the limitation of naval armament almost as much as the Americans'.³ Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Beatty, the First Sea Lord, persuaded the Cabinet to recall the Delegates to London to explain the state of the negotiations in person.⁴ Bridgeman and Cecil angrily argued against this apparent sleight on their judgement, claiming that the critical stage

1. A.J. Toynbee, *ibid.*, pp.60-61.

2. London (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 17 July, 1927, DBFP IA/III, No.455; letter, R.H. Campbell to G.H. Villiers, 16 July, 1927: W 7297/61/98, FO 371/12673.

3. CID, 229th Meeting, 14 July, 1927, Item 4: CAB 2/5.

4. W 6647/61/98, 14 July, 1927: FO 371/12672.

of negotiations made their presence in Geneva essential.¹ The Cabinet acquiesced in this for the time being, but Baldwin established a new Cabinet Committee to monitor the events at Geneva.²

When the Anglo-Japanese compromise scheme was received in London it was strongly criticized by Lord Beatty. At a meeting of the new Cabinet Committee Beatty rejected the proposed tonnage of small cruisers and destroyers as inadequate for Britain's needs, and opposed any increase in the Japanese ratio, however small. More fundamentally, Beatty categorically ruled out acceptance by the Board of Admiralty of American parity in all classes of vessels. The central question of the post-war naval question was thereby reopened.³

The Cabinet Committee, divided between supporters of Beatty and those who believed agreement was more important than superiority, peremptorily recalled the delegates to London to attend its next meeting. Bridgeman and Cecil arrived in London on 20th July, leaving the Conference adjourned to await their return.

In the face of Bridgeman's and Cecil's argument, Beatty refused to back down, even though Bridgeman pointed out that Admiral Field and the naval team at Geneva fully accepted the scheme. After a bitter debate, the Cabinet Committee made a number of recommendations to the full Cabinet. The limited qualitative restrictions defining the characteristics and replacement ages of destroyers and submarines, which had been agreed in the Technical Committee at Geneva, should be accepted. Similar restrictions would be sought for cruisers, including their division into two classes according to size, and further limits should

1. W 6656/61/98, 14 July, 1927: DBFP IA/III No.439; Cecil to Salisbury, 14 July, 1927: Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS 51086.

2. The Limitation of Naval Armaments, 1927 (LNA[27]) Committee: CAB 27/350.

3. CAB 27/350, LNA(27) 3rd Meeting, 19 July, 1927.

be imposed on the size and armament of battleships and aircraft carriers.¹ The Cabinet then agreed upon a public statement which, while not repudiating the principle of mathematical parity with the United States, insisted that any such temporary arrangement could not be accepted as creating 'an immutable principle, which might be treated as a precedent'. Once again, Britain claimed that because of its geographical position and dependence upon extended trade routes, any limitation of light cruisers 'on the lines appropriate to large fighting ships' would not give Britain adequate security.²

Although Churchill and Hankey were reported to favour the breakdown of the Conference,³ the majority of the Cabinet decided that if the United States rejected the British position, they would announce a building programme for light cruisers until 1936, and declare that they would not object if the United States built an equal number, Japan building in proportion. Light cruisers could then, it was hoped, be shelved, while the Conference turned to other areas of limitation.⁴

Bridgeman and Cecil returned to Geneva, but the British declaration had made an agreement much less likely.⁵ The American reaction was quick in coming; the United States 'would never agree to limitation in one class of cruiser and not in another', and if the British insisted on this, the Conference was 'doomed to failure'.⁶

1. CAB 23/55, Cabinet 43 (27), 22 July, 1927.

2. Delivered in Parliament on 27 July, 1927. Hansard, House of Lords: 5th Series, Vol.68, Cols.933-936.

3. See e.g. Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, 24 July, 1927, Austen Chamberlain papers; Bridgeman diaries, June-August 1927: Cecil To Salisbury, 31 July, 1927, Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS 51086.

4. CAB 23/55, *ibid*.

5. W 7192/61/98, 29 July, 1927: DBFP #475; FO 371/12673.

6. W 7179/61/98, 28 July, 1927: DBFP #471, FO 371/12673.

Bridgeman now put forward a modified compromise plan for the Conference's consideration. This time submarines were to be added to the proposed aggregate total of surface auxiliary vessels, at a suggested total of 590,000 tons (instead of 500,000 of surface vessels only) for the British Empire and the United States, with 385,000 tons (instead of 325,000) for Japan. Of these totals, submarine tonnage was not to exceed 90,000 tons for Britain and America, and 60,000 for Japan. Each Power might additionally retain vessels beyond the replacement age up to a limit of 25% over total tonnage, while the replacement ages themselves were to be set at 18 years for 10,000 ton cruisers, and 16 years for other cruisers, among other categories. This would enable Britain to increase its cruiser tonnage in service by the use of over-age vessels. The small cruiser class was to be confined to vessels of less than 6,000 tons displacement and guns of not more than 6-inch calibre, although each Power could retain existing vessels which fell between these limits and the 10,000-ton, 8-inch gun class.¹ There was general disappointment that no breakthrough was made on Bridgeman's and Cecil's return.² From the American viewpoint, it maintained all the points to which Gibson and Jones had previously taken exception. Gibson told the British that he could not accept restriction of the guns of newly-constructed cruisers to less than 8-inch calibre; apart from the central cruiser question, Gibson saw 'no insuperable difficulties', but it was made clear that

1. These were the ten 'Omaha' class vessels of the United States, of 9,000 tons displacement, with twelve six-inch guns, completed between 1923 and 1925; the two 'Emerald' Class (7,100 tons; seven 6-inch guns; completed 1925-6), the four 'Hawkins' class (9,750 tons; seven 7.5-inch guns; completed 1918-1925), and two 'York' class (8,400 tons; six 8-inch guns; building) cruisers of the Royal Navy; and for Japan, four 'Furataka' class cruisers (7,100 tons; six 8-inch guns; completed 1926-7). Full details of individual vessels are available in the League of Nations Disarmament Yearbooks (1920-1939, annually); the British Admiralty's Fleet Statistics (HMSO, annually: Cmd.2809 for 1927); and in Brassey's Naval Annuals.

2. The Times, 29 July, 1927; New York Times, 29 and 30 July, 1927.

unless the cruiser issue was settled it was useless to discuss other terms.¹ In Washington, Secretary Kellogg told the press that the new proposals were 'even worse' than the original Anglo-Japanese plan, and that the British were still calling for a much larger navy than the United States considered reasonable.²

The cruiser tonnage proposed by Great Britain was, according to American interpretations, at least 426,000 tons of the 590,000 total for auxiliary vessels - 120,000 tons for the twelve large cruisers and 306,000 tons in smaller cruisers, to give the total of seventy vessels which Britain claimed met her 'needs'. Such a level was far above that of the United States cruiser force, but was also greater than the existing British Empire total. The American contention that the conference had met to limit or reduce armaments, not to increase them, gave them at least a strong moral case.

A plenary session called for 1st August seemed likely to terminate the Conference once America had rejected the British proposals. Both the State Department and the Foreign Office spent 30 July considering the best way of concluding the Conference and portraying their respective cases in the most favourable light.³ On 31 July, however, Kellogg asked Gibson to have the plenary session postponed until 4 August.⁴ This was done to give the State Department more time to prepare their case; but it also gave time for last-minute attempts to secure some kind of compromise.

1. FO 371/12673: W 7184/61/98, B.E.D.(Bridgeman) to FO., 29 July, 1927: DBFP IA/III No.474; W 7192/61/98, B.E.D.(Cecil) to FO., 29 July, 1927, 28 July, 1927.

2. Manchester Guardian, 30 July, 1927; New York Times, 30 July, 1927; FO.371/12673, W 7222/61/98, Chilton (Washington) to FO.29 July, 1927.

3. FO.371/12673: W 7222/61/98, 29 July, 1927, Chilton (Washington) to FO.; W 7224/61/98, FO. to B.E.D., 30 July, 1927; W 7000/61/98, 30 July, 1927, FO. to Howard (Manchester, Mass.); all in DBFP IA/III, Nos.476, 481 and 482.

4. FRUS, 1927, Vol.1, pp.140-145.

To try to salvage something from the Conference, the Japanese returned to their earlier suggestion of agreement on future building programmes, leaving aside the irreconcilable differences on matters of principle.¹ This suggestion, acceptable to neither the British nor the Americans, was dropped when Gibson rejected the idea of building programme limitation without total tonnage limits, on the evening before the scheduled plenary session.² Parallel to the Japanese proposal, Alan Dulles of the American delegation put forward the suggestion of an 'escape clause', to be incorporated into any agreement on cruisers to make it more palatable to the British. This provided that any Contracting Power feeling threatened by another Power's building in any class, could reconvene the Conference to seek adjustment in its tonnage allocations by agreement. Failing agreement at such a meeting, the threatened Power could terminate the Treaty upon a year's notice.³

Such a clause was unacceptable to the British as long as it made no mention of the 8-inch cruiser problem. Cecil proposed an amendment which would allow the reconvening of the Conference if any party should at any time desire to construct cruisers mounting guns of larger calibre than six inches. Cecil felt very strongly that the Dulles Clause, if amended, should be pursued as a means to break the deadlock, and he felt that the major obstacle to agreement was the position of his own government. On 1st August he telegraphed to Salisbury urging acceptance of the amended Dulles Clause, and threatening to resign from the Cabinet if it was not prepared to make concessions over 8-inch guns.⁴ The Cabinet

1. FO 371/12673: W 7312/61/98, 2 Aug., 1927, DBFP IA/III, No.493.

2. FO 371/12673: W 7312/61/98, 2 Aug., 1927, DBFP IA/III, No.492
Records of the Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armament, op.cit., pp.126-7; FO 371/12673, W 7363/61/98, 4 Aug., 1927; DBFP No.499.

3. Records of the Conference..., op.cit., p.125.

4. FO 371/12673, W 7276 and W 7277/61/98, 2 Aug., 1927; Cecil to Salisbury, 1 Aug., 1927, Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS.51086

met on 3 August, but after a lengthy and heated debate during which Cecil's telegram and threat of resignation were read out, rejected the Dulles Clause as an insufficient guarantee for Britain. Cecil's threat was met by 'several' counter-threats of resignation 'on the Winston side'.¹

With no progress in sight on either the Dulles Clause or the Japanese building programmes scheme, the plenary session on 4th August was, as expected, the conclusion of the conference. Each delegation re-stated its case, the British and Japanese with great restraint; the American statements held open the door to further negotiations in the future, but struck a slightly harsher note with their statements. Kellogg, in Washington, declared to the press that America had, at Washington, made greater sacrifices in its naval strength than any other Power, and had now gone to Geneva with 'every reason to believe that the British Government was prepared to carry out a real reduction...'. Gibson, at the Plenary Session, denounced the British cruiser requirements doctrine, and declared that he could not understand why, in a time of profound peace, the British Government considers a considerable programme of naval expansion as an absolute and even a vital necessity.²

On Cecil's return to London, on 8th August, he submitted his resignation as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In Baldwin's absence in Canada, both Sir Austen Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury appealed to Cecil to reconsider his resignation, but he was adamant.³ The original letter

1. CAB 23/55, Cabinet 47(22); Salisbury to Cecil, 3 Aug., 1927, Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS 51086.

2. Kellogg to Coolidge, 4 Aug., 1927, No.187: Coolidge Papers, Reel 29, Library of Congress. FO 371/12673, W 7287/61/98, 1 Aug., 1927; DBFP IA/III, No.485; also Minute to W 7287 by G.H. Villiers, 2 Aug., 1927, in FO 371/12673. Kellogg to Coolidge, 4 Aug., 1927, unnumbered: CP, Reel 29.

3. Salisbury to Cecil, 4 Aug. 1927: Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS 51086; Cecil to Sir A. Chamberlain, 10 Aug., 1927: CP; Add.MSS 51079.

does not appear to have survived, but it was described by Hankey in a Cabinet memorandum as 'couched in rather bitter and violent language', and privately as 'a poisonous document'.¹ When Baldwin returned to London, on 24 August, Cecil produced a second draft of his letter of resignation, which was only slight toned down, and which Cecil desired to publish. Baldwin consulted Balfour and Hankey, who advised against the letter's publication on the grounds that it was in conflict with Hankey's recollection of proceedings within the Cabinet, and that 'it would have a deplorable and misleading effect abroad, not only in regard to (the British) attitude towards disarmament but on our foreign policy generally'.² After prolonged and bitter exchanges, a letter was issued to the press on 30 August which avoided all detailed reference to the events surrounding the Naval Conference, and was accompanied by a reply from the Prime Minister.³ But that was not the end of the matter, for in the House of Lords on 16 November, Cecil made a speech during a debate on the League of Nations which reverted to the attack on the Government Cecil had made in the first drafts of his resignation letter.⁴ By this time, however, the initial stir caused by Cecil's resignation had worn off, and Baldwin made no response to Cecil's outburst.⁵

1. CAB 63/39, minute dated 30 Aug., 1927; CAB 21/297, Hankey to Balfour, 26 Aug., 1927.

2. CAB 63/69, *ibid.*

3. Hankey to Baldwin, 27 Aug., 1930: Baldwin Papers, Vol. 130, pp. 41-5, and in CAB 21/297; Hankey to Baldwin, 30 Aug., 1930: in CAB 21/297, reprinted in full in Roskill, Hankey, II, pp. 442-3; The Times, 30 Aug., 1927.

4. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, H. of L., Vol. 69, Cols. 84-100.

5. See Roskill, Hankey, II, p. 444. For reactions in Britain to the Conference's failure and Cecil's resignation, see e.g., Toynbee, *op.cit.*; Brassey's Naval Annual, 1928; P.J. Noel-Baker, Disarmament and the Coolidge Conference, London, 1927. For American reactions, see, e.g. B.H. Williams, The United States and Disarmament, New York, 1931; FO 371/12675, A 6073/133/45, 22 Sept., 1927, enclosure detailing conversation between British Military Attaché, Washington, and General Commanding 1st Corps., US Army, in DBFP, IA/IV, No. 209.

Apart from the central cruiser question, a number of contributory factors can be isolated which obstructed agreement. The most obvious factor was the lack of diplomatic preparation by the participating Powers. Although the naval experts of the Powers had made their preparations, calculating the greatest wartime advantage for their respective navies with the least peacetime expenditure, both the Admiralty and the Navy Department made their calculations in isolation, without reference to each other's needs or desires. Thus the British proposals were designed for a Power facing extensive commitments but with weak financial resources; they therefore sought large numbers of inexpensive ships, demanding many small cruisers but the reduction in size of battleships. The US Navy, aware of its strong financial position, sought smaller numbers of qualitatively superior vessels with long range and high offensive power - chiefly the 8-inch cruiser class. The two naval staffs' requirements, adopted as national policy, became rigid programmes from which, once tabled at the Conference, the negotiators would not be moved. Under such circumstances, debate over what constituted 'parity' became extraordinarily difficult, and British divisions and, arguably, outright duplicity over conceding it made an agreed formula for 'parity' impossible.

The naval stranglehold at the conference could have been broken by strong-willed and knowledgeable civilian delegates, fully backed by their heads of government. Such conditions did not exist at Geneva. The heads of government of Britain and America both showed a singular lack of interest, being away from their capitals on holiday at critical periods of the conference. The civilian delegates were themselves handicapped, the Americans by lack of seniority and experience in naval affairs, and the British by uncertainty as to whether they could expect to be supported by their government. The civilians became overshadowed by the Admirals, of whom Jones on the American side, and Field and Jellicoe on the British Empire's side, exercised almost complete control over their countries'

positions in the critical Technical Committee. In the House of Commons, Commander Bellairs neatly summed up the situation by saying, 'We allowed the Admirals to talk and they straightaway began to fire broadsides at each other'.

Matters were made more difficult by the failures of communication between Geneva and the delegations' governments, as, for example, when Gibson failed to report to Washington Admiral Jones' claim that the US Navy should operate twenty-five 10,000-ton cruisers.¹ Equally, misconceptions as to the course of the negotiations led to Bridgeman and Cecil being summoned home, with the subsequent adverse impact at Geneva. The lack of organization of the British delegation was astonishing. Ronald Campbell, the Foreign Office adviser to the delegation, forwarded to London a letter to the Prime Minister from Bridgeman written three weeks earlier, with a covering note reading:

'Dear Department,

It is no good being cross with me about these despatches because I don't care a blow. In any case, I don't suppose you read them...'²

It is easy to understand why Captain Roskill has suggested that the absence of Hankey's administrative genius may have been a major contributing factor to the Conference's failure.³

Another problem was the atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue at the Conference. Because the business of the Conference was conducted behind closed doors, with few statements and bulletins put out to the press by the different delegations, rumour and inaccurate reporting prevailed among the press Corps. In each participating country, public suspicion and hostility to the proceedings at Geneva grew during the weeks the

1. See above, p.77.

2. FO 371/12674, W 7447/61/98, 4 Aug., 1927.

3. S. Roskill, Hankey, II, p.439.

Conference was in session.¹ The rôle played by William Shearer, the American naval shipbuilders' lobbyist, may have contributed to the almost unanimous opposition to limitation displayed by the American press, but the contribution made by press reporting to the actual breakdown of the Conference is impossible to assess. In the end, Mr. Shearer unwittingly served the cause of armament limitation, because in the autumn of 1929 his activities at Geneva were the focus of a Senatorial investigation which unquestionably helped prepare a more favourable state of opinion for the London Conference of 1930.² On the British side, the failure of the delegation to present their case effectively to the press reflected its lack of an accompanying professional publicist, a rôle which had been filled at Versailles in 1919 and Washington in 1921-2 by a newspaper proprietor, Lord Riddell.³

Other minor influences which may have contributed to the breakdown include the time of year at which the Conference was held. The summer heat in Geneva did not facilitate hard work, while Washington in July, before the advent of air-conditioning, was a place where no business at all was done.⁴ Kellogg, in Washington, had to handle the American end of the negotiations with the President and the British Ambassador absent at summer retreats, and with the State and Navy Department staffs cut to a minimum. The absence of Sir Esmé Howard from Washington may have been no great problem given the mutual dislike between the Ambassador and Secretary Kellogg. This cannot have helped the British

1. See leading article in The Times, 23 July, 1927.

2. Alleged Activities at the Geneva Conference, hearings before a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 1930.

3. FO 800/261, Sir E. Howard to Sir A. Chamberlain, 1 Sept., 1927; DBFP IA/III #506.

4. See Roskill, Naval Policy, I, p.515, text and note 1.

government's ability to assess American official thinking, however. The absence of France and Italy reduced the range of options available as avenues of negotiation once the initial positions of the Anglo-Saxon powers had proved irreconcilable. Their presence, acting either in concert with Japan as mediators, or as Latin objectors to Anglo-Saxon power, might conceivably have persuaded or forced the great Powers to stand together, as they were to do three years later against the continental Powers.

Technical and organizational factors notwithstanding, one must conclude an assessment of the Geneva Naval Conference by returning to the fundamental obstacle to agreement, the gulf between the 'doctrine of requirements' and the principle of parity. It is worth considering whether the British were actually duplicitous about 'parity', as they were widely believed to have been in the United States. Certainly there was a broad consensus in the British naval circles that the British Empire needed to be superior to the United States in the cruiser class.¹

At the Conference, Bridgeman explicitly stated, 'It is not parity with America that is troubling us. We have not raised any objections to that';² but the division in the Cabinet revealed when the British delegates returned for consultation prevented Cecil and Bridgeman from repeating this principle to the Conference on their return from London, thus re-awakening American suspicions. After the Conference Churchill confirmed these suspicions when he publicly rejected 'the principle of mathematical parity in naval strength'.³ Of this statement, Lord Cecil said that 'it bangs, bolts and bars the doors against any hope of further agreement with the United States on naval armaments'.⁴

1. This problem is exemplified in L.S. Amery, Great Britain's Weakness in Modern Cruisers, Current History Magazine, Vol.20, p.231, May 1924.

2. Records of the Conference...., p.28.

3. The Times, 8 Aug.,1927.

4. Hansard, H. of L., Vol.69, Col.90.

Cecil, however, not only realized that, if disarmament was to be effected in any meaningful way, considerable risks had to be run and concessions made in the interests of agreement; but accepted also that if agreement was required then one side had to concede a degree of military inferiority. He was prepared to make his own side accept that inferiority to advance the cause of peace. That is not to say that he was a pacifist: indeed ten years later he would be a close ally of Churchill's in fighting 'appeasement' and urging British rearmament. Cecil realized that agreement between Britain and America was worth the price of surrendering Britain's supremacy, but he was too visionary for the hard-headed nationalism and Imperial pride evinced by the Baldwin government. Cecil's approach held out perhaps the only chance of securing a considerable measure of naval disarmament at Geneva; his failure to persuade the Cabinet ensured the failure of the Conference.¹

The first concrete result of the failure of the Conference was a renewed effort by American 'Big Navy' supporters to secure the expansion programme they advocated. Legislation was introduced to Congress, designed to bring the US Navy up to parity with Britain. The Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee submitted a naval construction bill authorizing the fantastic number of seventy-one new ships, to be built over a nine-year period at an estimated cost of \$740,000,000. The proposed programme included twenty-five 10,000-ton cruisers, five aircraft carriers and thirty-two submarines.² This would increase the total number

1. Surprisingly, no full biography of Bob Cecil exists, although he published two volumes of memoirs, All the Way (1949), and A Great Experiment (1941). See also a short assessment of him in Kenneth Rose's The Later Cecils (London, 1975), and for an account of his career in the Conservative Party during and after the First World War, see M.Cowling, The Impact of Labour (Cambridge, 1971, Chap.3).

2. MS Department of State, US./18, memorandum of 31 Jan., 1930. See also Norman Davis, *op.cit.*, pp.326-7.

of American cruisers to forty-three, of 400,500 tons, still less than the British total, but more powerful and more modern vessels.

Combined influences of financial orthodoxy and worried public opinion diluted the original proposals, but a modified Cruiser Bill providing for fifteen new cruisers and one aircraft carrier over four years, at a cost of \$275 millions, passed the House on 17 March, 1928.¹ In the Senate, it faced a well-organized and vociferous opposition, mounted by churches and peace societies.² This delayed consideration of the Bill until after the 1928 elections; but on balance the United States assumed a far more hostile attitude to Great Britain that year than it had for a hundred years. The annual 'Estimate of the Situation' of the War Plans Division of the Navy Department for 1928 noted the deterioration of relations with Britain as a result of the Geneva Conference, and added that 'although the treaty of alliance between Great Britain and Japan had been abrogated there were still...relationships (between them) that were very cordial'. It urged development and refinement of the Navy's 'Red' (Britain), 'Orange' (Japan) and 'Red-Orange' (Anglo-Japanese alliance) war plans as a matter of urgency.³

American fears of British intentions were further heightened during the summer of 1928 by the affair of the so-called 'Anglo-French Compromise'. This draft agreement on arms limitation between the British and French Governments was an attempt to break the deadlock which had emerged in the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.⁴ The lines of division in the Preparatory Commission had become evident in March 1927

1. New York Times, 18 March, 1928.

2. Memorandum, 18 Jan., 1933, from Chairman of the General Board (Rear Adm. J. Chase) to Secretary of the Navy (Charles Adams), MS Navy File A19(8)/EM Geneva (320930), National Archives.

3. US Navy Department, Operational Archives, Op-12A-CD: Estimate of the Situation, 13 April, 1928.

4. See above, pp.66-67.

at the Third Session, when the British and French draft conventions had been broadly supported by the United States and Italy respectively. The failure to reconcile the two drafts ended attempts at Geneva to resolve the disarmament problem separately from questions of security and arbitration. In September 1927, the Eighth Assembly of the League adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the Preparatory Commission to include consideration of guarantees of arbitration and security.¹ In November 1927, the Preparatory Commission established a Security Committee, but no further progress was made.² Similarly, the next session, in March and April of 1928, dealt largely with the Soviet Government's proposals for complete and universal disarmament, which, to nobody's surprise, was rejected as 'impractical'.³ However, while the session was in progress, Sir Austen Chamberlain met privately with M. Briand at Geneva, and suggested that Britain might agree to the division of warships into six categories, instead of the nine they had previously insisted upon. This was not sufficient to satisfy the French, but Chamberlain told Briand that 'if he could point to a concession by the French in naval matters, (British public opinion) would probably acquiesce in his giving in on the military side'.⁴ Such a bargain might take account of the two principles to which Britain and France were most committed: for Britain, the division of cruisers into two sub-categories, with a strict limitation of the larger type armed with guns of more than six inches calibre; and for France, avoidance of any restriction on the numbers of men conscripted annually

1. 'Report of the British Representatives at the League of Nations Eighth Assembly', Cmd. 3008, 1928.

2. The minutes of the fourth session are printed as League of Nations Document CPD 1(d) (January, 1928).

3. The minutes of the fifth session are printed as League of Nations Document CPD 1(e) (April, 1928).

4. Cmd. 3211 of 1928, 'Papers regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments', Item No.10; DBFP IA/IV, No.304: W 2475/28/98, Memorandum, 10 March, 1928, by British delegation at Geneva.

for military training. Such a deal could, potentially, leave the British Navy and the French Army supreme in their respective elements, without cost to the British Army or the French Navy.

In Paris in June, Chamberlain and Briand again discussed arms limitation, and Briand produced the suggestion that the length of lines of communication should be the basis for limitation of auxiliary vessels. The vulnerability of communications, Briand argued, lay at the bottom of both British and American claims, and therefore a formula which determined cruiser strength according to the length of the respective sea routes should be acceptable to both States. For France, too, it would meet her requirement of superiority over Italy.¹

Austen Chamberlain endorsed this suggestion in a telegram to Lord Cushendun, Lord Cecil's successor as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with responsibility for disarmament, who placed the matter before the Cabinet on 6 June.² The British Cabinet divided on similar lines. Madden, the First Sea Lord, was called before the Cabinet, and denounced the 'lines of communication' thesis. Madden claimed that in the Navy's calculations, factors such as the nature and volume of the trade, and the geographical position of trade routes were equally important as their length.³ Churchill and Amery, the Colonial Secretary, consequently opposed the suggestion, but they had shown themselves opposed to all formal agreement on arms control. Baldwin and Cushendun took a neutral position, and requested clarification of Briand's ideas.⁴

Meanwhile in Geneva, the French naval representative to the Preparatory Commission, Captain Deluze, put forward a new suggestion, apparently on his own initiative. Deluze felt that as Britain and Italy,

1. DBFP IA/IV, No.364: London (Geneva) to Sir W. Tyrrell, 3 June, 1928.

2. CAB 23/58, Cabinet 31(28).

3. CAB 24/195, CP 184(28).

4. CAB 23/58, Cabinet 31(28) 1, 6 June, 1928.

among other Powers, made provision for arming merchantmen as auxiliary cruisers in wartime, it was 'obviously impossible to limit ships with 6-inch guns and below'. A naval agreement should, therefore, limit only those surface vessels mounting a gun above 6-inch in calibre. This would leave Britain free to operate as many 'police' cruisers as she felt necessary.¹ The British Admiralty quickly accepted this formula, but nothing more was heard from Paris. On 26 June, therefore, after the formula had received the Cabinet's approval, Sir Austen Chamberlain asked Lord Crewe, the British Ambassador in Paris, to inform the French Government of British agreement.² Chamberlain had assumed that Captain Deluze would not have proposed such a formula without the approval of the French Government, but this was not the case.³ Deluze accused Admiral Kelly of bad faith, and was nearly dismissed from office.⁴

Fortunately the French Government saw the advantages of agreement with Britain, from the point of view of their army: Admiral Kelly was called to the French Navy Ministry, where, he recounted, the two Chiefs of Staff 'were old friends of mine and were willing to discuss it all in a friendly manner'.⁵ The French Admirals were willing to agree that the only auxiliary vessels to be limited would be submarines of over 600 tons and eight-inch cruisers, all other classes being unlimited. In return, the French insisted on the exclusion from limitation of the numbers of trained reservists, and also that all the five 'great' naval

1. DBFP IA/IV, No.366, Vice-Adm. Kelly to Admiralty, 5 June, 1928: W 6039/28/98.

2. DBFP IA/IV, No.394, Sir A. Chamberlain to the Marquess of Crewe, 26 June, 1928: W 6039/28/98.

3. Cmd. 3211 (1928), No.16.

4. Vice-Adm. Kelly, unpublished memoirs, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MS 53/001, KEL.6, p.44.

5. *ibid.*

powers should be granted parity of tonnage in 8-inch cruiser and large submarines. Although a long way from the proposals Britain had originally suggested in March as a basis for compromise, the Cabinet agreed to the French terms and the French Government was so informed on 27 July.¹

The Compromise reflected a modification of British policy in a number of areas. First, of course, was the abandonment by Britain (with her professional army) of her opposition to conscription. In the naval field, Britain conceded a degree of parity to lesser naval powers - Japan and Italy as well as France. She abandoned her opposition to submarines, and the hope that the 6-inch gun, small cruiser should be limited - in the latter case, leaving open the theoretical possibility that the United States, or another power, could outbuild Britain in that category. The naval elements of the Compromise were all unacceptable to the United States. The one aspect of the Compromise to which the United States had no objection, the matter of the trained reserves, was surprisingly the one aspect which it appears Chamberlain attempted to conceal from them: at any rate, no mention of it was made in the official notification to the US Government of the Anglo-French plan.²

The reaction in Washington was one of considerable shock. The public announcement of the Compromise, in the Commons on 30 July,³ came as a 'bombshell' to both the administration and the press in Washington,⁴ and the failure of the British Government to inform the State Department of the full details of the 'deal' worked out between Britain and France

1. CAB 23/58, Cabinet 41(28) of 25 July, 1928. The 'compromise' is set out in its final form in CAB 24/195, CP 253(28).

2. DBFP IA/V, No. 428: 30 July, 1928, Chamberlain to Chilton (Beverley Farms, Mass.), W 6987/28/98. Also in Cmd. 3211 (1928), No.28.

3. Hansard, House of Commons, Vol.320, Cols.1837-8.

4. DBFP IA/V, No.440: Cushendum to Chilton (Washington), 10 Aug.,1928, account of a conversation between Lord Cushendum and J.T. Marriner, Head of the W. European Dep't., US State Department.

caused considerable ill-feeling and apprehension.¹ Not surprisingly, the American Government disregarded the supposed helpfulness of the Compromise from the viewpoint of the Preparatory Commission, or the League in general: instead they were concerned at its impact on the Anglo-American naval position. For the United States to agree to such an arrangement would mean the complete surrender of its position at the Washington and Geneva Conferences. Moreover, it was widely suspected that the 'Compromise' implied a far broader Anglo-French alliance agreement on naval cooperation.

Press suspicion had at first no hard evidence on which to ground its fears, as the terms of the 'Compromise' remained secret. It did, however, sharply contrast the negotiation of the Anglo-French compromise and the negotiation of the Kellogg Pact. This General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, to give its full title, was signed on 27 August, 1928, after well-publicized negotiations throughout the summer of 1928. Both the Compromise and the Kellogg Pact were attempts to start afresh after the failure of the Geneva Conference and the deadlock of the Preparatory Commission. One, however, was a return to the old-fashioned style of bilateral 'deal'; the other was a radical, if naïve, attempt to transform the entire situation by a high-minded and dramatic gesture.

While the texts of the Compromise were still undisclosed, a circular letter from the Quai d'Orsay to its embassies, expounding the course of the naval negotiations and agreements reached, was 'leaked' to William Randolph Hearst, who published it in his New York American on 21 September. Hearst's newspapers, which traditionally took an anti-British editorial stance, joined with the 'Big Navy' supporters in denouncing European intrigue, subversive diplomacy, and the refusal of the British to

1. DBFP IA/V, No.448: 18 Aug., Chilton (Beverley Farms, Mass.) to Lord Cushendun; W 7838/28/98.

2. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1928, pp.73-4.

acknowledge parity. The American public, reading the vitriolic attacks in the press, might be excused for thinking that while the British could build infinite numbers of cruisers, the United States was to be restrained from building the type of cruiser best suited to its needs.¹ The new Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, Fred Britten, was quoted as having claimed that the compromise was another British attempt to 'retain domination of the high seas by subversive diplomacy'.²

The US Navy's verdict on the 'Compromise' was enunciated by Admiral Jones, who felt:

...that no useful purpose would be served by accepting, even as a basis for discussion, the Franco-British proposals. Should the Preparatory Commission incorporate as an integral part of the agenda for a future conference, the Franco-British draft agreement as its accepted method for the reduction and limitation of naval armaments, it would seem fruitless for the United States to be represented at such a Conference.³

Denunciation of the Anglo-French Compromise was prevalent in Britain, too. The Economist, in a caustic editorial, judged the Compromise to be 'an example of the worst vices of secret diplomacy'.⁴ The Compromise particularly enraged Lloyd George, who moved a censure motion on the Government, with Labour support, on 13th November. Lloyd George proclaimed that 'In signing that Pact, we antagonized two of the great friendly Powers of the World, America and Italy. To antagonize Italy is the height of folly, but to antagonize America is sheer madness'. He added: 'There has been no more dull, obstinate mishandling of American psychology since George Grenville.'⁵

1. Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual, 1929, p.89. Contemporary Review, Vol.134, Oct.,1928: George Glasgow, 'The Bogey of a New Entente'.

2. The Times, 10 Sept.,1928.

3. MS Confidential Files, Dept. of State, 500.A.15 Franco/British 52 ; US Navy Dept., Operational Archives, GB 438 Serial 1390 of 11 Sept.,1928. Also MS Confidential Files, Dept. of State, 500.A.15 Franco-British/89, undated but stamped as received by the Dept.of State Index Bureau, on 17 Oct.,1928.

4. The Economist, Vol.107 (6 Oct.,1928), p.587.

5. Hansard, Parl. Debates, House of Commons, Vol.222, Col.730.

On 28 November, 1928, the editorial writer of the Manchester Guardian declared that: 'Not for many years have the Americans and the British been on terms as bad as they are now. There is ill-feeling, suspicion, misunderstanding, and estrangement between the two nations'. This was evident in a series of impassioned speeches by Coolidge, perhaps the only such ones of his career. On the tenth anniversary of the Armistice he told the American Legion of his anger at foreign governments 'using the movement to limit and reduce armaments in order to advance their own self-interest'. He then urged the passage of the Cruiser Bill, still awaiting action by the Senate.¹

The Cruiser Bill was debated in the Senate during January and February of 1929, backed by a final plea from the President in his last State-of-the-Union address.² The debates attracted a great deal of public attention across the country, with pacifist organizations holding mass meetings to offset the vigorous lobbying of the 'Big Navy' supporters. On 5 February, the Bill passed the Senate by the overwhelming margin of sixty-eight votes to twelve, and was signed by the President on 23 February.³ Thus at the end of the Coolidge administration, the American Government was firmly set upon a course of naval rivalry with the British Empire, a course largely provoked by the British Government, whose naval limitation policy appears to have failed completely. In Bob Cecil's words,

It achieved the almost impossible result of combining against (the British Government) the opinion of the United States, of Italy, of Germany, and of the great mass of people in this country who take an interest in the subject!⁴

1. Text in New York Times, 12 Nov., 1928. See also New York Times, 20 Dec., 1928.

2. Printed in FRUS, 1928/i, p.11.

3. Congressional Record, Senate, 70th. Congress, 2nd Session. Vol.72, part 2, p.2179.

4. Cecil Papers, BM Add.MSS 51099, Cecil to St. George Saunders, 28 Nov., 1928.

Chapter III

RAPPROCHEMENT

Writing in 1932, Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, one of the most respected interwar British commentators on international relations, stated that British antagonism to the United States in the wake of the Anglo-French Compromise was 'comparable only to that manifested towards Germany in the years 1908-1914'.¹ Certainly the mood of the press of both countries, and the tone of the speeches of American politicians from Coolidge downwards, was not conducive to a renewed effort to achieve a modus vivendi on the naval relationship between Britain and America. Nevertheless in both countries more objective and sober minds appreciated the possible consequences of rivalry between the two greatest naval powers, and it was not long before the first attempts were made to extend olive branches from both sides.

The US elections of 1928, although marked by vitriolic attacks upon Britain in the campaign rhetoric of various candidates, offered the opportunity for a fresh start to be made in Anglo-American relations, through the election of Herbert Hoover as President. Before the inauguration, Sir Austen Chamberlain delivered a widely-reported speech on 28 January, 1929, which suggested the possibility of naval equality between the United States and Great Britain, 'an admission we have never made to any other nation'.² This hint was repeated two weeks later, when as the luncheon guest of the American Newspaper Correspondents in London, he emphasized that Britain would not build against the US Navy.³

1. John Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security Since Locarno, 1925-1931 (London, 1932), p.142.

2. The Times, 29 January, 1929.

3. D/S 500.A 15 a2/10: Atherton to Kellogg, 19 February, 1929.

In January 1929, President-elect Hoover discussed the possibility of an unofficial mission to London with a senior newsman of his acquaintance, Edward Price Bell.¹ Hoover wished to establish contacts with British political leaders, and to enlist the support of British newspapers for reconciliation with America. Moreover, he was interested to know whether Baldwin would be amenable to a personal 'summit' between the two leaders to resolve outstanding issues in Anglo-American relations. Bell, having spent many years in London as Foreign Correspondent of the Chicago Daily News and a personal friend of British editors such as Geoffrey Dawson of The Times and J.L. Garvin of the Observer, was eager to go and was well qualified for the job. He had the additional qualification that as a newsman with no official connection with the US government, his mission could easily be denied if any embarrassment ensued.

Arriving in London in April, 1929, Bell rapidly enlisted the support of the Observer in promoting the cause of an Anglo-American rapprochement.² The campaign was greatly aided by another Hoover initiative, undertaken by Hugh Gibson at Geneva. With advance notification to Britain, Gibson put forward a new suggestion for naval limitation to the meeting of the Preparatory Commission on 22 April.³

1. Bell's role in establishing relations between Hoover and British political leaders has been well documented, both by Bell himself and a later writer. See Edward Price Bell, 'The Origin of Premier MacDonald's visit to America', Current History, Vol. 37 (October, 1932), and 'Why MacDonald Came to America', Chicago Daily News Reprints, No. 42 (Chicago, 1942); George V. Fagan, 'Edward Price Bell: The Journalist as Diplomat', Newberry Library Bulletin, November, 1955. Bell's papers are in the Newberry Library, University of Chicago.

2. The Observer, 14, 21, 28 April, 1927.

3. Herbert Hoover, Memoirs, ii, The Cabinet and the Presidency, 1920-1933 (London 1952), p. 340; FRUS 1929/1, pp. 88-90: Memorandum to British Ambassador, 20 April, 1929. FRUS, ibid., pp. 91-6 is the Gibson Speech, also in W.S. Myers, ed., The State Papers of Herbert Hoover (Garden City, N.J. 1934), i, pp. 55-61. Private conversations the same week between Gibson and Lord Cushendon are recorded in D/S Confidential Files, 500.A 15/903: Gibson to Stimson, 25 April, 1929.

Reiterating the preference of the US Government for limitation by categories, he suggested that a flexible 'yardstick' might be produced for estimating relative naval values between different categories of ship. By including such factors as age, unit displacement and gun calibre, the relative strengths of navies could be measured more fairly than by the rigid mathematical tonnage ratios of the Washington Conference. However, Gibson added, no technical formula could itself end naval competition; a new political determination was needed, and his own government was determined to pursue the lowest possible levels of naval disarmaments. Pressed privately by Craigie afterwards, Gibson claimed that a yardstick was prepared and 'ready in the President's safe'.¹

Against the background of pessimism and deadlock at Geneva, Gibson's speech was seen as a new ray of hope for arms limitation, and widely praised in Britain and elsewhere.² British interest in Gibson's proposal was immediately made clear, and not only by her delegates at Geneva. On 24 April, the former Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, made a courtesy call on Baldwin during a private visit to England. The Prime Minister told Kellogg he believed an agreement could be worked out using a yardstick formula, and Kellogg raised the idea that he might go to Washington to discuss the naval question at a 'summit', indicating Hoover's interest in meeting with Baldwin and the President's concern for restoring amicable relations with Britain. Baldwin was evidently delighted with this suggestion.⁴

The suggestion of a summit could not be pursued immediately, though,

1. DBFP, 1A/VI, Nos.408 and 413: Patterson (Geneva) to Sir A. Chamberlain, 22-23 April, 1929.

2. London press reactions on 23 April, 1929, were reported in D/S 500A 15/892, Atherton to Stimson, 24 April, 1929.

3. D/S 500 A 15/1005: Kellogg to Stimson, 21 April, 1929.

4. Bell to President Hoover, 2 May, 1929. MS Hoover Papers, Hoover Library, Stanford, California; file 'E.P. Bell'.

as it was now Britain's turn to face a General Election. To American surprise, on 30 May the Conservatives were defeated at the polls, the Labour Party becoming the largest party in the House of Commons. On 4 June, Ramsay MacDonald was invited to form the second Labour Government.

The lack of a parliamentary majority placed constraints on the new government's freedom of action. As in 1924, it was in external rather than domestic policy that the Labour Government was most able to display its strength and talents. This, moreover, was the area in which MacDonald himself was temperamentally best suited to exercise leadership. The appointment of Arthur Henderson to the Foreign Office was taken in America as a portent of MacDonald's intentions to personally direct his Government's foreign policy.¹ It appeared that foreign policy would therefore have a very high priority under the new administration, and, to make prospects for a fresh start in Anglo-American relations seem more favourable, the new administration was pledged by its election manifesto to improve Anglo-American relations and to promote disarmament.²

One person who was left somewhat isolated by the change of government in London was Edward Price Bell. Bell, believing that the Conservatives would be re-elected,³ had continued conversations with Baldwin, Chamberlain, and other Conservatives without making any contacts with Labour leaders. On 4 June, however, Bell arranged an interview with Lord Thomson, whose

1. D/S 841.002/84, Memorandum: 8 June 1929; Department of W. European Affairs to Secretary of State; Ray Atherton to Secretary of State, 8 June 1929. For a general treatment of MacDonald and Henderson's outlooks, see R.L. Carlton, MacDonald versus Henderson, The Foreign Policy of the Second Labour Government (London, 1970), pp.15-32.

2. F.W.S. Craig, ed., British General Election Manifestos, 1900-74 (London, 1976).

3. See G.V. Fagan, 'Edward Price Bell: The Journalist as Diplomat', Newberry Library Bulletin, November, 1955.

friendship with MacDonald was to be rewarded by the post of Secretary of State for Air in the new Cabinet. Bell exhibited some letters from President Hoover, which apparently satisfied Thomson as to his credentials. Thomson then told Bell that if President Hoover invited MacDonald to visit Washington, there should be an acceptance within twenty-four hours.¹ Bell's cabled report of their conversations added that:

His (MacDonald's) conviction is that quick action would be of high importance from every standpoint. He sympathizes ardently with your determination to reduce Naval Armaments and once (and) for all remove sources (of) misunderstanding and friction between (the) British (and) America.... Personally (I) feel that we are on (the) verge of great and most beneficent (sic) developments.²

On 6 June Bell sent a further cable to George Akerson, the President's secretary, reading in part, 'We now have here both popularly and officially the best state of mind for radical solution of British American problems since (the) revolution'.³

Little more could be done through the informal contacts of Edward Price Bell. Further progress had to await the arrival of the new US Ambassador, the former Vice-President, General Dawes. The aftermath of the British election saw him still in Washington, and he was not scheduled to arrive in Britain until 14 June. Meanwhile, expectations rose that Dawes' arrival would bring a breakthrough, and in particular an invitation for MacDonald to visit America. That such an invitation was likely was given credibility by J.L. Garvin's announcement in the Observer on 9 June, that MacDonald would be glad to visit Washington.⁴ This sparked off a

1. D/S 033.4111, MacDonald 1/2: Bell to Hoover, 4 June, 1929. Forwarded from White House to Stimson. See Fagan, op.cit., p.93.

2. D/S 033.4111, ibid.

3. Fagan, op.cit., p.94; Cablegram, Bell to George Akerson, 6 June, 1929, MS Hoover Papers, Hoover Library, Stanford, California.

4. The Observer, 9 June, 1929, editorial.

rash of articles in both Britain and America, drawing attention to Bell's role, and predicting, in the restrained wording of The Times, that 'Mr. MacDonald has taken over from Mr. Baldwin that long-cherished hope of paying a visit this autumn to the President of the United States'.¹

While the press speculated, diplomatic thinking was centred upon the significance of President Hoover's Memorial Day speech of 30 May, overshadowed in Britain by coinciding with the General Election. Speaking at Arlington National Cemetery, the President had denounced the 'tide of competitive (naval) building', and warned that 'fear and suspicion would never slacken unless we halt the competitive construction of arms'. He then referred again to the need for a 'yardstick' with which to compare naval forces 'and thus maintain an agreed relativity'.² In the Foreign Office, Craigie minuted his approval of all of Hoover's remarks, excepting only the President's statement that 'all nations assent to this - that the defensive needs of navies are relative'.³ The doctrine of absolute, as opposed to relative, requirements, was still a major obstacle which rhetoric alone could not remove.

The new American resolve to pursue disarmament was re-emphasized on the day following the Memorial Day speech, when Secretary Stimson made a public statement on the reduction of naval forces. While the President spoke with reference to the promotion of peace and the elimination of the threat of war, Stimson spoke in more practical terms of the financial burdens imposed on the world, and in particular on the US by naval competition.⁴ The British Embassy reported back to London, Stimson's answers at his regular press conference on 2 June 'made it clear that

1. The Times, 12 June, 1929.

2. The Times, 31 May, 1929.

3. FO 371/13520, A 3707/30/45, Minute by Craigie, 31 May, 1929.

4. The Times, 1 June, 1929.

his statements were authorized by the President', and pointed out that this was the first indication that the new administration wanted to reduce naval expenditure greatly.¹ The British officials, while still uncertain of Hoover's actual intentions, were favourably disposed to the new gestures. Craigie minuted, 'Nothing will be more fatal than if we show ourselves unresponsive to Mr. Hoover's advances especially as regards reduction'.²

General Dawes was briefed before leaving Washington by State Department officials, who left him in no doubt that the naval question was the major issue with which he was expected to grapple.³ On 6 June Dawes lunched with Hoover and Stimson at the White House, where he was told that they would try to produce the 'yardstick' on the basis of data assembled by the Navy Department. Stimson added that he would try to get the British and Japanese Governments to do the same thing independently with the assistance of their naval advisers, so that the civilian representatives of the three governments could then compare their 'yardsticks' and agree a common one.⁴

The next day Dawes sailed from New York. Word travelled ahead that he intended to address the naval question in his first public speech, to be given, by long tradition, to the Pilgrims' Dinner. Sir Esmé Howard had cabled on 31 May that the Ambassador's speech would follow the tone of Hoover's Arlington address, and that its text had been approved by the

1. FO 371/13520, A 3662/30/45: Sir E. Howard to Sir A. Chamberlain, 4 June, 1929.

2. FO 371/13520, A 3662/30/45, *ibid.*, Minute by R. Craigie, 4 June, 1929.

3. D/S, Confidential Files, 500 A15/976a: letter J. Theodore Marriner (head of W. European Affairs Division) to Dawes, 17 May, 1929, submitting dossier on Naval Limitation. D/S 500. A15/ a3/5, Memorandum, Marriner to Stimson, 29 May, 1929, expressing desire of Hoover to have Gibson go to London to confer with Dawes on the 'yardstick'.

4. D/S, Confidential Files, 500.A15 a3/2½, Memorandum by Stimson, 6 June, 1929, concerning luncheon conference at White House.

the President and by Stimson.¹ The American Department of the Foreign Office considered whether to dissuade General Dawes from plunging straight in, but Craigie ruled that to try to dissuade him from any utterances would raise serious questions at the very outset of his career as Ambassador. The outgoing Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, was in any case glad to leave the handling of the American initiative to his successor.²

The S.S. Olympic, with Dawes on board, docked at Southampton on 14 June. The new Ambassador hurried to London by the Boat Train and was received the next morning by the King and Queen Mary at Windsor. It was noted that never before had such a short period elapsed between the arrival of a new Ambassador and his reception by the King.³ A rather less propitious note was struck in the conversation between Dawes and George V, when the new Ambassador expressed himself as strongly opposed to any visit by MacDonald to the United States. The King recorded in his diary Dawes' view that '... were the Prime Minister to go to America, it would arouse all sorts of suspicions, especially among the anti-English parties..., that pressure was being put upon the President and that America, as usual, would give way to England'.⁴

The day after arriving in England, Dawes visited MacDonald at Forres, and the two men spent most of the day discussing the naval situation.⁵ Dawes showed MacDonald the text of his proposed Pilgrims' Dinner speech, which MacDonald warmly approved.⁶ The conversation then

1. FO 371/13520, A3640/30/45: Sir E. Howard to Sir A. Chamberlain, 31 May, 1929.

2. Minutes to FO 371/13520, A 3640/30/45, *ibid.*

3. The Times, 17 June, 1929.

4. Harold Nicholson, George V (London, 1952), p.438.

5. DBFP, Second Series, 1 (henceforth 2/1), Nos.9-10: FRUS, 1929/1, pp.117-9.

6. FRUS, 1929/1, p.117, Dawes to Stimson, 17 June, 1929.

ranged over various problems which might arise in the forthcoming formal negotiations. MacDonald and Dawes agreed that questions such as belligerent rights and freedom of the seas should be held in abeyance until after agreement on the reduction of naval armaments.¹ The question of the Prime Minister's visit to the US was raised during this meeting, although accounts vary as to who first brought up the subject.² MacDonald certainly asked Dawes if he would review the arguments for and against such a visit. Dawes repeated his statements to the King, advising against making the visit while the negotiations for naval disarmament were in progress, as he felt that certain Senators might seize upon the visit as an occasion for 'discussions of a most demagogical and demoralizing character'.³ Dawes' argument appears to have swayed MacDonald to some extent, since he accepted the need at least to delay any trip until the disarmament discussions had demonstrated that a settlement was practicable.⁴

Before Dawes left, he drew up with MacDonald a press communique for the waiting journalists.⁵ This stated that the Pilgrims' Dinner speech, and a speech which the Prime Minister planned to deliver the same evening at Lossiemouth, would constitute the beginning of Anglo-American negotiations on the naval disarmament question.

The next day, 17 June, Dawes began a round of meetings in London, at which he attempted to assess the advisability of a MacDonald visit to

1. DBFP, *ibid.*, No. 9

2. On the British side, Henderson told Sir E. Howard that General Dawes had raised the question (DBFP, *ibid.*, No. 9); while Dawes reported to Stimson (FRUS, *ibid.*, p. 118) that 'MacDonald spoke of a possible visit to America...'

3. FRUS, *ibid.*, p. 118.

4. DBFP, *ibid.*, Nos. 9-10.

5. Text in FRUS, 1929/1, p. 120: Enclosure in Dawes to Stimson, 20 June, 1929.

Washington. He first met Price Bell, the most ardent proponent of the visit, to whom he gave a resume of his talks with MacDonald. Bell was not unnaturally 'disappointed' at the lack of an agreed date for a visit but seemed 'to have adjusted himself satisfactorily to the general statement by MacDonald that he pay a visit to the United States without publicly referring to the fact that this will not be until after the negotiations for naval disarmament have taken place'.¹ Dawes was under no illusions about Bell's attitude though, adding in his report of their conversation that 'Bell is still endeavouring ... to create a general movement for an early visit by MacDonald to the States'.

Dawes also saw the French and Japanese Ambassadors, both of whom reported that Bell had enquired as to their opinions regarding the advisability of the visit.² Both men cautiously favoured such a visit at a proper and appropriate time. Matsudaira was told that President Hoover wished Japan to 'participate with us in the most confidential and intricate manner on this subject', and that he would be kept fully informed.³ Finally Dawes called upon Henderson with whom he again went over the text of his speech. The Foreign Secretary expressed himself as duly gratified.⁴

The next evening saw a gathering of nearly five hundred 'Pilgrims' at the Hotel Victoria. Introductory speeches were made by both Arthur Henderson - his first public speech as Foreign Secretary - and by Sir Austen Chamberlain, both of whom assured their hearers of their own, and their parties', determination to pursue Anglo-American friendship. In

1. D/S, Confidential Files, 500.A 15a3/19; Dawes to Stimson, 21 June 1929.

2. FRUS, 1929/1, p. 119: Dawes to Stimson, 18 June, 1929.

3. FRUS, 1929/1, p. 117: Dawes to Stimson, 17 June, 1929.

4. Ibid.

contrast to these speeches, marked by introductory frivolities and effectively limited to platitudes, Dawes' address took the form of a straightforward and business-like discussion of the problems of disarmament and peace. He took as his theme Burke's statement that 'Politics ought to be adjusted not to human reasonings, but to human nature, of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part'. He drew an analogy between the current naval situation and the procedures employed in attempting to reach a solution of the equally complicated and delicate problem of reparations in 1924. The task of naval reduction required, as in the case of reparations, the simultaneous employment of both statesmen and technical experts, and it was necessary that the former were not overawed by the latter. He warned that 'from a commission of naval experts of the respective nations', he personally would 'expect a failure to agree'. Thus any agreement on a 'yardstick' would have to be made by a committee of statesmen, possessed of sufficient goodwill to overcome the objections of their technical advisers.¹

Whilst Dawes was speaking in London, MacDonald was using a previously scheduled speech to the Town Council of Lossiemouth to declare the British side's eagerness to join with America in seeking to establish 'a cooperative fellowship in which all the nations could take part for achieving security by disarmament'.² His speech was limited to generalities, and was overshadowed in the public eye by Dawes' speech and by the small audience MacDonald was addressing; but it seems clear that MacDonald's intention, given the timing of the speech, was to signal both to the British public and the American government, his sincerity in pursuing a naval agreement.

The two speeches won instant and near-universal favour, the press in both countries attaching the highest significance to Dawes' remarks.

1. The Times, 19 June, 1929; also texts in full in FO 371/13521, A 4176/30/45.

2. Ibid.

Garvin in the Observer, for instance, claimed that 'the annals of diplomacy record no more remarkable utterance..'.¹ Only the Washington Post sounded a more realistic note, pointing out that 'MacDonald spoke only in generalities while General Dawes gave no indication that the United States had any proposal to make to Great Britain'.²

MacDonald was, however, more concerned about press speculation regarding the lack of any announcement in the speeches of an invitation to him to visit the United States.³ To dispel the rumour that no American trip was anticipated, MacDonald was forced to have Sir Robert Vansittart issue a statement to the press on 20 June that he was going to Washington 'at the first opportunity'. What is perhaps most remarkable here is the extent to which MacDonald acted in response to British public opinion and the lobbying of Price Bell, and the way in which the views of the diplomats were disregarded. Dawes' reluctance to advocate such a trip, perhaps natural in that it would reduce that distinguished figure to a very secondary role, was matched by outright hostility to such suggestions from other members of the Embassy staff, who were kept completely in the dark as to Price Bell's activities. Thus Ray Atherton, who had been Chargé d'Affaires in London before Dawes' arrival, actually informed Assistant Secretary Castle as late as 10 July that he was sending confidential details of 'certain embarrassments created here by an American newspaperman who persuaded Mr. MacDonald that he was conveying a semi-official invitation from President Hoover for the Prime Minister to visit the United States'.⁴ This message was transmitted on the day after Bell had lunched with the President at the White House in order to report on

1. The Observer, 23 June, 1929.

2. Washington Post, 19 June, 1929.

3. Carlton, MacDonald versus Henderson, p.105; Drew Pearson and C. Brown, The American Diplomatic Game (New York and London, 1935), p.80.

4. D/S 500 A 15a/3/84: Atherton to Castle, 10 July, 1929.

the results of his mission.¹

The opening of serious conversations was facilitated by the State Department directing Hugh Gibson to travel to London to assist Dawes. He arrived on the morning of 24 June, and was immediately closeted with Dawes in a planning session for the forthcoming talks. Gibson must have been somewhat embarrassed at the prospect of the conversations, as he had told Craigie at Geneva in April that such a formula was 'ready in the President's safe'.² There was no justification at all for such a statement, although Hoover had been thinking through the problem. The British, however, were quite naturally waiting eagerly to see this secret formula. Gibson was forced to tell Craigie that 'the President had decided to send the "yardstick" back to the Navy Department for certain repairs and modifications'.³

This foreshadowed the serious difficulty which was to dog the negotiations throughout the summer: the question of actually producing concrete figures over which to bargain. Nevertheless, a measure of agreement was reached during the three days of Gibson's visit, during which he and Dawes were twice received by MacDonald. The need for a Five-Power conference, with Japan somehow given a leading role in order to ensure her cooperation, was agreed, but it was already recognized that French and Italian agreement was unlikely, and that

in the event of a Five-Power conference breaking down, we should have at the back of our mind an immediate setting-up of a Three-Power conference which would come to a really satisfactory agreement, and that that should be executed.⁴

The British agreed with Dawes that the conference should be attended

1. G.V. Fagan, 'Edward Price Bell: The Journalist as Diplomat', Newberry Library Bulletin, IV, November, 1955, pp.24-27.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.6 (FO 371/13521, A4361/30/45): Memorandum by Craigie, 26 June, 1929.

3. DBFP, 2/1, *ibid.*

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.4: Memorandum by R. MacDonald, 25 June, 1929.

by political, rather than naval, delegates, although they resisted his suggestion that naval experts be excluded from the conference room even in an advisory capacity.¹ Before the conference was to be called, however, MacDonald agreed with the two Ambassadors that the entire naval problem should be examined by non-technical, diplomatic representatives of the two nations, while keeping the other three interested powers informed. It was hoped that this procedure would prevent a deadlock being reached on purely technical questions before any general principles had been agreed upon.² The naval experts would be confined to working out the details of proposals agreed upon by the diplomatic and political representatives, thereby preparing a technical 'yardstick'. This procedure was faithfully followed; but the naval experts on the American side at least were to extract their revenge for being excluded from the diplomatic conversations by their delay and obstruction when asked to produce their requirements for the fleet and their suggestions for the 'yardstick' formula.³

The General Board of the Navy was first requested by Secretary Adams to consider the basis for a yardstick on 31 May - that is, two weeks before Dawes would arrive in England, but over a month after Gibson had made his remarks about the yardstick 'being ready in the President's safe'.⁴ The Board's reply, forwarded to Adams while Dawes was at sea, claimed that it was 'improbable' that a yardstick reflecting the actual combat value of a vessel could be calculated, or that agreement could

1. DFBP, 2/1, No.5: Minute by Sir R. Lindsay, 25 June, 1929.

2. D/S Confidential File 250/25, letter, Gibson to Dawes, 28 June, 1929: and D/S Confidential File 250/26, Gibson to Dawes, undated, probably 25 July, 1929.

3. D. Carlton, *op.cit.*, p.109.

4. Department of the Navy, Operational Archives, General Board file 438-I Op-10 Hu (SC) A 19, Serial 1427, 31 May, 1929.

be reached on the relative values of factors such as tonnage, armaments, speed, and so on. If the United States Government deemed such a formula absolutely necessary, the Board felt it should include only the two factors of age and displacement in order to avoid disagreements on evaluation.¹ On 14 June, as Dawes landed at Southampton, with the press claiming that it was 'no longer a secret' that he brought with him the expected formula,² the President made another attempt find the yardstick. He asked Rear Admiral Hilary P. Jones, the former Chairman of the General Board who had participated in both the Washington and Geneva conferences, confidentially to submit his own recommendations on the equivalence of British and American cruiser fleets, bearing in mind 'a possible conflict of the two fleets'.³ Jones submitted, however, a lengthy memorandum on the US Navy's lack of modern cruisers and of overseas bases, and reiterated the Big Navy doctrine that parity could be achieved only by the United States possessing a larger number of cruisers than Britain.⁴

The lack of any helpful ideas from the Navy Department led Stimson to suggest in July his own proposal for a yardstick, assigning a percentage evaluation to large ships as compared to smaller vessels.³ Stimson proposed that each ton displaced by a light cruiser of up to 5,000 tons be rated at 90 per cent of the value of each ton displaced by a destroyer, and that each ton displayed by a heavy cruiser of between 5,000 and 10,000 tons be rated at 90 per cent of the value of each ton of a light cruiser. In other words, a cruiser of 8,100 tons displacement would by this yardstick be equivalent to 9,000 tons

1. GB File 438-I, Serial 1427, 10 June, 1929.

2. Daily Telegraph, 14 June, 1929.

3. Hoover to Adams, 14 June, 1929; Rear Admiral Hilary Jones Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

4. Jones to Adams, 18 June, 1929.

5. O'Connor, Perilous Equilibrium, p.34.

of light cruisers or 10,000 tons of destroyers.¹ This was rejected by the General Board on the grounds that destroyers, because of their different role, were not comparable with cruisers. In addition, for the United States to recognize the existence of two categories of cruiser might force the US Navy into operating ships of the smaller class, unsuited to its needs. The Board concluded with an air of finality that any computation of equivalent combat strength could not accurately assess the actual conditions that might arise during conflict and was, therefore, dangerously arbitrary.²

Deprived of a formula to put forward, the American representatives in Europe began to indicate alternative lines along which they could proceed. As early as 27 June, Gibson indicated that 'when we actually got to work, ... there would be no necessity to utilise a "yardstick" in order to achieve "parity"'. Instead, he suggested that if the British could state their own minimum requirements, the United States could reply indicating their own minimum. 'It would probably be found that these two minima could be taken as constituting parity ... and ... the "yardstick" could be made to fit in with the result thus achieved.'³ Thus it became clear that in the absence of any formula from the US naval authorities, the 'yardstick' was going to be a mere public relations exercise, a way of justifying a settlement rather than a basis for it.⁴ The alternative of Britain putting forward its minimum requirements threatened to repeat the debacle of the 1927 conference.

At the end of June there was evidently a difference of opinion

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1. GB File 438-I, Serial 1436: Stimson to Adams, 9 July, 1929.
 2. GB File 438-I, Serial 1436, *ibid.*; Serial 1437, Adams to Stimson, 15 July, 1929.
 3. DBFP, 2/1, No.7: Memorandum by Craigie on a conversation with Gibson, 27 June, 1929. Also in FO 371/13521, A 4362/30/45.
 4. D. Carlton, *op.cit.*, p.110.

between Dawes and Gibson on the speed at which the difficulties could be resolved, and a full conference summoned. Dawes, perhaps carried away by his reception in England, was described by Lindsay, at this time still the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, as 'impulsive, keen, and wants to have a conference at once and go full steam ahead'.¹ Gibson, on the other hand, possibly remembering the effects of his ill-advised remarks at Geneva, told Craigie on 26 June of his apprehension about summoning a conference 'before we know more definitely what was to be on the agenda'.²

Lindsay added that Gibson 'fears to launch out till the ground has been carefully prepared. Observe how nervous he is of doing anything which scares the French and Italians...'.³ Hoover, according to what Stimson told Sir Esmé Howard, tended towards Gibson's view. The Secretary of State said that Hoover was 'a little uneasy at the pace that had been set by General Dawes in the discussions over naval disarmament', and that

while the President was still most anxious that no time should be wasted, he feared that conferences without careful preparations might end in failure, which would be the worst thing that could happen.⁴

After a brief lull in the negotiations as Parliament met, MacDonald being preoccupied with the preparation of the King's Speech and Dawes with establishing contact with influential people in London society,⁵

1. Note from Lindsay to Henderson, 27 June, 1929, annexed to FO 371/13521, A 4362/30/45.

2. DBFP, 2/1, *ibid.*; FO 371/13521, A 4362/30/45, has departmental minutes on this memorandum.

3. Further note from Lindsay to Henderson, undated, probably 27 June, 1929, annexed to FO 371/13521, A 4362/30/45.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.10: Howard to Henderson, 28 June, 1929: FO 371/13521, A 4547/30/45.

5. Gen. C.G. Dawes, Journal as Ambassador to Great Britain, 1929-1933 (New York, 1939), pp.29-32.

the Prime Minister sent Dawes a letter on 8 July, 1929, which outlined for his government's confirmation the position reached to date. The points MacDonald took as settled were:

- 1) the acceptance of the Kellogg Pact as the basis for naval agreement;
- 2) the reduction as well as the limitation of armaments to be the objective;
- 3) parity between Britain and the United States is assumed;
- 4) parity as between different categories to be adjusted by an agreed yardstick;
- 5) Japan, France and Italy to be kept informed of Anglo-American progress 'in ways which we can decide from time to time'.¹

The reply of the State Department accepted 1, 2, 3 and 5, but hesitated again over the yardstick, point 4. Stimson thought the technical question of 'the stick' called for more mature consideration, and avoided meeting MacDonald's request for a US naval officer to be sent to London to calculate a yardstick along with a similar British officer. He suggested, however, that in measuring combatant strength, displacement, guns and age should be the determining factors. He dismissed protection, speed and habitability as of secondary importance.²

MacDonald professed to be delighted with this reply. He wrote to Dawes on 17 July that all that was needed to make the agreement complete was the elusive yardstick.³ He was also gratified by Hoover's fast response to his goodwill gesture of halting construction on two cruisers of the 1929 programme under construction in Admiralty dockyards. He handed Dawes a note, informing him of his intention as regards the

1. FRUS, 1929/1, 140; DBFP, No.12: MacDonald to Dawes, 8 July, 1929.

2. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.145-7: telegrams from Secretary Stimson to Dawes; DBFP, 2/1, No.17.

3. FRUS, 1929/1, p.149; DBFP, 2/1, No.19.

cruisers during a meeting on 11 July, and by the 14th Hoover had communicated through Dawes his intention reciprocally to slow the construction of three American cruisers. These gestures were publicly announced in the British Parliament on 24 July, and the American Congress at the promulgation of the Kellogg-Briand pact.¹

The announcements of the cruiser cut-backs were generally well received in both Britain and America,² and were of particular pleasure to those most closely concerned with the negotiations: Dawes noted in his Journal that the gestures marked 'the partial beginning of the naval disarmament'³ and Sir Esmé Howard wrote to MacDonald praising 'an act of no little courage on (Hoover's) part to reply right away to your naval armament cut in the way he did'.⁴ In the United States opposition came only from the most die-hard of 'Big Navy' supporters. These included Paul McNutt, Commander of the American Legion, who cabled to Hoover that

Our lost parity can be regained by only two methods which are: continued cruiser building by America or extended cruiser scrapping by Great Britain, or by a combination of these methods.⁵

This provoked Hoover publicly to denounce the Legion's proposals on the grounds that they would not only require great expenditure on the part of the United States, but would create suspicion, ill-will and misunderstanding among the naval powers of the world.⁶

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.14: MacDonald to Dawes, 14 July, 1929; No.17: Minute by MacDonald, 14 July, 1929.

2. US press opinion is reviewed in Literary Digest, 102 (10 August, 1929), pp.5-6.

3. Dawes, Journal, p.33.

4. Quoted in D. Carlton, *op.cit.*, p.110.

5. D/S 500. A 15 a 3/89, 25 July, 1929; New York Times, 26 July, 1929.

6. W.S. Myers, ed., State Papers of Herbert Hoover, 1, pp.84-5.

The goodwill generated by the cutbacks in the cruiser programmes was spoilt somewhat by a harsh note of realism injected by Stimson in a letter to Dawes of 22 July, which was handed to MacDonald.¹ Stimson denied MacDonald's contention² that all that was needed to make the agreement complete was a yardstick. He pointed out that parity in destroyers and submarines could be achieved only by large-scale scrapping on the part of the US, and this required equally drastic reciprocal action by Britain regarding cruisers: the total British cruiser tonnage, in service, under construction, and authorized, amounted to 402,800 tons as against about 300,000 tons for the US. The gap, as Stimson observed, was a wide one, hardly to be bridged by the mere application of a yardstick. It became a question, therefore, as to what the level of parity in cruisers should be: would the US have to build up, or would Britain scrap? This, as Stimson observed, was the issue on which the Geneva conference had foundered. As Stimson saw it, either the US must proceed to the completion of its whole programme of cruiser building, or Britain must not only check her present programme of construction but must build no more cruisers before 1936.

MacDonald's initial reaction was to dispute Stimson's figures, which appeared to have been taken from the old and subsequently modified White Paper programme.³ A little later, though, he submitted a private and personal memorandum for Dawes, with his suggestions as to Britain's minimum cruiser requirements. Dawes and Gibson appear to have concurred with MacDonald's ideas, and they undertook to submit them to the State Department while MacDonald sent them to the Admiralty for their comments.

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1. FRUS, 1929/1, 149-152: Stimson to Dawes, T.G., 22 July, 1929.
 2. DBFP, 2/1, No.19: MacDonald to Dawes, 19 July, 1929.
 3. DBFP, op.cit., No.22: MacDonald to Dawes, 24 July, 1929.

MacDonald proposed that Britain should operate fifteen 8"-gun cruisers, as opposed to eighteen for the US; and forty-five 6"-gun cruisers, with the US constructing 'up to ten 6"-gun ships' in addition to her existing ten Omaha-class vessels.¹ Stimson, not surprisingly, was shocked by these proposals. He wrote to Dawes that 'they are practically no real modification of those made at the Geneva Conference and it does not seem to me that they offer any hope of agreement'.² Stimson calculated that MacDonald was bringing up the old Admiralty programme simply in order to 'try us out'.³ Dawes told MacDonald that the substance of the American objection was that

the proposals are not for reductions but for increases in cruiser programmes both for Great Britain and the United States. In proposing 15 and 45 as the number of cruisers you desire, you are proposing a total of 60 cruisers against 52 which are in service today...⁴

Dawes evidently viewed the MacDonald proposal more favourably than Stimson. MacDonald was later to tell the Cabinet that Dawes and Gibson had accepted his proposal for sixty cruisers during their meeting on 29 July, but that Washington had disagreed.⁵ Dawes had to defend MacDonald's position to Stimson, on the grounds that he could not afford politically to antagonize both the Opposition and the Admiralty.⁶

Hugh Gibson, who at the end of July was back in London, substantially agreed with Dawes. He argued that the gap between the two sides could best be settled by referring the cruiser problem to a personal conference between MacDonald and Hoover. He pointed out that MacDonald was very

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.25: Memorandum from MacDonald to Stimson and to the Admiralty, 29 July, 1929: FRUS, 1929/1, p.164: Dawes and Gibson to Stimson, 29 July, 1929.

2. FRUS, 1929/1, p.168: Stimson to Dawes, 31 July, 1929.

3. FRUS, 1929/1, p.170: Stimson to Dawes, 31 July, 1929.

4. Dawes to MacDonald, 8 August, 1929, MacDonald Papers; quoted in D. Carlton, MacDonald versus Henderson, p.111.

5. CAB 23/61 (Cabinet Conclusions), Cabinet 33 (29).1.

6. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.176-81: Dawes to Stimson, 4 August, 1929, with message from Gibson.

anxious to reach some sort of agreement before Parliament reassembled in November, and therefore urged that the two leaders meet together as soon as possible.¹

The first week of August marked the first serious crisis in the negotiations. MacDonald rejected Stimson's protest that his proposals actually meant increases not reductions in cruiser strength, arguing that 'naval armaments are not what is built but what, things remaining as they are, must be built, and when we use the word "reduction" that must be taken into account'.² It began to look as though MacDonald, whose political position was always precarious, would not take the risk of breaking with the Admiralty, and that negotiations would bog down on the same issue that had caused the failure at Geneva: not parity, but the level of parity.

The central problem was that, as MacDonald wrote to Dawes, 'at the moment the bulk of your cruiser strength is in a programme; ours is on the water'.³ Thus almost any level of parity required building, not reduction, on America's part.

On 6 August Dawes and Gibson saw MacDonald and Alexander in an attempt to learn what really constituted the lowest level of cruiser tonnage which the British considered essential.⁴ MacDonald reiterated the British view that because cruisers were employed on 'police' work in the various colonies, they were only partly a fighting category of ship. He said, however, that he was working on a new plan, which would make British figures in 1936 the standard of parity as far as cruisers were concerned.

1. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.176-81: Dawes to Stimson, 4 August, 1929, with message from Gibson.

2. MacDonald to Dawes, 1 August, 1929, MacDonald papers, quoted in Carlton, *op.cit.*

3. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.171-4: MacDonald to Dawes, 1 August, 1929.

4. FRUS, 1929/1, p.183: Dawes and Gibson to Stimson, 6 August, 1929.

Two days later, MacDonald wrote to Dawes with details of this new plan.¹ With no replacement, the British cruiser fleet would total fifteen 8"-gun and thirty-four 6"-gun cruisers, totalling forty-nine. MacDonald could not permit a complete halt in cruiser construction; the need to preserve dockyard employment, and to prevent large numbers of cruisers becoming over-age simultaneously, required a steady building programme. He proposed to Dawes, therefore, 'to scrap each year one cruiser which I would not otherwise, and replace it by a scheme of building which would leave us with fifty cruisers and no more'. This further concession, establishing a fifty-cruiser standard as opposed to the seventy Britain had demanded in 1927 immediately cleared the air. 'We feel', Stimson wrote to Dawes on 15 August, 'that the British and the U.S. are nearer real and complete agreement in the light of the true facts understood by both of us than we have ever been'.² Dawes, in his Journal, wrote on 16 August, 'The fact is that we are about agreed in principle'.³

Also on 15 August, Sir Esmé Howard - who had been almost completely excluded from the naval negotiations - saw Stimson at MacDonald's request to discuss the date of the Prime Minister's visit. Only two days before, Howard had reported the disquieting news that the usually well-informed Army and Navy Journal had reported that MacDonald would not now visit America that autumn 'because naval negotiations are virtually at a standstill'.⁴ Now, however, MacDonald's letter of 8 August had entirely changed things. Stimson told Howard that 'there had arisen some days

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.28: MacDonald to Dawes, 8 August, 1929.

2. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.189-90: Stimson to Dawes, 15 August, 1929.

3. Dawes Journal, p.55.

4. FO 371/13522, A 5461/30/45: Telegram Howard to Henderson, 13 August, 1929.

ago (the) possibility of (a) hitch in (the) negotiations regarding naval reduction but that he hoped that difficulty was now in a fair way to settlement'.¹ Stimson informed Howard that the President would be very glad to receive MacDonald in early October, and that Hoover agreed with the Prime Minister that 'there should be nothing in the nature of negotiations during the visit but only discussion on (the) general situation of a friendly informal and unofficial character'. The next day Stimson telephoned to Howard an invitation from Hoover to MacDonald to stay at the White House during his visit to Washington, rather than at the British Embassy as would have been expected. MacDonald, delighted, booked cabins for the trip immediately, and cabled his grateful acceptance of Hoover's invitation.²

Even so, complete agreement still eluded the two sides. Stimson estimated that MacDonald's revised figures accepted an aggregate cruiser tonnage for Britain in 1936 of 330,000 tons, and he suggested that parity could be achieved on that basis if the US proceeded to build up its full cruiser programme of twenty-three 8"-gun cruisers, which would bring the US total cruiser tonnage to 300,000.³ The actual tonnage difference, Stimson felt, could then be reconciled by the application of a yardstick which would incorporate other factors than displacement. He hinted, furthermore, that the US might even accept twenty-one 8"-gun cruisers and make up the difference with 6"-gun cruisers.

MacDonald could not agree to a US margin of superiority of eight vessels in the 8" cruiser class. But he insisted that this was not because

1. FO 371/13522, A 5486/30/45: Telegram Howard to Henderson, 16 Aug., 1929; DBFP, 2/1, No.30.

2. FO 371/13522, A 5486/30/45: Telegram Henderson to Howard, 20 Aug., 1929; DBFP, 2/1, No.33; A 5567/30/45, Telegram Howard to Henderson, 21 Aug., 1929.

3. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.190-5: Stimson to Dawes, 15 Aug., 1929.

Britain wished to limit America's fleet, but due to the danger from Japan. MacDonald feared that Japan 'would be forced to say that whatever ratio it had agreed to observe, that ratio had to be calculated in relation to the American fleet and not to ours'.¹ Thus if Japan maintained her demand for an increased ratio of 5:3.5 she could demand sixteen vessels of the 8"-gun class if the US was to operate twenty-three such ships; and Britain with her fifteen clearly could not accept this. MacDonald also complained that without Britain being allowed to see the elusive 'yardstick', the US had evidently used a formula in producing its 15 August proposals which 'provides for a margin of only 30,000 tons, e.g. eight extra 8" cruisers and ten Omaha calibres only add one-tenth to the effective strength of the US cruisers in comparison with ours'. MacDonald pleaded to be shown the formula that produced such a result, and recalled Gibson's suggestion at the Preparatory Commission in April which would have given Britain a far greater margin.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Stimson and Hoover had been pressing the General Board to agree to some reduction in the authorized American cruiser programme. By 29 August Stimson was able to inform Dawes that the Navy Department had agreed to a reduction of the US programme by 'at least one 8"-gun ship',² and the Board conceded for the first time the possibility that the US Navy might build new 6"-gun cruisers instead of 8"-gun ships.³ On 30 August MacDonald had asked Dawes that the United States limit itself to eighteen of the larger class of cruisers, thus giving Japan thirteen, a figure which might be acceptable to the Dominions.⁴

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.35: MacDonald to Dawes, 23 August, 1929.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.39: Dawes to MacDonald, 29 August, 1929.

3. US Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, Hearings: 11 September, 1929, pp.502ff.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.40: MacDonald to Dawes, 30 August, 1929.

By the beginning of September, therefore, the gap had narrowed to the difference between twenty-one and eighteen 8"-gun cruisers for the US.

Even at this stage, lingering doubts of the sincerity of each other's intentions, doubtless fanned by the naval advisers, could elevate relatively minor issues into major obstacles. One such matter was the size of the British building programme for replacement vessels in their 6"-gun cruiser fleet. When MacDonald, in his 8 August proposals, had proposed to scrap 'each year one cruiser which I would not otherwise scrap and replace it...',¹ the Americans read this, not unnaturally, as implying that no more than seven new cruisers would be built (one per year) before 1936, while fourteen vessels in all would be scrapped if all cruisers which were constructed before 1916 and therefore 'over-age' were also to be scrapped. When the United States repeated their understanding of this arrangement, in a review of points of agreement sent from Dawes to MacDonald on 29 August,² MacDonald changed his mind on replacement and put forward a new plan for construction of fourteen new cruisers with 7½"-guns.³ The effect of this would be to leave the total of British light cruisers planned for 1936 the same, at thirty-five vessels, but with a higher proportion of modern vessels, and a total tonnage increased to 339,000 tons.

Stimson objected strongly, going so far as to say that 'we shall have to reconsider the entire situation'. The addition of seven new ships did certainly affect Stimson's calculations to the extent that age was assumed to be a factor in any yardstick, so that by the application of that elusive formula it was to be expected that the gap between the two

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.28: MacDonald to Dawes, 8 August, 1929.

2. DBFP, op.cit., No.38: Dawes to MacDonald, 29 August, 1929.

3. DBFP, op.cit., No.41: MacDonald to Dawes, 30 August, 1929.

fleets would have been widened by more than just the increase of 9,000 tons. However, as a complete yardstick formula was still not forthcoming, Stimson's indignation is hard to sympathize with. Certainly, when MacDonald emphasized that the 30 August proposals 'really touch bottom', Stimson seems to have accepted the inevitable.¹

The MacDonald plan was submitted by Hoover to the General Board, which reported that if it was to accept the proposed British fleet as the basis for an American cruiser force, it would wish the US Navy to operate twenty-one 10,000 ton, 8"-gun cruisers, the 10 Omaha-class ships, and eight new 6"-gun cruisers or 58,500 tons aggregate displacement, for a total US displacement matching the British at 339,000 tons.² Hoover, on hearing of this, summoned the General Board, for the only time in his administration, to a conference with Stimson and himself at the White House, on 11 September. He angrily asked the admirals to apply a yardstick to the figure in order to produce a lower US total. The Board first grudgingly estimated that if displacement and age factors were included in a rough yardstick the number of the new 6"-gun cruisers might be cut to five; then at the President's further insistence it conceded that another such ship might be cut if gun calibre were to be included.³ Having been satisfied that a yardstick could halve the number of new 6"-gun ships requested in the General Board's original meeting, Hoover then closed the meeting and had Stimson prepare a cable to Dawes giving that as the American level of parity in response to the British proposals. In fact, Hoover appears not to have realized that the Board had not agreed to the reduction to four 6"-gun cruisers, even though the figure was computed using a formula conceived by the Board;

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.49: MacDonald to Dawes, 9 September, 1929.

2. GB 438-1, Serial 1444 A, 11 September, 1929.

3. An unsigned memorandum of the day's meetings, probably by Capt. Chormley, USN (Secretary to the General Board), 11 September, 1929, in GB 438-1 gives a full account.

for the Board would not accept that the formula was a satisfactory means for determining parity. When shown the draft cable to Dawes the Board protested, and a second meeting had to be held with Stimson at which it was finally agreed that five of the new ships would be satisfactory, giving a US cruiser tonnage of 315,000.¹

Although the Board aroused the anger of Hoover² and of Dawes³ by its resistance, it must, in fact, be given credit for making two major concessions before the conference of 11 September. In their report on the MacDonald proposals⁴ the Board accepted the higher British figures without demur, and it also showed itself willing to accept the inevitability of operating a number of smaller, 6"-gun cruisers of the type it had resisted constructing until then. Nevertheless, its programme, if carried out, implied a considerable increase in the total US Navy cruiser strength. In September 1929 the US cruiser force still included only ten modern vessels, the Omaha class; and the first of the new programme of 10,000-ton ships was still not completed.

The decision to accept a 315,000 ton level of parity on 11 September brought the two sides to the end of the first stage of the negotiations. The General Board and the Admiralty were left in disagreement on only one point, which was 'as to whether three of the American cruisers are to be of the 8", 10,000-ton type or whether there is to be a substitute for them of, say, four (more) cruisers of the 6"-gun type'.⁵

The two heads of government were satisfied by these developments sufficiently to reject any possibility that they might fail to reach

1. Ibid.

2. D/S 500.A 15 a/329, Hoover to Stimson, 11 September, 1929.

3. Dawes, manuscript Journal, 12 September, 1929.

4. GB 438-1, Serial 1444-A.

5. FRUS, 1929/1, p.223: Stimson to Dawes, 11 September, 1929: DBFP, 2/1, No.55, Dawes to MacDonald, 12 September, 1929.

an agreement. Stimson wrote on 11 September that Hoover

thinks that when we consider all these things and realise that the items we are discussing are so small a percentage of our total difficulties, and that we are developing the greatest problem in statesmanship of our times, ... he feels sure that we could, between the two Governments, compromise these small differences.¹

Similarly, MacDonald wrote that it was 'unthinkable' that a settlement could be prevented.²

Sir Robert Vansittart, whom MacDonald had inherited from Baldwin as Private Secretary, had gone to Washington at the end of August on a 'private visit to relatives', although he was kept abreast of developments in the naval negotiations by cable through Howard and acted in effect as MacDonald's personal emissary to the President for the purpose of arranging the visit.³ Vansittart twice saw Hoover before 11 September, and appears to have succeeded in urging him to 'speed up proceedings here'.⁴

He stressed the serious effect on British public opinion of any postponement of MacDonald's visit through a continued impasse over cruisers. Sir Esmé Howard pressed Stimson to agree to a public announcement on 10 September, but the Secretary of State requested that no such announcement be decided upon until after the General Board's report.⁵ He explained that until he knew what the Board's decision would be, he did not want to 'take even the slightest chance of slapping the Prime Minister in the face with an unfavourable cable after he was publicly committed to a visit here'. Stimson did tell Howard, however, that

1. FRUS, 1929/1, p.223, Stimson to Dawes, 11 September, 1929.

2. DBFP, No.58; A 6121/30/45, MacDonald to Dawes, 13 September, 1929.

3. In The Mist Procession (London, 1978), p.386, Vansittart says explicitly 'I was sent to Washington to promote a meeting with Hoover'.

4. DBFP 2/1, No.47: Howard to Henderson, 5 September, 1929, for Prime Minister from Vansittart.

5. D/S 033.4111 MacDonald/40: Memorandum of a conversation between Stimson and Sir Esmé Howard, 9 September, 1929. Also DBFP, op.cit., No.51.

both he and the President 'now felt that the visit was worth any risk involved'.

The dilemma was resolved the next day when the General Board had been pushed into accepting the 315,000 ton cruiser programme, and Stimson instructed Dawes to tell MacDonald that 'The President earnestly wished Mr. MacDonald to visit the United States'.¹ An official announcement was made on 12 September in London, that the Prime Minister would sail for America on 28 September.

One of the tasks that engaged Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson during the remainder of September before the Prime Minister's departure was the preparation of a draft note of invitation to the London Naval Conference.³ Identical notes were to be addressed to the French, Italian and Japanese Ambassadors in London. The complete draft had been submitted to the State Department where it had been recast several times.⁴ Both sides went to great pains to be propitiatory and to keep the lesser naval powers completely informed throughout. The British in particular were continually aware that while agreement with the United States was of the first importance, 'the real difficulty arises when Third Parties are taken into account'.⁵ It was necessary to avoid any appearance of ignoring the lesser powers or excluding them from an Anglo-American club. Perhaps the greatest danger was that France and Italy, whose rivalry in the Mediterranean was becoming acute, would refuse to participate in any agreement. The hostility and constant criticism from the French and

1. FRUS, 1929/1, p.223; DBFP 2/1, No.55

2. The Times, 13 Sept., 1929; New York Times, 13 Sept., 1929.

3. DBFP, 2/1, No.62.

4. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.244-5 and 253; DBFP, 2/1, Nos.69-75 inclusive.

5. FO 371/13520, A 3523/30/45: Memorandum by Philip Kerr, 'The Anglo-American Problem', 24 May, 1929.

Italian press in their comments on the reopening of naval negotiations gave serious concern to the Foreign Office. Ronald Campbell, the head of the Western European section, circulated a minute reading, 'It seems to me very essential to do everything we can to carry France and Italy with us at each step'. If they dropped out, it would not only exacerbate the naval question, but 'would deal a severe blow at the League'.²

The Americans were also aware of the need for continuous consultation - perhaps especially so in view of their own exclusion from the Anglo-French negotiations of 1928. At any rate, Dawes made a point of seeing the Ambassadors of the three powers very frequently, and they were told of each development in the Anglo-American negotiations as they took place. Dawes was helped in his task of establishing the confidence of the lesser naval powers in the London talks by the fact that Matsudaira was an old friend from Washington. The two men met very frequently and were absolutely frank with each other,³ and MacDonald apparently concurred in Matsudaira being kept informed through the medium of Dawes.⁴

Despite their efforts to preclude such a possibility, MacDonald and Dawes were aware from the start that they might have to face the prospect of France and Italy remaining outside an agreement. At his meeting with the Prime Minister on 28 June, one of the questions raised by Dawes was that if agreement should seem impossible with the continental powers, should they be admitted to the Conference or should it be a trois? Japan's cooperation was rather more taken for granted, although MacDonald felt it necessary to reassure Matsudaira officially that the conversations with Dawes 'did not signify any intention to conclude a United

1. A.J. Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1929, p.17.

2. FO 371/13521, A 4361/30/45, Minute by Campbell, 27 September, to Memorandum by Craigie, 29 September, 1929.

3. See for example, Dawes, Journal, pp.24, 33 etc.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.27, A 5251/30/45, Memorandum by Craigie on conversation with Dawes, 30 July, 1929.

States-British agreement, and present it to other nations as a fait accompli'.¹ The Japanese nevertheless maintained a polite pressure for more details of any proposals which showed that they were 'still nervous that they are not being fully consulted'.² One may suspect that the major reason why Japan was asked in July 1929 to prepare her own 'yardstick' for comparison with the American proposals was simply to give her a greater feeling of participation; certainly no Japanese formula was ever consulted in negotiations by the British and Americans.³

The gestures by Hoover and MacDonald in cutting back their cruiser-building programme were welcomed in Japan, where it was hinted that a similar gesture would probably be forthcoming.⁴ Instead, a month later, MacDonald's fears about Japan's probable cruiser claims were confirmed when the Navy Office in Tokyo was reported to have prepared an increased programme of replacement construction, to include four new 8"-gun cruisers, for completion in six to eight years. The Liberal government of Hamaguchi was, however, committed to a policy of economy and retrenchment, and it seemed unlikely that such a programme could ever be sanctioned. Its object, it seemed, was to give the Navy a strong bargaining position when the conference was convened.⁵ More worrying, though, were the reports emanating from Tokyo that Japan intended to claim a 70 per cent ratio in auxiliary vessels, as opposed to the 60 per cent Washington ratio, and that she wanted a parity in submarines.⁶ Until the conference

1. DBFP, No.13; FO 371/13521 A 4505/30/45: Henderson to Tilley (Tokyo), 9 July, 1929.

2. FO 371/31521, A 4666/30/45: Minute by Roger Makins to Telegram Tilley (Tokyo) to Henderson, 12 July, 1929.

3. DBFP, Nos.15 (*ibid.*) and 18: Henderson to Tilley, 16 July, 1929, A 4666/30/45.

4. Captain Malcolm D. Kennedy, The Estrangement of Britian and Japan, 1917-35, p.143.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1929, pp.49-50.

opened, Japan was to go to great lengths to assert her right to such an increased fleet.

The month of September saw a startling episode which focused public opinion in the United States on the disarmament question. In August, William B. Shearer had sued the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, and the American Brown Boveri Electric Corporation, claiming that these companies owed him over \$250,000 for 'professional services' rendered in the years 1926 to 1929. During that time he had acted as lobbyist for them on behalf of American shipping interests, notably at the 1927 General Naval Conference.¹

President Hoover realized that useful political capital could be made out of the Shearer case in preparing public opinion for naval reduction. He wrote to Stimson asking the State Department to investigate Shearer's career, and added that 'It may be a useful public example, and one that we will need before we are finished'.² At one of his regular Press conferences, Hoover denounced propaganda which aimed at creating international tension, and condemned lobbyists whom he believed were obstructing the naval negotiations then under way. He then called upon the shipbuilding companies to answer the charges that they financed such lobbying.³ The companies promptly denied all Shearer's claims, but Hoover nevertheless ordered a full investigation by the Justice Department.⁴

Hoover's intention came with perfect timing to pre-empt 'Big Navy' objections to a naval agreement. The Shearer case was brought

1. New York Times, 9 September, 1929; Time, 2 September, 1929, p.13.

2. D/S 500. A 15a1 Shearer/44: Hoover to Stimson, 30 August, 1929, Confidential File.

3. The Times, 7 September, 1929; New York Times, 7 September, 1929.

4. New York Times, 11 September, 1929.

into the limelight as the conversations in London reached their culmination, and as America prepared for MacDonald's visit. If the case aroused sufficient public anger, it might forestall Congressional or naval opposition to an agreement. So pleased was Hoover at this prospect that Vansittart reported him as saying he wished Great Britain could also find a Shearer.¹

The publicity given Shearer caused Senator Borah to launch a further investigation by the Senate's Naval Affairs Committee,² which established a special investigation subcommittee. However, the initial disclosures about the details of Shearer's activities at Geneva were made by the press. The New York Times succeeded in producing brochures and handouts distributed at Geneva by Shearer, which included several typewritten naval problems which had been worked out by the Naval War College.³ It was revealed that American press coverage from Geneva had largely been based on such material.

Towards the end of September, the former Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, disturbed at press reports that he would be called to testify before the Shearer Investigating Committee, wrote to Under-Secretary Joseph Cotton, stating 'everything which I know about the matter, which is very little'.⁴ He expressed the hope that this written statement

1. DBFP, No.57, A 611/30/45, Howard to Henderson, 12 September, 1929, from Vansittart for MacDonald.

2. The Senate hearings and proceedings on the Borah case were published as a volume entitled Alleged Activities at the Geneva Conference, hearings before a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, 71st Congress, 1st session: Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1930.

3. New York Times, 16 September, 1929. The State Department's files on the Shearer case are very comprehensive, and include details of an attempt by Sec. Stimson to gain information on Shearer from British and French police files. Confidential Files D/S 500, A 15/a Shearer, Sept.-Oct., 1929.

4. MS Confidential File, D/S 500, A 15a1, Shearer/12, Kellogg to Cotton, 23 September, 1929.

would avert the necessity of his appearing in Washington before the committees.

Kellogg reported that Ambassador Gibson had informed the State Department in mid-July, 1927, that 'Big Navy' propaganda was being spread at Geneva; but not until December did they learn that it was Shearer, an employee of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, who was responsible. Kellogg secured an apology from the Chairman of Bethlehem Steel, and a denial that it had been his company's intention to lobby as Shearer had done. He then buried the matter, feeling that publicity of Shearer's connection with the steel and shipbuilding companies 'would have misled the public both at home and abroad into believing that Shearer's activities were of international significance'.¹ Had Shearer had a significant influence at Geneva, Kellogg felt certain that members of the delegation would have reported it to him.

Under a glare of publicity, the Senate hearings opened on 20 September, and continued intermittently until 11 January, 1930. The subcommittee interviewed directors of the major shipbuilding concerns and established that Shearer had been employed by them as a lobbyist in Washington and as an 'observer' at Geneva.² Corporations were not the only bodies to be embarrassed by the hearings: the Navy Department was involved when the newspaper columnist Drew Pearson stated that at Geneva Shearer had been seen in frequent conversations with at least four United States naval experts, and that Rear Admiral Reeves in particular had seemed to be very sympathetic to Shearer's views. Reeves denied any connection with Shearer or that he had ever expressed the hope that the Geneva Naval Conference would fail.

Shearer himself appeared somewhat ridiculous to all but the

1. MS Confidential File, D/S 500, A 15a1, Shearer/12, Kellogg to Cotton, 23 September, 1929.

2. Alleged Activities at the Geneva Conference, op.cit.

most dedicated and narrow 'patriots' when he gave testimony to the subcommittee.¹ His first words to the subcommittee, when asked to state his name, were 'William Benton Shearer, American, Christian, Protestant, Nationalist'.² He claimed to have in his possession an 'amazing secret document' containing a bitter British attack upon the United States, which turned out to be a satirical paper written by an Irish-American physician. He also proudly admitted to being the author of numerous vitriolic pamphlets with titles such as The Cloak of Benedict Arnold, circulated by various 'patriotic' societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Gold Star Mothers. The finance for his activities, it was revealed, came in large part from William Randolph Hearst, who paid Shearer a stipend of \$2,000 a month to carry on propaganda against the League of Nations and the World Court as well as for a 'Big Navy'.³ Further revelations, however, were postponed as the subcommittee decided to adjourn its activities during MacDonald's visit.⁴

MacDonald sailed from Southampton on 28 September, with Robert Craigie as his Foreign Office adviser, Tom Jones of the Cabinet Secretariat, and his Principal Private Secretary, Robert Vansittart.

It would appear that MacDonald spent his voyage worrying more about the image he would present in the United States, rather than preparing for the diplomatic talks; certainly MacDonald did not take the initiative on any matter during his visit.⁵

1. Alleged Activities at the Geneva Conference, op.cit., pp.424-559 cover Shearer's testimony.

2. Time, 7 October, 1929, p.4.

3. Alleged Activities at the Geneva Conference, p.540.

4. New York Times, 3 October, 1929.

5. Claud Cockburn, In Time of Trouble: An Autobiography, quoted in Carlton, op.cit., p.114; see also T. Jones, Whitehall Diary (London, 1969), pp.211-3.

The Berengaria docked in New York on 4 October, where the official party was given an elaborate welcome. In reply, MacDonald gave a brief address on the idea of an enduring peace. A brief extract will give its flavour:

I came here on this mission not to advance material interests, but to meet your President in order that we two great nations, powerful in the past, still more powerful in the future - we two great nations who can look behind with pride and before with hope - shall shake hands and pledge ourselves not to any alliance - these belong to the old order of things - but shall pledge ourselves to common aspirations.¹

Such flowery rhetoric, delivered in MacDonald's earnest and sincere manner, was to set the tone for the entire visit, during which his public speeches all received tumultuous applause and the almost unanimous praise of the media. The emotional reception of MacDonald's remarks by the New Yorkers stirred the Daily Chronicle in London to remark that 'America is the country of "revivalism" and may easily be stirred by gusts of popular feeling. If such gusts can be converted into tornadoes on the side of peace, there is hope for the future. Popular feeling on this scale is an irresistible mandate to the politicians at Washington'.²

Secretary Stimson was in New York to welcome MacDonald, a gesture designed to offset the hesitancy with which the official invitation to visit America had been extended to MacDonald and 'in order not to allow the possibility of the slightest criticism as to our pleasure in having the Prime Minister here'.³ Stimson escorted MacDonald and his party

1. New York Times, 5 October, 1929; also J. Ramsay MacDonald, American Speeches (Boston, Mass., 1930), with a foreword by Dawes and an introduction by Stimson.

2. Daily Chronicle, 7 October, 1929.

3. D/S 033.4111 MacDonald/52, Memorandum of a conversation between Stimson and Sir Esmé Howard, 26 September, 1929.

to Washington, where at Union Station they were welcomed by Under-Secretary Cotton and, on behalf of the President, by George Akerson, his Secretary. After a procession to the British Embassy, MacDonald immediately went on to the White House for his first meeting with the President. It seemed from the start that the two men got on remarkably well in view of the wide gulf in outlook between the European Socialist and the American businessman. The press, at any rate, were impressed by the way in which the two men at their first meeting plunged straight into 'earnest conversation'.¹ It strains the credulity, though, to believe what MacDonald was later quoted as having said of Hoover:

His aspect, his demeanour, his powerful charm in stating an argument almost made me smile into his face and exclaim to him, out of the goodness of my soul, "Oh, you dear old Quaker!"²

What mattered, however, was that the two men were seen to act like great friends, and the newsmen were delighted with the announcement that Hoover had invited MacDonald to his Summer White House for the weekend, his retreat on the Rapidan River in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

MacDonald and Hoover drove to the Rapidan Camp the next day, 5 October, accompanied by their political advisers. During the twenty-four hours MacDonald was at Rapidan, the conversation remained in fairly general terms, staying away from hard bargaining as had been planned; but the two men covered a range of subjects which was certainly greater than the British had hoped for, and the conversation appears to have been dominated by Hoover, who made a number of suggestions of a somewhat radical nature designed 'to test MacDonald's views'.³

1. New York Times, 6 October, 1929, includes a full description of the Rapidan Camp.

2. Mark Sullivan, 'President Hoover in International Relations', Yale Review, December, 1929, p.231.

3. Hoover, Memoirs, iii, The Cabinet and the Presidency (London, 1952), p.345.

The conversations covered a wide range of topics, including naval limitation, British bases in the Western Hemisphere, belligerent rights, liquor smuggling, and 'cooperative action for the reinforcement of world peace'.¹ These were set out in a memorandum drawn up by Hoover before the Rapidan talks, detailing matters upon which he wished to sound out MacDonald.² Stimson's reaction apparently was that Hoover 'wouldn't get far' with such a broad spectrum of controversial issues. Nevertheless such matters as belligerent rights were not only close to Hoover's heart, but were of critical importance to Senator Borah, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, whose support for any treaty with Britain was a sine qua non of its ratification by the Senate.

MacDonald noted that the belligerent rights issue was particularly important to Hoover as a 'direct outcome of his experiences and activities during the war', when he had been responsible for feeding millions affected by the Allied blockade of food as well as war materials supplied to the Central Powers. According to MacDonald, Hoover even hinted that if food ships could be declared free from interference in time of war it would be unnecessary to proceed further 'into this complex problem of the rights of neutrals and belligerents'. MacDonald was wary of any such commitment, whether confined to food-ships or upon the whole question of freedom of the seas; both were politically too sensitive in England. MacDonald cabled back to London for advice as to whether any reference to food-ships could be included in the final communique. Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, was 'very shocked' that the matter had been raised. To him,

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.77, Appendix A, No.1: Howard (from Prime Minister) to Henderson, 6 October, 1929.

2. Hankey diary, 18 October, 1929, Churchill College, Cambridge.

It looked like a plant. First MacDonald is told ... that the question is off (the agenda). Then he comes to Washington, gets a tremendous ovation. When drunk with success, he is brought to the lumber camp, and, without any experts to consult with ... the question is sprung on him in a most acute and contentious form.¹

Hankey had, however, taken the precaution of briefing Tom Jones on the matter, and had given him a copy of the CID's report of March, 1929, which reached the conclusion that belligerent rights should be maintained and that any international discussion of the question should be avoided.² The Chiefs of Staff also pleaded through Henderson, that

on a question of such vital importance to the Empire nothing whatever should appear in the statement to be issued which could be taken at this stage as being even the most partial surrender of our belligerent rights at sea.³

With opposition in London from both Chiefs of Staff and Cabinet, MacDonald had to press Hoover to omit any specific mention of these matters, to which he reluctantly agreed. MacDonald did consent to discuss the matter informally with the United States once the naval conference was out of the way.⁴ Such a course at least had the advantage of restricting discussion to an exchange of views between the two governments only.

Another potentially troublesome matter raised by Hoover was that of the British naval stations in the Western Hemisphere. Halifax was a matter for the Canadian government, MacDonald insisted, but Hoover pressed him to make a public declaration that Britain would not maintain the bases in the Western Hemisphere capable of menacing the United States. In return, Hoover offered the rather hollow concession of a similar

1. Hankey diary, op.cit.

2. Ibid., and DBFP, No.77, Appendix A, No.4: Henderson to Howard, 8 October, 1929.

3. DBFP, No.77. A 4 (ibid.).

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.77 main memorandum.

American undertaking with regard to the Eastern Hemisphere, meaning the Phillipines which were already covered by the 1922 Treaty.¹ Although not reported back to London, Hoover in his Memoirs also stated that he had offered verbally to purchase Bermuda, Trinidad and British Honduras as part of a debt settlement. MacDonald, however, 'did not rise to the idea at all'.² A third topic of conversation, the possibility of an amendment to give practical effect to the Pact of Paris, suffered a similar burial. The press communique issued at the end of the Rapidan talks on 9 October mentioned only that 'old historical problems' had been discussed 'in a new atmosphere'.³

The most constructive aspect of the Rapidan conference was an attempt to produce a compromise on the cruiser question, which while not finally settled at the time did foreshadow the lines of the eventual settlement.⁴ From a memorandum by Hoover dated 6 October it seems that the President hinted that America might accept, as representing 'parity' with the projected British fleet, a total of only eighteen 8"-gun cruisers along with seventeen 6"-gun ships.⁵ The President was, however, strongly of the opinion that

it was understandable to submit these figures in such places as they would be likely to become public, or that would start speculation, and that we should hold them confidential until we arrived at the conference.

1. DBFP, No.77 main memorandum.

2. Hoover, Memoirs, ii, The Cabinet and the Presidency, p.346.

3. Full text of press declaration in FRUS, 1929/iii, p.34.

4. The information available as to the details of these important talks is very sketchy, confined essentially to the memoranda written by MacDonald, Craigie, Hoover and Stimson, and printed in the British and American series of published documents. I have been unable to locate further documents in either British or American National Archives. No stenographic record of the talks was kept.

5. FRUS, 1929/iii, p.26: Memorandum by Hoover, 6 October, pp.27-8: Memorandum by Craigie, 6 October, 1929.

MacDonald, in his report of the talks, stated that Hoover

... appeared as anxious as we were to get the American figure for 8" cruisers down to eighteen, but saw no way of doing this as long as we insisted upon 339,000 tons of cruiser tonnage and a replacement programme of fourteen ships.¹

He promised, however, to meet the British 'at least half way', if they could devise some means of further reduction.²

In discussing the other categories of vessels, MacDonald outlined a proposal, approved by the Admiralty, to cut the costs of battleship fleets. It was suggested that battleship displacement be reduced from 35,000 to 25,000 tons, gun calibre from 16" to 12", and the replacement age increased from twenty to twenty-six years. The President implied that the United States wished to eliminate the battleship from their fleet altogether as

... many naval officers believed that the days of the battleship were numbered owing to the development of aircraft, and he saw no point in putting vast sums into engines of war which might afterwards have to be scrapped as useless.

The United States certainly did not wish to build any new capital ships before 1936. MacDonald, however, put forward the argument of unemployment and 'dislocation in the yards' if new construction was not undertaken, and no conclusions seem to have been reached. Later, however, Craigie learnt that the State Department might be amenable to a compromise, accepting the reduced tonnage maximum if they could build one 35,000 ton ship to counterbalance the large British ships, Hood, Nelson and Rodney. This suggestion encouraged MacDonald to report that 'there is no likelihood of any serious divergence between the two Powers in regard to this category of ship when the Five-Power conference meets'.³

On the destroyer category, both the President and the Prime Minister

1. DBFP, No.77, Section 1.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

expressed a desire to reduce tonnage to 150,000 tons. Hoover stated that the United States intended to come down to the 50,000 tons of submarine displacement which the Royal Navy had in 1929 if that type of vessel could not be abolished altogether; and the two considered reducing aircraft carrier tonnage from 135,000 (as fixed by the Washington Treaty) to 120,000 tons. Both men agreed to a ten per cent transfer between categories, although they felt the French would want a higher percentage.¹

President Hoover also told MacDonald that he intended to invite the Japanese delegates to the London Naval Conference to stop in Washington while en route to England. This, he felt, would not only allay any Japanese suspicions of the Hoover-MacDonald meeting, but would also afford an opportunity to reconcile any outstanding differences between Japan and the United States before the Conference.²

The significance of the Rapidan conference is hard to assess. Certainly no agreement was reached on any specific question at issue between the two countries, as was publicly confirmed by the vagueness of the 9 October press communique. An assessment of the achievements of the meeting must, then, concentrate on two areas: the cementing of goodwill and trust between the two countries' political and diplomatic leaders, and the impact of the visit on public opinion in Britain and America, and in the other naval powers.

There is, unfortunately, no clear evidence as to what either Hoover or MacDonald privately thought of each other. It does seem, though, that MacDonald was impressed with Hoover and his attitude, even if the 'dear old Quaker' remark can be dismissed as journalistic licence. Hankey, for instance, reported him coming home 'full of Hoover's food (-ships) proposal, which he would have tacitly approved but for my

1. DBFP, No.77, Section 1.

2. Ibid.

active intervention while he was in Washington'.¹ Certainly, Hoover's obvious idealism in matters of foreign affairs, and the informal and delightful surroundings of the Blue Ridge Mountains at the President's camp, must have had a favourable impact on a man of MacDonald's background. On the other hand, Hoover's raising of matters such as the proposal to amend the Kellogg Pact, and the belligerent rights issue, placed MacDonald in a difficult position when he had been led to expect that such matters would not be raised. On Hoover's side, the tone of both his Memoirs and his memorandum on the Rapidan talks seem disappointed that his ideas were not immediately accepted, despite MacDonald having 'seemed receptive upon many of them'.²

The MacDonald visit was most successful in its public aspect, where the popular acclaim he received helped create a more favourable feeling between the United States and Great Britain. In addition to his initial speech at New York, two speeches of MacDonald drew special attention from the press in America and around the world. On 7 October MacDonald visited Congress, and delivered an address to the Senate. Here the Prime Minister described the relations of Britain and America as 'a union of cooperation'. But, he declared,

We are not out for any exclusive alliance. All we seek is cooperation and that free and friendly relations may be established not between your country and my country, but between your country, my country, and all the other civilized and honest countries of the world.³

The Times noted that among MacDonald's enthusiastic hearers, Senator William E. Borah 'was the most approving and most applauding of all

1. Hankey Diary, entry headed 18 October, 1929, but later dated 19 October, 1929 in text: Hankey Papers file 1/7, Churchill College, Cambridge. See also Hoover, Memoirs, ii, p.347, where he states that Macdonald was 'naturally sympathetic' to the idea.

2. FRUS, 1929/111, p.26; Hoover, Memoirs, ii, pp.346-9.

3. Congressional Record, 71st Congress, 1st Session, Vol.71, Part 4, 7 October, 1929, pp.4285-6. Also in MacDonald, Speeches in America.

the Prime Minister's hearers'.¹ It may be noted though that MacDonald's address to the Senate formed an interlude in its debate on the Hawley-Smoot Tarriff Bill, which was to have serious repercussions on American trade with Britain and her Empire.

The next MacDonald address which captured headlines was to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on 11 October, broadcast by radio across America and to Britain and the Empire.² In this speech, MacDonald attempted to review the significance of his visit, and proclaimed his belief in the sincerity of the American desire for peace and continuing friendship. This was tempered, though, by another appeal to the American government and people to understand that the British 'are a people of the sea and the sea is our security' and spoke of

... the real human affection gathered around our ships and how difficult it will be to get the British people to feel secure if the naval arm is limited in any way.

Once again, MacDonald's remarks were warmly received by an audience largely comprised of hard-headed businessmen, while the press gave very widespread and favourable coverage to the speech.

It is clear that MacDonald struck a most responsive chord in America by his direct and unassuming manner and his evident idealism, so utterly unlike the common stereotype in America of the British ruling class. His popularity in the United States was very much a triumph of personality.

The New York Times' editorial writer summed up the visit as

A distinct triumph for Ramsay MacDonald, the man. His bearing has been perfect His eloquence has been that of elevation of mind and nobility of purpose Such speaking as his, coming to climax as it did in his magnificent address on Friday night (to the Council on Foreign Relations), has seldom been heard in any country, from the lips of a citizen of another.³

1. The Times, Editorial, 2 November, 1929.

2. Text in MacDonald, op.cit., pp.59-80, and in Special Supplement to Foreign Relations, October 1929.

3. New York Times, 13 October, 1929.

The Prime Minister spent a diplomatically necessary two weeks in Canada, then returned to Liverpool on 1 November, to the plaudits of the British press and Parliament. On 5 November, MacDonald addressed the House of Commons. It was a quasi-ceremonial occasion with the Prime Minister being applauded impartially from all sides of the House as he related his experiences in the United States.¹ MacDonald confined his remarks to generalities and did not divulge the contents of his discussions with Hoover, glossing over the controversial questions that had been raised, and saying that the Americans had demonstrated their friendship by the candour with which they exchanged views and the straightforwardness with which they discussed delicate matters. He continued

I went with no draft agreements either in my mind or in my pocket. I went to try direct contact and by direct address to establish a new relationship between the two peoples, a relationship based upon mutual understanding, not only natural differences to be respected.²

MacDonald was duly congratulated by Lloyd George, who called the visit 'an unquestionable success from every point of view', and Baldwin similarly went out of his way to pay tribute to the Prime Minister's success, in what was called 'the speech of a great gentleman'.³ Perhaps just as important as the support MacDonald received from his political opponents for his pursuit of Anglo-American friendship was the support the visit generated among MacDonald's political friends. Thus Beatrice Webb wrote in her diary that the visit had been 'a feat of endurance and triumph in political activities', and Hugh Dalton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and no admirer of MacDonald, wrote in his diary that

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.231, columns 885-891 (5 Nov., 1929).

2. Ibid.

3. D. Marquand, Ramsey MacDonald (London, 1978) pp.508-9; Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diaries, ii, p.217.

MacDonald had 'made for himself an eternal niche in the temple of history'.¹ The political impact of the visit, in unifying the Labour Party in approval of MacDonald's conduct of naval negotiations, and in gaining popular support for a naval settlement may have been just as significant in Britain as in the United States. In America, the public success of the visit combined with the effects of the Shearer case to put the 'Big Navy' cause at its lowest ebb since the war.

While MacDonald was in Washington, the long-awaited invitations to the Conference were issued after the State Department concurred in a final set of amendments to its wording.² The Conference was to open in the third week of January, 1930. The notes of invitation enumerated certain principles concerning naval reduction. These included, first, that the Kellogg Pact would be regarded as the starting point of any agreement; second, that the United States and the British Empire would adopt the principle of parity in each of several categories, to be achieved by 31 December, 1936; thirdly, that battleship reduction through adjustment of replacement programmes would be considered at the conference; fourthly, that both the British and American governments favoured the abolition of the submarine, and would again urge this at the Conference.³

Ray Atherton delivered the first formal acceptance to the Foreign Office on 11 October, in a note carefully worded to allay suspicions of isolationist Senators. The Department of State could not afford to take risks in arousing hostility in the Senate even during MacDonald's triumphal visit, and the note referred to the forthcoming conference only as one

1. Margaret Cole, ed., *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-1932* (London, 1956) p.223- ; H. Dalton, *Call Back Yesterday:Memoirs, 1887-1931* (London, 1953) p.246.

2. DBFP, 2/1, Nos.72, 74.

3. DBFP, No.74; FRUS, 1929/1, pp.263-5, give the texts of the Notes.

... which will unite the Powers signatory to the Washington Treaty which will anticipate the problems raised under Article XXI of that treaty as well as broaden its whole scope by the inclusion of other categories of ships,¹

The Italian Government accepted the invitation on 15 October, and the next day the Japanese acceptance was forwarded by Matsudaira.² France, too, replied on 16 October - accepting the invitation but pointedly taking note of previous expressions that the purpose of the proposed conference was to facilitate the work of the League of Nations Preparatory Commission and of the forthcoming General Disarmament Conference.³

In the notes of invitation the British Government expressed its willingness to undertake informal conversations with each government, and promised to forward its views as to the subjects which should be discussed at the conference. The announcement of the conference triggered off a whole series of bilateral conversations as Japan, France, and Italy sought to establish their own claims and to define their positions vis-a-vis one another and the British and Americans. Up to the issue of the notes of invitation, the three powers had been content to sit back and watch, albeit with interest and perhaps uneasiness; after the invitations were sent, though, they joined in feverishly, manoeuvring for position now that a deadline, the opening of the Conference on 21 June, had been set. Of the different bilateral exchanges, the most important were those between France and Italy, Britain and France, and Japan and the United States.

The Italians were first off the mark by proposing Franco-Italian conversations, on the lines of the Anglo-American conversations, in an

1. FRUS, 1929/1, p. 265, Stimson to Dawes, 9 Oct., 1929.

2. DBFP, No.80, Signor Boronaro to Henderson, 15 Oct., 1929; A 6889/30/45; and Matsudaira to Henderson, 16 Oct., 1929; A 6923/30/45; DBFP, No.81.

3. DBFP, No.82, de Fleurian to Henderson, 16 Oct., 1929; A 6924/30/45.

aide-memoire to the French Foreign Minister, Briand, dated 17 October.¹ This proposal was promptly accepted by the French Government, and was widely welcomed by public opinion in both countries. The conversations opened on 19 November in Paris, between Briand and M. Berthelot, the Secretary-General at the Quai d'Orsay, on the French side, and Count Manzoni, the Italian Ambassador in Paris. Three questions were chiefly at issue: whether France would concede Italy parity in auxiliary vessels; the abolition or regulation of submarines; and the suggestion of a 'Mediterranean Locarno', or security pact to guarantee both Powers' positions.

Italy maintained, with courtesy but persistence, the formula they had adopted in 1927: that the Italian Government was disposed a priori to assume as the limit of its naval armament any figure whatsoever, however low, provided that that figure be not exceeded by any other European continental Power. In other words, Italy demanded parity with France; she was only prepared to negotiate as to the level this parity should be set at.

Briand raised the idea of a 'Mediterranean Locarno' at his first meeting on the naval question with Count Manzoni. Any such agreement, whether or not lesser powers such as Spain or Yugoslavia were included, would have to have been in effect a guarantee by England of the status quo in the Mediterranean. Italy did not reject the suggestion outright, but a series of editorials in the government-controlled Italian Press made it clear that the idea was not favoured.² For the time being the idea of a Mediterranean Locarno got no further, and Britain was not forced to make public its opposition to the idea.

On 4 December the differences between France and Italy were thrown into sharp relief when Briand informed Manzoni that France could not

1. The Times, 19 Oct., 1929.

2. The comments of the Italian press are reviewed in DBFP, op.cit., No.100, Graham (Rome) to Henderson, 22.Nov., 1929.

negotiate on the basis of parity, but only on the basis of respective requirements. Briand's idea of French requirements were revealed in a document considered by the French Senate at this time, which calculated theoretical naval needs on the basis of three factors: area of territory, length of coasts, and length of communications. In this calculation, index numbers for the five powers were produced as: the British Empire, 10; United States, 4.2; France, 3; Japan, 1.6; Italy, 1. Were such a basis to be adopted, France might claim three times the Italian naval strength.¹

France could afford to claim a large fleet whereas financially and in terms of shipbuilding capacity Italy could not. The French naval budget for 1930-1, debated in December 1929, adhered to the 1924 plan of the 'Statut Naval', which was never enacted into law, but was always treated as such. This laid down that the French high-seas fleet would total 360,000 tons of non-capital ships and 96,000 tons of submarines, which maximum would be reached in stages by 1943. The 1930 programme did not deviate from this plan, although voices were raised in the French Chamber demanding that it be speeded up. The danger was certainly present that France's response to the Italian claim to parity would simply be to outbuild her by increasing her programme to a level at which Italy could not compete. Such a course, however, would have serious repercussions on Britain, whose position in the Mediterranean would be threatened, and through the British fleet upon the fleet levels of the United States and Japan.²

The Franco-Italian exchange of views ended on 17 December, when it was announced in Rome that Italy maintained her demand for equality

1. This paragraph is based on Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1929, pp.52-3.

2. The French naval budget is considered in minutes annexed to FO 371/13512, 12 December, 1929.

with the greatest continental naval power, and communicated this in a note to M. Briand. Italy would wait until France presented her requirements, then duplicate them for her own. Italy disclaimed any intention to influence France in assessing her own requirements, but declared its expectation that France would reduce rather than increase her armaments, given the nature of the London conference. Italy also concurred with the Anglo-Saxon powers in wishing to see the submarine abolished.¹ The result of all this was simply to worsen Franco-Italian relations; a bad omen for the Conference.

France turned to serious exchanges with Britain rather later than with Italy, probably out of suspicion that any Anglo-American closeness implied isolationistic tendencies on Britain's part towards the Continent. During November, Craigie had minuted his concern that France appeared to be dealing exclusively with Washington in her attempts to sound out the Anglo-American position in various issues. 'It has been noticeable for some time', he said, 'that the French embassy here (in London) appeared to take less interest than any other of the naval powers in the progress of the naval discussions'. Realizing the dangers of not reconciling the differences between Britain and France, he urged that this tendency be checked.² Late in December, though, Rene Massigli of the Quai d'Orsay³ came to London to consult with the British Government and with the French Embassy in London with regard to the Naval Conference. After first sounding out Craigie,⁴ Massigli presented on 20 December a long memorandum which, despite British and American wishes to avoid entering the Conference with prior commitments, set out the position France would

1. Toynbee, op.cit., p.52; DBFP op.cit., No.126, Tyrrell to Henderson, 27 December, 1929.

2. Minute by Craigie to FO 371/13512, A 8234/30/45, 19 November, 1929.

3. M. Rene Massigli, Chief of the League of Nations Section of the Quai d'Orsay and representative on the Preparatory Commission.

4. DBFP, op.cit., No.120, Memorandum by Craigie, 18 December, 1929, A 8669/30/45; DBFP, op.cit., No.123.

adopt at the Conference.¹

The French memorandum made the following points:

i) that programmes of disarmament could not be based alone upon such unimplemented declarations of good will such as the Kellogg Pact, and that the French Government intended to base the reduction of its armaments upon Article 8 of the Treaty of Versailles;

ii) that naval disarmament could not be considered independently of land and air armaments;

iii) that naval disarmament should be a matter for all naval powers;

iv) that in any programme of naval disarmament France would prefer to establish ratios in terms of global naval tonnage rather than by categories;

v) that she would attach great importance to any guarantees of security which might be established;

vi) that she desired some kind of regional pact for the Mediterranean, perhaps along the lines of the Four Power Pact of 1922 for the Far East.

The French also raised the matter of belligerent rights, stating in their memorandum that 'a complete naval agreement must presuppose the rights of belligerents and of neutrals'. Craigie pointed out to Massigli that any reference to belligerent rights would be 'very unfortunate', but nevertheless it was retained in the memorandum, which was circulated to the other naval powers. No further mention was made of the subject, however, and one must consider the possibility that it was included purely to see whether it might strike a responsive chord with the United States Government and lead to friction between Britain and America.

The French note amounted to an expression of grave doubts as to the usefulness of the forthcoming conference, and it left France many convenient doorways of escape, if matters did not go to her liking.

Tom Jones, reviewing French apprehensions, wrote that the French

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.120, Memorandum by Craigie, 18 December, 1929, A 8669/30/45; DBFP, op.cit., No.123.

believed that the Conference would be conducted on the lines of the Washington Conference,¹ and that the British and American Governments and their press would attempt to force France to accept figures laid down by themselves. Britain and the United States would simply give legal form to their de facto naval predominance under the cover of a disarmament agreement. Furthermore, Italy intended to try to realize her naval ambitions by gaining the support of the two chief naval powers for them. Thus the decision of the Italians in December to support the abolition of the submarine 'seems to them a piece of obvious flattery with the object of influencing Anglo-Saxon opinion in favour of the Italian claim for parity with France'. Italy was trying to isolate France and hold her up as the black sheep of international affairs. The French were, therefore, approaching the conference with great reluctance and suspicion.

The British reply to the French memorandum made the best of the strained situation, noting 'with particular pleasure' the French protestation that none of the problems mentioned in their memorandum amounted to irretrievable obstacles.² The reply avoided any mention of guarantees of security, and on the matter of a Mediterranean consultative pact noted non-committally that 'it would appear that facilities already exist for joint consultation in the event of need' through the League of Nations.

The British were, indeed, definitely opposed to a Mediterranean pact that involved any commitment to a guarantee of security, but were very anxious not to antagonize the French at this juncture. When Massigli met Craigie at the Foreign Office on 18 December, therefore, Craigie brought forward the idea that the US was contemplating a cautious advance

1. Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, ii, pp.231-2, January 1930.

2. DBFP, op.cit., No.136: Memorandum communicated to the French Ambassador, 10 January, 1930. This was published in the press on 13 January, 1930.

in the direction of implementing the Kellogg Pact by suggesting a general consultative treaty.¹ It would appear that this was the first occasion upon which the subject of a consultative pact, first raised by Hoover at Rapidan, was discussed with a French representative; it certainly predates the meetings between Massigli and Dwight Morrow in February 1930, at which Harold Nicolson claimed that Morrow 'evolved the theory of a consultative pact'.² A few days later Henderson cabled Sir Esmé Howard to inform the Secretary of State that

if Mr. Stimson has no objection, the Prime Minister proposes to resume with him as soon as he arrives (in London) the private conversations on this subject (of a consultative pact) which took place between the President and Prime Minister at Washington.³

Although the consultative pact proposed seemed to be one way to resolve the matter of French fears, the United States' ability to enter into any such arrangement was still in doubt. Stimson, in his reply, expressed sympathy with the general idea, but he said

I am aware how suspicious certain elements in the Senate were of any even indirect implication that the U.S. might be entangled in European conflicts, and it would never do for the U.S. government to initiate any such proposal, which would at once be seized by critics in Congress in order to undermine the whole work of the conference.⁴

The matter was pursued no further at the time.

The other major problem was that of the Japanese ratio. In an attempt to ascertain at what level the Japanese might settle, Hoover told MacDonald at Rapidan that he intended to invite the members of the Japanese delegation to visit Washington while en route to the London Conference. Stimson proposed this to the Japanese Ambassador in Washington on 16 October, and hinted that there was a possibility that the American and Japanese delegations might sail to England together, thereby having

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.120.

2. Harold Nicolson, Dwight Morrow (London, 1935), pp.386-8.

3. DBFP, op.cit., No.127; Henderson to Howard, 29 December, 1929.

4. DBFP, op.cit., No.130; Howard to Henderson, 29 December, 1929.

a longer time for consultation.¹

Meanwhile the Japanese pressed, through Ambassadors Debuchi in Washington and Matsudaira in London, their demand for an increased ratio of 70 per cent in auxiliary vessels including cruisers. Recognizing that the British Empire's fears about such an increase in Japan's strength, especially in heavy cruisers, were the major obstacle to their attaining this goal, Debuchi even urged Stimson to intercede with MacDonald on Japan's behalf. However, Stimson avoided giving the Japanese any hope that the United States would accede to their demand, and eventually told Debuchi that he hoped the Japanese delegates would not raise the question of the ratio during their visit - which would render the visit practically useless.³ This request was made largely because Stimson feared the effect on the Japanese delegates of the intransigent attitude of the Navy Department in Washington, which considered 'that the quid pro quo for the American sacrifice in naval bases made at the Washington Conference was (the 60%) ratio and that any increase in Japan's ratio will disturb the status quo'.⁴

Great efforts were made to entertain and to impress the Japanese delegates, who landed at Seattle on 11 December.⁵ They were received at the White House by Hoover on 16 December, and on the next two days held talks with Secretary Stimson at his home and at the State Department, at which Morrow and Assistant Secretary William R. Castle were present.

1. D/S 500, A 15 a3/278, and a3 P43/7, Memoranda of conversations between Stimson and Debuchi, 16 and 23 October respectively.

2. D/S 500 A 15 a3/245; Memorandum of a conversation between Stimson and Debuchi, 6 October, 1929.

3. D/S 500, *ibid.*, Memorandum of a conversation between Stimson and Debuchi, 14 December, 1929.

4. D/S 250. Japan/28: Dept. of State policy memorandum, 9 December, 1929.

5. D/S A 15 a3P43/4; Memorandum entitled 'Handling of Japanese Delegation while in the U.S.', 31 October, 1929.

After lengthy exchanges of views, no changes were made in the positions of the two sides, although the delegates nevertheless got on well personally with their American counterparts.¹ One suggestion did emerge though as a possible avenue for compromise. In an aide-memoir to Debuchi of 12 November, Stimson had said

It may well be that the word ratio will be an unfortunate word in the London Conference. It may be possible that the eventual settlement will be made as a result of actual conditions in ships rather than ratios.²

This Stimson repeated in his conversations with the Japanese delegates, adding that

... he hoped that a basis for understanding or agreement might be found in the light of what Japan had actually been doing in regard to her cruiser strength.³

The importance of the Japanese-American discussions lies not in any agreement or failure to agree, but in the fact of the establishment of cordial relations between the two countries' delegates, thus establishing the basis of mutual confidence necessary for an eventual compromise.

Secretary Stimson wished to travel to England on the Olympic, the vessel the Japanese delegates were booked to sail upon, but an adverse decision by the Comptroller-General of the United States made it impossible: he ruled that by law a United States delegation had to travel aboard an American-registered vessel.⁴ The US delegates had, therefore, to wait until 8 January to sail from New York on the old George Washington, facing an eight-day crossing, by which time the Japanese delegates were already in London, and the last preparations for the Royal opening

1. FRUS, 1929/1, pp.307-13, Memo., Dept. of State to the Japanese Embassy, undated. Copy to British in DBFP 2/1, No.133.

2. FRUS, 1929/1, p.274: Aide-memoire presented to Debuchi by Stimson, 12 November, 1929.

3. FRUS, 1929/1, p.309.

4. D/S 500 a3P43/98½: Letter from Comptroller-General to Secretary of State, 9 December, 1929. D/S 500 a3P43/122½: Assistant Secretary Carr to Stimson, 12 December, 1929.

of the Conference were under way.

The lengthy preparation for the next naval conference, recounted in this chapter, had not succeeded in eliminating all the differences between the five Washington naval powers. The areas of disagreement on naval matters were too varied, their sources often too fundamental, to be readily resolved; and the nature of the naval balance, with its complex inter-relationships, was such that bilateral talks could not hope to settle those questions, such as the Japanese ratio and the Mediterranean balance, which were multilateral.

The 1929 talks had, however, succeeded in ending the atmosphere of suspicion and hostility which the breakdown of the 1927 Conference and the Anglo-French compromise had brought about. The most important of these bilateral talks, the Anglo-American negotiations, achieved a reconciliation between those two nations which appeared unthinkable the year before, and which was an essential prerequisite for further naval limitation. The impact of the Hoover-MacDonald talks at Rapidan cannot be overemphasized in this. Although the basis for the Anglo-American cruiser agreement had been laid down in London beforehand, through the medium of General Dawes and Ambassador Gibson, the personal 'summit' of the two leaders provided the necessary will and determination in both governments to make the 1930 Conference a success.

Chapter IV

THE LONDON NAVAL CONFERENCE 1930

The London Naval Conference of 1930 was the high water-mark of inter-war naval limitation. During the two years of Anglo-American tension, and the deadlock at the Preparatory Commission, the goal of comprehensive naval limitation had seemed to be beyond the grasp of the maritime powers. But now, less than three years after the debacle at Geneva, the tentative agreement on cruisers between the new administrations in Britain and America, and the common idealism and sense of purpose between those countries' leaders, had eliminated the obstacle upon which naval limitation had foundered in 1927. The change in the diplomatic climate gave grounds for widespread optimism about the outcome of the Conference. Its Chairman, Ramsay MacDonald, reflected the general confidence that prevailed in the early stages of the Conference when he asserted that the London Naval Conference was '....not merely a Naval Conference. It aimed at making a substantial contribution to the problem of general disarmament...and to the peace of the world.'¹

The significance of the Conference certainly was very great. Despite the limitations of the Washington Treaty, naval armaments were still the dominant elements in the defence postures of the major powers. In 1930, of the five major armed powers, only France did not spend more on her navy than on land and air forces combined.²

No general advance in the field of disarmament was possible, then, without agreement in the naval sphere. Naval questions had by 1929 deadlocked the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference: now it was possible that the log-jam might be broken, and the great ideals of the internationalists and pacifists might again be within grasp.

The Conference opened on 21 January, when over 150 participants - delegates, advisers, technical staff, and secretaries, assembled in the

1. Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.238, Col.2085, 15 May, 1930.

2. League of Nations. Armaments Yearbook. 1930.

Royal Gallery of the House of Lords, and King George V made a speech of welcome. Even in an era of grand international gatherings, the company was distinguished.

The host British delegation was comprised of four Cabinet ministers: MacDonald; Arthur Henderson; Albert V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty; and Captain W. Wedgwood-Benn, the Secretary of State for India. In opposition, the latter three had all been champions of disarmament and peace, although in office, Alexander had increasingly sided with his naval advisers.¹ At the Conference, however, only MacDonald played a conspicuous part, the others appearing mainly at public sessions. This placed a great burden on the Prime Minister in addition to his job of parliamentary leader, one he shared only with his adviser and collaborator, Robert L. Craigie. Stimson reported to President Hoover his belief that MacDonald

...is taking too much of the burden of this Conference upon his shoulders in addition to his work in the House of Commons to enable him to be very effective. The result of this has been to keep Henderson and Vansittart out of harness and to leave nobody in except Craigie. As a result, there is a lack of constructive initiative being shown on the part of the British...'²

Apart from Craigie and the omni-present Vansittart, by now promoted to Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Office was represented by the Hon. Alexander Cadogan, acting as an adviser on League of Nations affairs, and H.W. Malkin, the department's legal adviser. The Admiralty also had a strong contingent, headed by Admiral Sir Charles Madden as First Sea Lord, and Vice-Admiral Sir William Fisher, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. Perhaps the single most influential individual amongst the Admiralty staff was Captain Roger Bellairs, who, as Director of Plans, was in charge of the Navy's day-to-day planning and lobbying, prior

1. Hugh Dalton, MS Diary: 22 Oct., 1927 (MS Vol.10). Dalton's papers are in the British Library of Political and Economic Science.

2. D/S Confidential Files, 500 A15a3/708 $\frac{1}{2}$: Stimson to Hoover, 24 Jan., 1930; Stimson to Hoover, 17 Feb., 1930.

to and during the Conference. Other noteworthy figures amongst the British staffs were Malcolm MacDonald MP, described as 'personally attached to the Prime Minister', and Philip Noel-Baker MP, the Parliamentary Private Secretary to Arthur Henderson; while 'personally attached' to Wedgwood-Benn was Roger Makins, later Lord Sherfield, then the Third Secretary in the Foreign Office's North American Department assigned to coordinate the department's responsibility for naval negotiations. Also in attendance was the indispensable Hankey, as Secretary to the Delegation and a number of assistants from the Cabinet Office.¹

The United States delegation was also very strong, headed by two Cabinet Ministers, Stimson, and Navy Secretary Adams, and including two leading Senators, David Reed (Republican - Pennsylvania) and Joseph T. Robinson (Democrat - Arkansas), as a step towards increased cooperation between the Executive Branch and the Senate. By appointing Congressional leaders Hoover followed Harding's example at the Washington Conference, which avoided the fatal error of Woodrow Wilson at Paris.

Senator Reed, in particular, was to prove an outstandingly successful negotiator, and both men were to play a major role in getting the eventual Treaty ratified by the Senate. The delegation of seven was completed by three Ambassadors: Dawes, Gibson, and Dwight Morrow, the American Ambassador to Mexico. In Mexico he had played a remarkable role in stabilising the country's government², and although a banker by profession, he had thoroughly mastered the convoluted and technical details of the naval question. In Harold Nicolson's words, 'Not only was he able to see the wood for the trees, but he knew more about the trees and the undergrowth than any of those with whom he negotiated'.³

1. The full list of the British delegation and staffs is found in F0371/14255, A201/1/45, approved 3 Jan., 1930.

2. See Harold Nicolson, Dwight Morrow, pp.310-366.

3. Ibid., p. 381. See also Dawes, op.cit., p.131, and New York Herald Tribune, 22 Nov., 1929.

The American advisers were a similarly distinguished group of Admirals, led by Rear Admiral Hilary Jones, who at the 1927 Conference had gained a reputation as a 'die-hard', recalled from retirement for the London Conference; and by Admiral Veazie Pratt, the Commander-in-Chief of the US Fleet, and a veteran of the Versailles and Washington Conferences, with a reputation for greater flexibility.¹ Other naval officers included Rear Admirals Moffatt, Pringle, Yarnell, and Hepburn, and Commander Harold C. Train, whose daily log of the Conference provided an invaluable record of the proceedings.

Civilian advisers included Ted Marriner, who as head of the Western European Division was Craigie's opposite number at the State Department, and Hugh Wilson, the United States Minister in Berne and delegate to the Preparatory Commission.²

Distinguished political and naval figures also represented the other naval powers. The Japanese delegates were Mr Reijivo Wakatsuki, a former Prime Minister, as head of the delegation, with Admiral Takarabe, the Navy Minister, Ambassador Matsudaira, and Ambassador Matsugo Nagai from Brussels. For France, Premier Tardieu attended the opening session as titular head of the delegation, with Briand to direct the delegation's activities, and the Ministers for the Navy and the Colonies, MM Georges Leygues and Francois Pietri. The principal members of the Italian delegation were the Foreign Minister, Signor Dino Grandi, and the Minister of the Navy, Guiseppi Sirianni.³ Although Admiral Takarabe, as a Japanese delegate, and Admiral Sirianni of Italy appeared to infringe the Hoover-MacDonald plan that the negotiations should be conducted by civilians, with naval personnel kept strictly in a

1. FO 371/13527, A 8194/30/45: Campbell (Washington) to Henderson, 22 Nov., 1929.

2. The full US delegation and staff is given in Publications of the Dept. of State, Conference Series, No.6, Proceedings of the London Naval Conference of 1930 and Supplementary Documents, 1931 (henceforth cited as Proceedings... 1930), pp.9-10.

3. Proceedings...1930, pp.11-13, 15-18.

subordinate position, the civilian political posts occupied by the two men caused their governments to disregard the principle,¹ and the Foreign Office had to content itself with instructing delegations that uniforms were not to be worn by officers on any public occasion.²

The delegations were completed by representatives of the Dominions and India, who had an anomalous status as members of the combined British Empire delegation, but representing independent states with full rights at the Conference. Four of these six governments were represented by their High Commissioners in London, whilst Canada sent her Minister for National Defence, Col. Ralston, and Australia her Minister of Trade and Customs, James E. Fenton.

Each of the delegations came to the Conference having undertaken lengthy preparations and consultations, and with a reasonably coherent order of objectives and priorities. In Britain, the Cabinet appointed a Committee to plan arrangements for the Conference, and to coordinate British policy after considering memoranda submitted by the departments concerned.³ Among these the Admiralty's contributions, notably those of the First Sea Lord, Madden, were less than helpful. MacDonald had asked Madden to make a comprehensive statement of the problems which the Admiralty had to face in connection with the Conference, but when his memorandum was submitted it dealt largely with the Admiralty's misgivings over the concession in principle of a 50-cruiser fleet.⁴ Madden's objections were reiterated in a letter to Alexander, of 15 January 1930, which protested that 70 cruisers represented an absolute need, and further objecting to the idea of the postponement and

1. Graham (Rome) protested to Grandi about Admiral Sirianni's selection: Graham to Henderson, Tel.No.838 of 13 Dec., 1929, copy in ADM 116/2690.

2. US Navy Dept., File A 19(8)/EM London (300102), Nat.Archives, Hughes (CNO) to Stimson, 2 Jan., 1930.

3. CAB 29/117.

4. CAB 29/117; LNC(29) 4, 13 Dec., 1929.

battleship replacement until after 1935, and reduction of the numbers of the battleship fleet. He did, however, concede on this occasion that a 50-cruiser force might be acceptable 'for a strictly limited period' if a steady replacement programme was maintained.¹

On 14 January the full Cabinet considered policy for the Conference, examining all the papers submitted by the Chiefs of Staff and the Admiralty. One of these, C.P.5(30), was an Admiralty 'Blue Print' of British proposals to be submitted to the Conference. This was apparently not sent to the Treasury before it was circulated to the Dominions and to Cabinet members, to the annoyance of Phillip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.² Snowden, writing from the Hague where he was a delegate to the Reparations Conference, thought the 'Blue Print' a 'great mistake' which appeared 'to have been framed without any consideration of the financial implications'. In his letter, which was read out in Cabinet, he called for the complete abolition of the Capital Ship, 'which is a useless ornament'. If not, then any replacement must at least be deferred until 1936. Snowden pointed out that the Admiralty's plans would mean maintaining the Navy at approximately its current size, but at the cost of a 14 per cent increase in the estimates, to £64 millions per annum, and that such a proposal would 'entirely fail to achieve the primary purpose of the Conference, namely an all-round reduction of the fighting forces of the Powers'.³ Alexander's defence of the Admiralty's position, although winning the respect and affection of navalists,⁴ was seen by his colleagues as a sign of weakness,

1. Memorandum by Madden, 15 Jan., 1930 C.P.1(30), CAB 24/209. See Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, pp.52-3.

2. CAB 29/117, 9 Jan., 1930 Snowden to MacDonald, 12 Jan., 1930, in Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, ii, pp.232-4, CAB 23/63: CAB 1(30) of 14 Jan., 1930.

3. Snowden to MacDonald, 12 Jan., 1930, *ibid.*

4. e.g. S. Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, p.54.

of his being a prisoner in the hands of the Admirals.¹ He stood upon the Admiralty's 'Blue Print' and other papers, and argued from them that any alteration in the proposals agreed between MacDonald and Hoover would 'mean the loss of four months of endeavour', and that they 'had gone as low as they could. Not another ton could be surrendered...'²

The results of the Cabinet meeting were, necessarily, a compromise. On the question of battleships the Conclusion stated that the capital ship was 'simply and solely a ship of war, and as political security is strengthened it must stand to disappear'. Thus replacement would be postponed, if the Conference agreed, until after 1935; but neither the Treasury, seeking complete abolition, nor the Admiralty, seeking an immediate replacement programme, got their way.³ The battleship question, incidentally, revealed the prominence of MacDonald in the British delegation; at a meeting of the delegation on 9 January Henderson had made a stand for a bolder reduction in that class, but was easily over-ruled by MacDonald and Alexander. When Robert Cecil asked Wedgewood-Benn why he had not similarly opposed the 'Blue Print' line on battleships, Dalton recorded that 'he didn't feel that he could take a strong line about anything at the Conference. He was only Secretary of State for India. In other words, he wants to keep in with J.R.M. and is quite willing to be a passenger...'⁴

In other categories, the Cabinet endorsed the 50-cruiser fleet as 'amply adequate', agreed to limitation of destroyers to a total gross tonnage of not more than 150,000, and supported the idea of abolition of submarines, or their reduction to as low a level as possible.⁵ These

1. e.g. Dalton Diary, 20 Jan., 1930 (MS.Vol.13).

2. CP13(30), 20 Dec., 1929; Dalton Diary, 20 Jan., 1930 (MS.Vol.13); *ibid.*, 21 Jan., 1930.

3. CAB 23/63: CAB.1(30), 14 Jan., 1930.

4. Dalton Diary, 21 Jan., 1930.

5. CAB 23/63 CAB.1(30), 14 Jan., 1930.

produced little controversy as the Cabinet was merely endorsing positions which had become accepted by a concensus of the interested parties in which even the Admiralty had come to share: the only point at issue being under what circumstances, and for how long, the 50-cruiser fleet would continue to be 'amply adequate'. The renewal of controversy within the British Government on battleships, however, again revealed the dichotomy of interests between departments which had become somewhat obscured in the cruiser question, due to the Prime Minister's clear direction in overruling departmental reservations, and to the need to preserve a common front in negotiation.

This dichotomy was phrased admirably by Captain Roskill, who pointed out that while the Foreign Office wanted agreement and the Admiralty, limitation, only the Treasury wanted reduction of naval forces.¹

The same dilemma faced the United States delegation, although the United States Treasury did not have the influence of its British counterpart. When the Conference opened the General Board in Washington still intransigently opposed reduction of the US Navy's heavy cruiser fleet below twenty-one ships unless the level of parity in total tonnage was fixed well below any level seriously discussed up to that point. The Board would only go down to eighteen vessels if parity was set at 250,000 tons.² The lack of agreement in Washington cast the delegation upon its own resources, and on 27 January a document was drafted in London entitled 'The Tentative Plan of the American Delegation'. The basis of this was an outline plan drawn up by Senator Reed, and submitted to the naval advisers of the delegation by Admiral Pratt on 25 January. Production of a full plan was then assigned to Commander Train and Captain W.W. Smyth, USN.³ After a heated argument

1. Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, p. 54.

2. G.B. Memorandum, 7 Jan., 1930: File G.B.438-1, Records of General Board of the Navy.

3. Train's daily log, 25 Jan., 1930, appended to File G.B.438-1.

as to whether or not to go below the figure of twenty-one cruisers wanted by the General Board, Pratt ruled that as Reed and the civilians wanted eighteen vessels the plan must be based on that number.¹ After the plan had been submitted to the delegates they called upon the naval officers to give their own individual views on parts which they disliked. By that stage, though, with a workable document in their hands, based on Reed's ideas, and incorporating the naval advice on how it could be translated into practice, it was probably too late.

After struggling so long against naval obstruction to get any kind of document it must be assumed that the delegates were in no mood to go back to square one. An inclination to accept the plan for want of any alternative must have been heightened by conflicting evidence given by the naval advisers.

Admiral Jones was, as in 1927, the most reluctant to accept any reduction in his beloved fleet.² He asserted that the plan weakened the relative strength of the United States both as regards the original building programme accepted by the General Board, by decreasing the number of units most suitable to the United States' needs, and increasing the number of (six-inch) units less suited to meeting those needs. He also added that the plan, like that accepted by the General Board, would actually increase the cost of the Navy's armaments, because the construction of the unwanted six-inch vessels would increase total construction, personnel and maintenance costs.³

Other naval officers, however, disputed Jones's rejection of the six-inch cruiser. Captain Van Keuren, for example, a specialist in naval design and construction, argued that:

1. Train's daily log, 25 Jan., 1930, appended to File G.B. 438-1

2. *ibid.*, 28 Jan., 1930.

3. *ibid.*

...under certain circumstances (the six-inch cruiser) would at least be a match for the 8-inch gun ship.... An 8-inch gun ship attacked by two or more 6-inch gun ships would be hard put to it to dispose of them before they could close in to ranges at which the 6-inch ships would have superiority.

This superiority at those ranges, due to greater manoeuvrability and more rapid rate of fire, meant that the 6-inch ship could actually be more cost-effective than the 10,000, 8-inch gun cruiser, which in Van Keuren's estimation was 'an artificial type which violates all the tenets of good design, especially the principle of corresponding protection'. By this he meant that in order to achieve high speed and heavy fire power within the 10,000 ton limit, armour protection had been sacrificed and the design's combat effectiveness weakened. He concluded that:

... it appeared that we would pay a tremendous cost for the privilege of retaining 8-inch gun ships, when, by the additional tonnage secured from foregoing the privilege of building 8-inch gun ships in considerable numbers we could secure several extra valuable 6-inch gun units...¹

In this he was supported by Admirals Yarnell and Hepburn, both of whom favoured the 6-inch gun in the 10,000-ton vessel.²

This acceptance by at least one section of naval opinion of the 6-inch cruiser effectively demolished the Jones's argument, which had up until then prevailed in the Navy Department. The tentative plan, amended by 5 February, to include technical changes requested by the naval officers, remained fundamentally the proposal initiated by Senator Reed two weeks beforehand. In addition to a cruiser fleet of 18 8-inch gun ships and a number of compensatory 10,000-ton, 6-inch gun ships, the plan called for the reduction of capital ship totals to 15, 15, and 9, although the delegation was to press for the United Nations to be allowed to build one new battleship to compensate for the British Rodney and Nelson; and Britain and America would

1. Train's daily log, 25 Jan., 1930, op.cit., includes memoranda submitted by both Jones and Van Keuren.

2. *ibid.*, 30 Jan., 1930.

maintain parity in other classes of ship. Japan, according to the tentative plan, would be asked to accept only twelve of the 8-inch cruisers, and 60 per cent and 66.7 per cent of the Anglo-American parity levels in destroyers and submarines respectively: a long way from the 70 per cent ratio Japan was demanding.¹ On 5 February Cotton telegraphed from Washington that the President heartily approved the programme.² Stimson then announced to the press that the American delegation had accepted an 18-vessel, 8-inch gun cruiser fleet, and from that moment on the British and American delegations worked practically in unity.

The only unfortunate aspect of the adoption of the tentative plan was its effect on Admiral Jones. In a letter to Pratt of 5 February he dissociated himself from the plan entirely; Pratt, however, defended the plan with equal vigour when he forwarded Jones's letter of complaint to Stimson.³ Jones threatened to become a serious embarrassment to the delegation but, largely as a result of the pressure he had been under when opposing the plan, he fell seriously ill and was obliged to return to the United States for rest and treatment. He left on the Berengaria on 27 February.⁴ Jones's departure assured unanimity within the American party at London; but his stand reflected the fears of many naval officers, and a sizeable part of American public opinion. The tentative plan could be - and was - portrayed by its opponents as having been 'railroaded' through by Reed and Stimson, and Jones's opposition was loudly echoed in the Senate when the time came to ratify the Treaty.

At the second plenary session, on 23 January, Hankey was elected

1. G.B. 438-1; also Train's log, 5 Feb., 1930.

2. FRUS, 1930/i, pp.13, 18, 19.

3. Pratt Papers, Library of Congress MS Division: Jones to Pratt, 5 Feb., and Pratt to Stimson, 13 Feb., 1930.

4. Train's log, 26 Feb., 1930.

Secretary-General and the Conference's procedure was agreed upon.¹ It was accepted that problems could best be dealt with in closed sessions of sommittess, and so the Conference resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, or 'First Committee', to discuss technical matters. This was subdivided into further committees to treat specific problems. Political questions were to be handled by the heads of delegations in small, informal meetings. Only when major decisions had been made and were ready for public announcement would a plenary session be convened.² Despite the logic of the exclusion of the exclusion of the public, it ran the risk of alienating, as in 1927, the American press and of increasing the suspicion concerning the proceedings in London in the US Congress.³

At a third plenary session a week later an agenda for the First Committee's proceedings was approved, which included six matters under the heading of 'general questions'. These included, at France's request, the system of global tonnage limitations, and, at Great Britain's request, the opposite system of limitation by categories. Italy, perhaps more practically, had placed on the agenda the questions of determination of ratios and of levels of total tonnage.

The First Committee met eight times between 31 January and 12 April, producing six reports which were sent to Plenary sessions. These were drafted from reports produced by a Committee of Experts, comprising one adviser and two experts from each delegation assigned to study and draft methods of limitation.⁴ To focus upon attempts to resolve specific problems, however,

1. See Roskill, Hankey, ii, pp.512-5

2. Minutes of Second Plenary Session, 23 Jan., 1930; Proceedings...1930, pp.43-58; also CAB 29/119.

3. See Congressional Record, US Senate, 71st Congress, 2nd Session: Vol.72, part III (25 Jan., 1930), p.2359; also New York Times, 26 Jan., 1930; 'Secret Diplomacy at London' in New Republic, Vol.61, 5 Feb., 1930, pp.287-8

4. Minutes and reports of the Experts Committee are in CAB 29/124.

the two major political divisions must be considered separately: the questions of Japan's ratio, and of France's resistance to Italian claims of parity.

The US in practice assumed the chief responsibility for dealing with Japan, whilst the British did so for France. I shall deal with the Japanese problem first, as this was the first to be settled, although, of course, it ran pari passu with the French problem. The principal negotiators dealing with the Japanese ratio were Senator Reed for the United States and Ambassador Matsudaira for Japan.

From the first, the Japanese held out for a 10:10:7 ratio in auxiliary vessels, as her delegates had done in Washington, en route for London. They regarded this as particularly important in the class of heavy 8-inch gun cruisers, and in relation to the larger allotment in that category assigned to the United States in the preliminary agreement with Britain. They were, however, apparently disposed to be more accommodating in the category of smaller cruisers.¹ The British had continually taken the position that they could not concede more than twelve 8-inch gun cruisers to Japan, and remain within the limits of the Anglo-American agreement. Both the Americans and British attached much more importance to maintaining the 60 per cent ratio in 8-inch cruisers than in any other classes of vessels. Such cruisers were seen as offensive weapons, akin to capital ships, to a much greater degree than any other class of ship. Meanwhile, in Japan, the Navy and its supporters mounted a more determined propaganda campaign, which created a strong public opinion in support of their intransigent position.²

Little progress could be made in the negotiations with Japan until after the elections for the Diet, which were scheduled for 20 February. This saw

1. DBFP 2/1, No.147: Notes of a meeting on 17 February, 1930, between members of the US, British, and Japanese delegations.

2. DBFP 2/1, No.156: Henderson to Tilley, 15 March, 1930.

the Government returned with an increased majority, thus strengthening the hand of the Japanese delegates in London. After this Reed and Matsudaira began to hold private conversations with a view to finding a way out of the impasse. Nevertheless, at the beginning of March the lack of any breakthrough caused Stimson and MacDonald to start thinking in terms of downgrading their hopes to a two-power Treaty.¹

The solution eventually adopted was first suggested in a letter from Assistant Secretary Cotton of 18 February.² Cotton proposed that whilst the US should adhere to its plan for 18 cruisers, the construction programme might be slowed down so that only 15 vessels would be completed by the expiry of the agreement in 1936. Reed and Matsudaira were prepared to make such a compromise, with Japan accepting restrictions to her existing 12 8-inch gun ships on those terms, which would also satisfy the British.

The willingness of Reed and Matsudaira to compromise was not shared wholeheartedly by their delegations. Stimson at least thought that the US should stand fast and make no concessions, writing on 10 March that:

The Negotiations with the Japanese are very tedious, as the Japanese evidently in an endeavour to satisfy eternal dissatisfactions in their delegation, are bringing to us recurrent propositions which they know we will refuse. However, we believe we are slowly reaching a point of agreement with them, which will be satisfactory.

The State Department, though, with Hoover breathing down its back, was impatient, and favoured further concession. In the course of the next few days Stimson conceded to the Japanese a 70 per cent ratio in 6-inch gun cruisers, and parity in submarines.³

On 11 March MacDonald was defeated on a vote in the House of Commons, which cast doubt over his ability to continue in Government. Stimson feared

1. O'Connor, op.cit., pp.81-3; Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, pp.63-4.

2. Cotton to Pratt, 18 Feb., 1930: File, 'London Conference 1930', Pratt Papers: FRUS 1930/1, pp.43-5, Stimson to Cotton, 4 March, 1930.

3. FRUS, 1930/1, pp.46,48,52,55,59.

that because of this possibility

...and as a tactical manoeuvre against the delays which we are suffering from Japanese and French sources, we should proceed ... with the drafting of a two-power treaty with Britain.¹

This suggestion, with MacDonald's concurrence, was passed on to Wakatsuki on the Japanese delegation in London, and via Castle in Tokyo to the Japanese Government.² The threat forced the Japanese to back down, and accept what were by then fairly generous terms. On 13 March Stimson announced an agreement which commanded the support of a majority of the Japanese delegation, and the unanimous approval of the British and American delegates. By its terms, Japan received 60 per cent in 8-inch gun cruisers, 70 per cent in 6-inch gun cruisers, 70 per cent in destroyers, and 100 per cent of the Anglo-American submarine fleet. Arthur Henderson told Tilley, the British Ambassador to Tokyo, that the agreement represented

...a considerable departure from our original attitude, and during the negotiations we have made concession after concession to Japan before reaching the present position. It is useless for the Japanese Government, or the Japanese delegation here, to think we can go any further.³

Between 13 March and the end of the month the problem became one of gaining approval of the compromise from the Japanese Government. The British and American Ambassadors in Tokyo, Tilley and Castle, were requested to do their best to this end, though Tilley was warned to avoid giving the impression of exercising concerted Anglo-Saxon pressure.⁴ Of this, Tilley needed no warning; he reported to Henderson the view prevalent in Japan that Britain, whom she regarded as her friend, will have 'as once before helped to make her give way to the United States which is her enemy'.⁵ The Big Navy party, in

1. FRUS, 1930/1, p.58: Stimson to Cotton, 12 March, 1930.

2. ibid., pp.58, 60: Stimson to Cotton, 13 March, 1930.

3. DBFP, 2/1, No.156: Henderson to Tilley, 15 March, 1930. See also FRUS, 1930/1, p.61: Stimson to Cotton, 13 March; p.68: Castle (Tokyo).

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.156: Henderson to Tilley, 15 March, 1930; to Cotton, 20 March, 1930.

5. DBFP, 2/1, No.161: Tilley to Henderson, 18 March, 1930.

Tokyo, represented the compromise proposal as an American plan, which they they, along with a considerable portion of the Japanese press, proceeded to denounce.¹

What was actually happening in Tokyo, as was realised in London and Washington, was that the Japanese Navy were fiercely resisting the attempts of the Japanese Foreign Office to gain Governmental support for a compromise. The same departmental differences in objectives and outlook have already been noted in the United States and in Britain. The Japanese Navy's resistance appeared to be weakening by 20 March, however, when they proposed that some kind of Japanese-American agreement on China be concluded, effectively giving Japan a free hand there, as the price for accepting the compromise.²

This was apparently a last attempt by the Navy to improve their position on the losing side of a considerable struggle with the pro-compromise civilian elements. By the end of March, both Tilley and Castle reported that they were 'hopeful' of a successful outcome,³ and on 1 April Premier Hamaguchi telegraphed to the Japanese delegation his Government's acceptance of the compromise terms, which Wakatsuki and Saito duly communicated to the British and Americans the next day.⁴ The Japanese problem was effectively solved; and the Naval Treaty, as eventually signed, embodied almost exactly the original Reed-Matsudaira compromise proposals.

With France, Britain led the search for a compromise. The United States was only interested in the French (and Italian) force levels inasmuch as they affected British construction. The American Attitude was characterised by Senator Borah, who remarked that the tonnage of the French demands was impossible, and that she was behaving like a spoiled child. Since he did

1. O'Connor, op.cit., pp.81-3.

2. FRUS, 1930/1, p.69: Cotton to Castle(Tokyo), 20 March 1930.

3. DBFP, 2/1, No.171: Tilley to Henderson, 27 March, 1930.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.175: Meeting on 2 April, 1930.

not believe that France would build to whatever level she claimed, he did not care how much they asserted their right to build to such levels.¹ On the whole, the attitude of the delegation in London reflected this attitude, discounting French naval strength as unimportant, except inasmuch as it influenced the agreement.

The British, on the other hand, were naturally much more concerned about the French naval programme. The principle that the Royal Navy must be the equal of any two others in the world had, of course, been abandoned with the rise of the United States and Japan in the First World War, but was still maintained with regard to Europe because of the necessity to protect her trade route through the Mediterranean. In plain terms, with Germany then out of any naval race, and Soviet Russian forces negligible, British policy required her Navy to be equal to those of France and Italy combined. Anything like competitive naval building between those two countries meant that British naval strength must be correspondingly increased if the two power standard was to be maintained; and if such an increase was forced upon the British, inevitably the tentative agreement with the United States would collapse.

As has been recounted,² France came to the Conference insisting that she be allowed to retain her existing superiority over Italy. Realists like Dwight Morrow and Sir Maurice Hankey felt, however, that the only way to deal with France and Italy was to get away from principles like theoretical ratios, and come down to the practical questions of ships built, building, and planned.³ Italy nevertheless refused to commit herself to a concrete programme, and France offered only figures set at levels which would entail enormous increases in her navy.

1. FRUS, 1930/1, p.49: Cotton to Stimson, 6 March, 1930.

2. See above, Ch. 3, pp. 53-7.

3. FRUS, 1930/1, p.6:Stimson to Cotton, 28 Jan., 1930.

Before the Conference opened, suspicions existed as to France's attitude towards the meeting. The French memorandum of 20 December 1929 had put forward much that appeared to Walter Edge, the United States Ambassador in Paris, as obstructive, and was intended for bargaining purposes in London.¹ When Briand and Tardieu arrived in London, however, their pleasantness and apparent cooperativeness surprised and impressed the other delegations.² This seems, initially, to have caused British and American eyes to overlook the fact that France had not moved her position an inch since preparations for the Conference began. The French still wanted, in effect, a guarantee of defence by Great Britain, and by the United States if at all possible, in the event of her being attacked either in the Atlantic or the Mediterranean. MacDonald was in no position to underwrite French security in any way.³ The United States, however, had for the first time considered the possibility of a consultative arrangement similar to that contained in the Four Power Pact. This idea had been raised by Craigie in conversation with Massigli on 13 February, 1929,⁴ but had apparently been considered by Hoover and Stimson before the latter sailed for England.⁵ In mid-February Stimson was hopeful that Tardieu would accept such an agreement in place of a formal guarantee,⁶ but hopes of a settlement through such

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1. D/S Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/616: Edge to Stimson, 28 Dec., 1929.
 2. e.g. D/S, Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/708½: Stimson to Hoover, 24 Jan., 1930.
 3. See FRUS, 1930/1, p.55: Stimson to Cotton, 10 March; also Dawes, Journal, p.167.
 4. DBFP, 2/i, No.144: Memorandum of Conversation, 13 Feb., 1930.
 5. D/S Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/708½: Stimson to Hoover, 24 Jan., 1930, mentions 'the form of Treaty which I discussed with you and Mr. Root at the White House at luncheon...'
 6. D/S Subject Files, A15a3/Consultative /23: Memorandum by Stimson, 16 Feb., 1930.

means collapsed with Tardieu's Government at the end of February. The departure of the French delegates to participate in the Cabinet-making negotiations in Paris, kept the Conference marking time with no change in the original French programme, which aimed to build her Navy up to the unacceptable level of 725,000 tons by 1936. In fact, no major changes of personnel took place in the French delegation, with Briand returning almost immediately and continuing as Foreign Minister, and Tardieu returning in March as President of the Council of Ministers.

After Tardieu's fall, pressure seems to have been applied to the US delegates in particular, to offer a more concrete guarantee of security to France. This pressure may have arisen in Paris, whence dispatches from American press correspondents such as Mowrer of the Chicago Daily News, and James of the New York Times urged the French need for security. It was however taken up in New York by the Foreign Press Association, which traditionally had urged a more active world role for America, and by liberals and pacifists.¹ The opinion was expressed that action of the sort demanded by Briand would alone save the Conference. Hoover, however, along with the State Department, felt this to be no more than clever French propaganda, and calculated that whilst such a guarantee might save the Conference, it would destroy any hopes of getting the US Senate to ratify a naval Treaty.² American hopes began to be limited to a three power Treaty.

Early in March it would appear that Stimson made a further effort to work out some kind of formula that could conciliate the French, and make them reduce their proposed building programmes by offering greater security. Stimson told the French that his government felt it could not become a party to any pact, consultative or otherwise, which simply guaranteed French

1. FO 371/14260, A2085/1/45: Campbell (Washington) to Henderson, 18 March, 1930.

2. FRUS, 1930/1, p.32: Stimson to Cotton, 28 Feb., 1930; p.40, Cotton to Stimson, 3 March, 1930. See also Hoover's Memoirs, ii, pp.348-9

power in Europe or the Mediterranean. He did, however, hold out hope that something might be offered in the way of a modification of the Kellogg Pact.¹ This time it was Briand's turn to be cool to the idea: he expressed himself willing to discuss it, but only after the naval negotiations had been completed. Any adjustment of the Kellogg Pact was unlikely to be sufficiently explicit to satisfy France. The idea was in any case quashed once again by Hoover, who told Stimson that :

...the entanglement of political guarantees in these negotiations, though they may be indirect, is more dangerous than anything else to the whole American acceptance of the results.²

He told Campbell that

... the American public would rather spend \$500 millions to reach parity with a British fleet increased to meet French construction than, by giving France any guarantee of security, allowing American policy to depend in particular on that of France.³

Hoover's emphatic opposition caused Stimson to fall into line and give up his ideas for a political solution, and MacDonald also abandoned any ideas of a political pact shortly afterwards. On 12 March the British and French delegates conferred again, with the American delegates sitting in as silent observers. No agreement was reached after a lengthy discussion, with MacDonald ruling out an agreement on security, and Briand ruling out any reduction in the proposed French figures until Italy produced her own figures. He claimed that if the French delegates did otherwise, the French Parliament would 'throw the Government out in forty-eight hours'.⁴ Tardieu's return from Paris seemed to strengthen their intransigence.⁵

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1. FRUS, 1930/1, p.36:Stimson to Cotton, 3 March, 1930.
 2. FRUS, 1930/1, p.41:Cotton to Stimson, 4 March, 1930.
 3. FO 371/14259, A 1787/1/45, Campbell(Washington) to Henderson, 6 March, 1930.
 4. DBFP, 2/1, No.154, 12 March, 1930; FRUS, 1930/1, p.63.
 5. See DBFP, 2/1, No.158: Conversation between MacDonald and Tardieu, 16 March, 1930.

MacDonald was very blunt with Tardieu on 16 March, telling him sharply that the French figures were not acceptable, and that any further negotiations with Britain would have to be conducted on the principle that Italy did not exist, or at least had a hypothetical (and low) tonnage, so that France would then produce figures showing her true requirements. Tardieu reluctantly agreed as long as the British and Americans would apply pressure to Italy to produce her figures.¹ Such a course was, however, made impossible by leaks of information to the French press, which published reports of the impending joint demarche in Rome. This immediately aroused strong feelings in Rome, reflected in the controlled Italian press, and caused Graham and the United States Ambassador in Rome to report the inadvisability of making any approach to Mussolini back to their Governments.²

This left the position in deadlock. Tyrrell reported from Paris on 22 March that

The French believe that their delegation cannot do anything more in London so long as France is being asked by Great Britain to lower her figures without entering into a Mediterranean agreement with her, and so long as Italy's demand for parity continues. Therefore, if the British have decided to refuse a Mediterranean agreement, and can do nothing more with the Italians, and also will agree to let the French figures stand as they are, the French will help wind up the Conference with a report to the League which would contain certain agreements with respect to the regulation of reduction, naval holiday for certain construction, methods of limiting naval armament, and so forth.³

This foreshadowed fairly accurately the final solution which evolved over the next month. Work began in earnest on a three-power treaty soon after the abortive 16 March meeting, although further efforts were still to be

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.158, op.cit.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.157: A 1986/1/45, Henderson to Graham, 15 March, 1930; No.159:A 2003/1/45, Graham to Henderson, 16 March, 1930; No.165:A 2123/1/45, Graham to Henderson, 20 March, 1930.

3. Quoted in FRUS, 1930/1, p.72: Stimson to Cotton, 22 March, 1930.

made to obtain French concessions, and MacDonald entertained the hope for a while that Italy might participate in the Treaty. He expressed the opinion that, in that instance, Italy's action 'would most certainly put the wrong on France and leave her isolated in Europe'.¹

French obstruction was prevented from jeopardising the Japanese settlement by the adoption of an 'Escalator Clause' in the draft treaty. This idea had first been raised in 1927 at Geneva; at that time Secretary of State Kellogg had written to Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur that

It must be frankly recognised that the strength in cruisers and destroyers, at least of the British Navy, must always be, to some extent at least, conditioned upon the strength and composition of the French and Italian navies.²

Thus Article XXI of the draft treaty which the three delegations' legal advisers began to prepare at the end of March, permitted each signatory power to exceed the tonnage levels established, if that nation felt that its safety was endangered by the naval constructions of neighbouring countries. This meant in particular that Britain would be permitted to build up her fleet beyond the maximum set by the Treaty should either French or Italian expansion jeopardise Britain's naval power in the Mediterranean.

The first week of April saw final and rather desultory attempts to find a way out of the Franco-Italian deadlock before the Conference closed. MacDonald offered Briand a proposed declaration designed to clarify the attitude of Britain towards the implementation of her obligations under Article XVI of the League's Covenant. In MacDonald's eyes, the Covenant already contained a sufficient guarantee for French security, and if its obligations were more clearly defined it would render further

1. D/S 110.001/33: Conversation between Stimson and MacDonald, 5 March, 1930; DBFP 2/1, No.155 Conversation between MacDonald and Grandi, 13 March, 1930.

2. D/S 500.A 15a1/137a, 23 March, 1927.

assurances superfluous. After Briand had returned to Paris from 5 to 8 April, however, to consult with his Government about the proposed declaration, he reported that the French Government found the statement inadequate, whilst the British Cabinet had insisted that any implementation by Britain of her obligations to the League was subject to the approval of Parliament; in other words, that it would be no different from any other decision to go to war, and could not be an automatic response.¹

The next suggestion from the British side was some kind of four-power agreement based upon figures designed to bring the naval forces of Britain, France, the United States, and Japan into equilibrium, with an escalator clause to protect France against Italian competitive building. On 9 April however the French produced no figures beyond their demand that a disparity of at least 240,000 tons be maintained between France and Italy.² Assuming once again a putative Italian fleet of 400,000 tons, a French fleet of 640,000 tons was still too high to be acceptable to Britain. No attempt could therefore be made to bring the British and French totals into equilibrium without reference to the Italians, to discover their projected total: the very question which had prevented agreement all along. Once again, the Anglo-French conversations were delayed, whilst MacDonald and Briand went to see Grandi, who was ill with a stomach complaint.

The next day, 10 April, a letter from Grandi was read to the two delegations, which was quite uncompromising. Italy would, as before, undertake not to build beyond parity with France, but she could go no further. The situation was obviously hopeless.³

That afternoon Stimson and MacDonald met to discuss how a composite

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.181: Notes of a meeting between French and British delegates, 8 April, 1930; also appendix to the same suggested draft declaration by French and British Governments.

2. DBFP, No.182: Meeting between British and French delegates, 9 April, 1930.

3. FRUS, 1930/1, p.104; DBFP, No.183 and appendix thereto.

treaty could be prepared, which would combine the three-power agreement on limitation of auxiliary naval vessels, whilst at the same time enshrining those principles which all five powers had agreed upon, and to which we must now turn. The final treaty included three major items which all five powers accepted: a holiday in the building of capital ships; acknowledgement of humane rules for submarine warfare; and rules for the scrapping and replacement of warships.

The British came to the Conference with the object of ultimately getting both the battleship and the submarine eliminated. On the subject of the battleship, the Cabinet decided that, as the capital ship would become obsolete in time, as political security was strengthened, there should be no replacement in the class during the life of the treaty; and that if a 'transition period' came to pass before the class disappeared altogether, then rules should be adopted limiting the size, and increasing the life, of any new vessel built.¹

The Washington treaty permitted the construction of replacement capital ships from 1931 onwards, when the 'building holiday' agreed in Chapter II, Part 3 of that treaty expired. All the five powers were, however, prepared to continue the 'holiday' subject only to the American wish to build one large battleship to offset British possession of the Nelson and Rodney. When capital ships were considered by the First Committee, however, on 12 April, the American delegates withdrew this demand in the face of British opposition, and the Committee unanimously reported in favour of extending the 'holiday' until 1936.² The Committee's report also included an agreement by Britain, America, and Japan, originally discussed in the Reed-Matsudaira negotiations, to reduce their battleship fleets to 15, 15, and

1. CAB 23/63: Cabinet 1 (30) of 14 Jan., 1930.

2. The Committee's 12 April report is printed in Proceedings...1930, pp.199-200.

9 respectively, thus maintaining the Washington ratio, but reducing the numbers of ships below their current levels of 20, 18, and 10 ships. These agreements became part I of the eventual Treaty.

The question of submarines saw much less unanimity of purpose. The division arose from the different postures of the five powers. To France, in particular, and also to Japan, the submarine was a great equaliser; the poor man's way to combat the major naval powers' battle fleets, to disrupt enemy communications and provide a coastal defence capability. The British and Americans, with their great investment in surface fleets vulnerable to submarine torpedo attack. their extended trade routes, and their bitter experience of German U-boat warfare in the war, saw submarines as a threat to the balance of naval power and a great danger to their principally ocean-going communications and trade. The Anglo-Saxons, furthermore, had little use for submarines in their own strategies; they depended upon superiority in surface forces to maintain sea control for trade and counter-trade purposes, and submarines were, they felt, of little use, either for the defence of sea routes, or for trade blockades. They were seen by Britain and America, therefore, although inevitably not by France or Japan, as purely offensive weapons, which argument was lent considerable force in the eyes of Anglo-Saxon public and professional opinion by their experience in the First World War. Italy took a position somewhere between the two extremes, being both in a position to use submarines effectively against her presumptive Mediterranean rivals, France and Britain, with their superior forces, but also vulnerable to submarine attack against her primarily seaborne commerce.

The submarine question was raised at the fourth plenary session of the Conference, on 11 February, when Albert Alexander made an impassioned plea for abolition,¹ supported by Stimson. The French case was then put forward

1. Department of State, Proceedings...1930, pp.78-82.

by M. Leygues, the Minister of Marine. In arguing that the submarine was an indispensable part of France's requirement for national security he held that the submarine was a warship like any other, whose use could, and should, be regulated by international law. France considered the submarine as the least expensive means of defence; 'In particular, she looks on the submarine, as all the lesser naval powers do, as her only protection against a long blockade by surface fleets'. Leygues also argued that the submarine was relied upon by France to protect her coastal cities and colonial dependencies in the absence of surface fleets; to escort convoys to the colonies, and guard lines of communications; and for her protection of, and as a scouting force for, her high seas fleets.¹ France declared herself ready to concur in an agreement regulating the use of submarines, forbidding their use against merchant vessels except in accordance with the rules to be observed for surface warships. She could not, however, accept their complete abolition.

The question of abolition or limitation of the submarine, and regulation of their use, were referred to by the plenary session to the First Committee, and thence to the Committee of Experts and a Committee of Jurists for consideration of the legal aspects. These committees met during early March, and, as expected, proved unable to persuade the French and Japanese to accept abolition, causing the anti-abolitionists to prevail. They proved more successful in producing a declaration about the use of submarines against merchant vessels, without, apparently, any consideration of whether it was realistic to expect nations at war to obey such rules. An agreement was also reached to limit the size of such vessels to 2,000 tons displacement, with the exception of three larger vessels for each power to meet a French requirement for long-range patrol submarines for use in her

1. Department of State, Proceedings...1930, pp.81-88; CAB 29/123.

tropical colonies.¹ These agreements were eventually written into Articles IX and XXII of the final treaty.

The three major naval powers, as mentioned above, agreed upon parity between themselves in submarines, fixed at a level of 52,700 tons each. The French submarine force, which stayed outside the three-power limits, maintained a level of over 80,000 tons throughout the period of the London Treaty.

Finally all five powers agreed upon various rules for the disposal and replacement of vessels; the use of ships for training; training and experimental purposes; and for communication between the signatory powers of details of the particulars and dates of construction of all new vessels. These had been drafted by the Committee of Experts whilst it was still hoped to get a five-power agreement of limitation, and the rules for the replacement of vessels, for instance, could have only marginal relevance to France and Italy, with their auxiliary vessel fleets unlimited by treaty. Nevertheless, both countries signed the complicated technical clauses, thus giving a somewhat false appearance of enlarging the area of agreement, and giving hope that it would be easy for them to adhere to the ratio system for auxiliary vessels once some political breakthrough had been made to facilitate agreement between the two. The agreement to exchange information followed the practice set in the Washington Treaty, and strengthened a precedent which was to prove useful later in the decade as tension and governmental reluctance grew to publish building figures.²

The recognition by 10 April that the prospects for Franco-Italian reconciliation were hopeless led the heads of the delegations, meeting that

1. Minutes and papers of the First Committee are in CAB 29/123 and ADM 116/2742; those of the Committee of Experts are in 29/24 and ADM 116/2743. In the Dept. of State files, these are listed respectively as 500.A153/First Committee, and 500.A15a3/Experts.

2. London Navy Treaty (1930), Part II (Articles 6-13); Second, Fourth and Fifth reports of the First Committee (15 March, 12 April and 16 April); Second report of the Committee of Experts (4 March) in Proceedings...1930, etc.

night, to agree to a three-power treaty, whilst France and Italy continued their efforts to reach agreement, with Britain serving as mediator. MacDonald went from this meeting to announce the decision to the House of Commons, sitting in a late night session.¹

A drafting committee under Dwight Morrow's chairmanship was formed, which worked almost without pause over the next week, including the Easter week-end, until a satisfactory document was presented, after many drafts, to the delegations on 21 April.²

The announcement of the limited agreement by MacDonald on 10 April set off a new round of political activity, this time aimed at gaining ratification of the agreement by the signatories' legislatures. This was particularly critical for the United States, where the delegates knew they would face opposition to the ratification of virtually any treaty. Hoover and Acting Secretary Cotton viewed the apparently hostile current of popular opinion with considerable apprehension, and Cotton telegraphed Stimson that

We both deem it essential that you begin now to give the news that comes from London a clear note of exultation in your success and, as I explained to you, the President is making a statement to that effect, and we expect to follow it up... Particularly, we would like to hear from the individual delegates a series of messages declaring they are satisfied with the result and are proud of it, the senators particularly. You may want to wait yourself until the paper is signed but we think it very unwise to leave the newspaper reporters both in London and in Washington to form their own conclusions between now and the signing of the Treaty...³

The President set an example, with a statement on 11 April, praising the agreement in glowing terms and emphasising the supposed financial savings from the Conference. By comparing the cost of the American

1. Train's daily log, 10 April, 1930; Hansard, Commons, Sixth Series, Vol. 237, col. 2473, 10 April, 1930.

2. Minutes and drafts are in D/S 500.A15a3/Drafting Committee, National Archives.

3. D/S Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/838a: Cotton to Stimson, 11 April, 1930.

building programme permitted by the Treaty, with the presumptive cost of obtaining parity at the levels considered in 1927 at Geneva, Hoover was able to claim a saving of \$1,000,000,000 over the six years of the Treaty.¹

The delegates in London adhered to Cotton's requests. Stimson made a radio address to the American people on 13 April, followed by similar broadcasts by Senators Reed and Robinson, and a second speech by Stimson delivered via radio to an Associated Press luncheon in New York.² By such means the delegates attempted to bolster the Treaty's supporters, whom Cotton reported on 15 April as probably being just able to raise the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate.³

22 April saw the sixth and final plenary session of the Conference, three months after the first. The London Naval Treaty of 1930 was signed to the accompaniment of much self-congratulation by the delegates.⁴ The areas of disagreement were ignored, or glossed over, and the harmonious atmosphere seemed to augur well for acceptance of the Treaty and its ratification.

Despite the professed satisfaction with the Treaty of the three governments most affected, it was subjected to searching analysis and bitter attack by its opponents in Great Britain, in the United States, and in Japan. The ratification process produced a verbal barrage of ridicule and abuse in all three countries.

In all three countries the naval authorities were to a greater or lesser extent dissatisfied with the Treaty. Each felt that it had made a

1. Dept. of State, Press Releases, 12 April, 1930.

2. All in Proceedings...1930, pp.208-296

3. MS Confidential Files, Dept. of State, 500 A 15a3/839, National Archives: Cotton to Stimson, 15 April, 1930.

4. CAB 29/119; ADM 116/2741; The treaty was published in Britain as Cmd. 3758 (1931) and in the United States in Proceedings...1930, pp.100-122.

considerable sacrifice, and the Admirals in each country, who, by experience and training, were exclusively concerned with maximising security through military means, instinctively rejected the idea that any reduction in armaments could be beneficial.¹ Nevertheless, in Britain and the United States, factions within the navies of those countries did accept, if not support, the Treaty; the leading figures in these cases tending to be Admirals who had actually helped to prepare the treaty as naval advisers at the Conference, and whose professional pride and influence was therefore staked upon the Treaty. Only in Japan did the naval authorities present a virtually united front in opposition to the Treaty, although this was offset by a similar closing of ranks in the civilian government and the liberal parties in the Diet. The honour of the government being at stake, the Treaty was ultimately pressed through the Privy Council over the Navy's determined opposition, but here the victory proved pyrrhic, as will be seen later.

In Britain and Japan the ratification process was essentially confined to parliamentarians, whether in the Houses of Commons and Lords, or the Imperial Privy Council; but in the United States hearings had to be held by the Senate, during which Senators could call any person to testify as to his views. A very large number of witnesses, mostly professionally concerned, did in fact appear before the Committee on Foreign Relations, thus involving the United States Navy in the ratification process in a more public and direct manner than its opposite services in Britain and Japan.

Nevertheless, former naval chiefs sat in both the British House of Lords and the Japanese Privy Council, so that naval viewpoints were expressed there too, openly in debate as well as privately through bureaucratic channels. In the United States public opinion also played a more significant role, given the relative lack of party discipline in the

1. See for example Naval Attache Reports: London Office of Naval Intelligence, US Navy Dept., File C-8-C 19991A: 'London Naval Conference and Treaty - British Attitude', National Archives.

United States Congress and the sensitivity of both Congress and President to the pressures of religious and pacifist groups. Much of the American press had opposed the Conference and any reduction in the US Navy; although - probably as a result of the propaganda campaign launched by Hoover and the delegates - only the Hearst newspapers and the Anglophobe Chicago Tribune remained implacably opposed to the Treaty.¹ In Japan public opinion also contained elements fundamentally hostile to the Treaty and indeed to any compromise with the West; but here the knowledge of the issues was far less, and the principal demonstrations of popular feeling took the form of 'stage-managed' crowds by both the supporters and opponents of the Treaty, to cheer or heckle the protagonists on public occasions.² The members of the Privy Council, such office not being subject to re-election, were however largely able to ignore such pressures. In Britain, whilst sentimental attitudes towards the Navy were prevalent, the feeling for disarmament was almost certainly greater, and here there was very little popular feeling against the Treaty.

The first debate of the London Naval Treaty as a prelude to ratification came in Britain, in the House of Lords, on 8 May, 1930. Although not itself able to reject the Treaty the presence in the Upper House of numerous senior Admirals and former First Lords of the Admiralty gave that body considerable prestige and influence in naval matters. Such a presence also made the atmosphere of the Lords most inhospitable to naval limitation.

On 8 May the opponents of the Treaty argued largely in terms of injured British pride and prestige. The attitude is summed up in the remarks of Lord Carson, a former wartime First Lord:

1. O'Connor, op.cit., pp.106, 114-5.

2. D/S 500.A15a3/1005, National Archives: Neville (Tokyo) to Stimson, 26 June, 1930.

Never before has there been an attempt to reduce the Navy of this country so as to take away from it the mastery of the seas, which hitherto has always been considered essential to the absolute existence and safety of this country.... I object to being dictated to by America, or by any country, in what are the essentials which we require for the safety of our own country.¹

A week later the House of Commons debated the Treaty, with a more realistic note being struck from the start, MacDonald, opening the debate, said that he

...would like to remind the House that when we enter into international conference we do not get what we propose but what we can get our colleagues in the Conference to accept with us.²

The Treaty's opponents' case was somewhat spoiled when Winston Churchill, who replied to MacDonald, quoted a secret Cabinet paper, thereby causing a major row in the House. Churchill had hoped to use this paper - a telegram sent by Lloyd George to Balfour in Washington at the 1921 Conference p to show that the London Treaty had no relation in spirit to the Washington Treaty. The passage he quoted instructed Balfour not to accept any restriction upon vessels of less than 10,000 tons; and Churchill bombastically announced his astonishment 'that any Admiralty Board of naval officers could have been found to accept responsibility' for any such restrictions. They represented, he insisted, the formal acceptance of inferior status for Britain as a sea power.³

The debate took up six hours on 15 May, and was continued on 2 June, but after Churchill's blunder the opponents of the Treaty seem not to have been able to get back into their stride. Lloyd George defended the Treaty strongly, and Alexander spoke with considerable effect. Only Rear-Admiral Beamish, Conservative MP for Lewes, made any impact in either the

1. Hansard, House of Lords, Fifth Series, Vol.77, col.44, 8 May, 1930.

2. Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vo.238, col.2094, 15 May, 1930.

3. *ibid.*, cols. 2096-2114.

House or the press on behalf of the opponents, with his quip that 'The Prime Minister has said that the sea is us, and he made very great endeavour to turn the "US" into "U.S.A."' ¹

On 2 June Baldwin, in a quandary of having to oppose the Labour Government's success in concluding the Treaty, and to pacify the more militant navalists among his supporters, whilst having himself endeavoured to conclude just such a treaty in 1927, decided to take a compromise course. He asked that a Select Committee be established to further examine the Treaty. MacDonald immediately objected that such a proposal with regard to a Treaty would be a constitutional innovation, and Baldwin's motion was voted down. The Treaty in fact passed the Commons without a division on 24 July, a testimony to the recognition by most Conservatives that their outright opposition would be both hypocritical and unpopular in the country. ²

The Treaty still had to pass the Lords for prompt ratification, and its opponents there did not give up so easily; on 1 July Earl Beatty, the former First Sea Lord, rose '...to call attention to the serious effects which will ensue to this country from the proposed Naval Treaty', and a further lengthy but inconclusive debate followed. ³ The basic weakness of the opponents' case was analysed in a brief which the Admiralty produced at the request of J.H. Penson, the Secretary of the Privy Council Office, for use in preparing the Government's defence in this debate, which was led by Lord Parmoor, the President of the Council. ⁴ This concluded that no effective criticism of the Treaty had been produced which would not have been equally

1. The Times, 16 May, 1930; Hansard, *ibid.*, col.2144.

2. Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.239, cols.1791-1924, 2 June, 1930.

3. Hansard, House of Lords, Fifth Series, Vol.78, cols.186-242, 1 July, 1930.

4. Copy in Foreign Office Files, FO 371/14269, A4577/1/45, Public Records Office. Its author is not recorded.

applicable to the Treaty which in the last resort the Conservatives would have settled for at Geneva in 1927.

The critics failed to satisfactorily prove that security would be in any way impaired by the Treaty, and the Treaty Bill was given a third reading in the Lords on 29 July, and on 1 August the King signed the Treaty into British law.¹

In the United States, the Treaty's supporters were cautiously optimistic about ratification. The President banked heavily upon the prestige of the delegation in convincing the American people that the Conference had achieved positive results.² The State Department was similarly hopeful that if prominent Americans spoke out in favour of the Treaty unreasonable opposition to ratification would be diminished, and plans were made to put pressure on people ranging from General Pershing to Charles Lindbergh.³ General Dawes, who as Vice President for the four years to 1929 had presided over the Senate, was confident that a majority sufficient to ratify existed.⁴ To make certain, however, Senator Borah, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was brought into the Administration's planning for the passage of the Treaty Bill, and a careful analysis of the arguments of the Treaty's critics, along with counter-arguments, was prepared.⁵

The ratification process formally began on 1 May, 1930, when the

1. Hansard, House of Lords, Fifth Series, Vol.78, col.979, 29 July, 1930. Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.242, col.1014(No.22), 1 Aug., 1930.

2. D/S 500.A15a3/838a and a3/839, Cotton to Stimson, 30 April, 1930.

3. D/S 500.A15a3/891, Memo. within Division of Western European Affairs, 'R.W.W.' to Pierre Boal, 15 April, 1930.

4. D/S 123. Dawes, C.G./78, Dawes to Stimson, 25 April, 1930.

5. D/S 500.A15a3/891½: Cotton to Stimson, 30 April, 1930; D/S Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/871½; Memorandum, Division of Western European Affairs, 28 April, 1930.

President submitted the Treaty to the Senate. Both the Foreign Relations and the Naval Affairs Committees decided to hold hearings, and a lengthy battle ensued. The obstructionists used a familiar tactic: they demanded the production of ever more documents, which, because of the necessarily confidential nature of the negotiations preceding and during the Conference, were classified and certainly not intended for the public glare of scrutiny to which they would be subjected in the Senate. To have surrendered all the diplomatic and naval files requested would have been a major breach of trust on the President's behalf, although Hoover did invite the Senators to examine them in confidence. The question of ratification was brought to a head when the Senate's regular session ended on 3 July. On the same day Hoover summoned the Senate back for a special session whose agenda was limited to the Treaty. The President, in his message convening the Special Session, said

The question before us now is not whether we shall have a treaty with either three or more 8" cruisers or four less 6" cruisers, or whether we shall have a larger reduction in tonnage. It is a question of whether we shall move strongly towards limitation and reduction in naval arms or whether we shall have no limitation or reduction and shall enter upon a disastrous period of competitive armament.¹

Even then, the Treaty's opponents attempted to stave off what seemed to be the inevitable. Senators naturally wanted to return home to their states, and many were facing re-election. Nevertheless the Senators who had emerged as the chief spokesmen for the opposition to the Treaty, Hiram Johnson of California (Republican) and Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee (Democrat), proposed nine reservations between them, aimed at nullifying most of the effects of the Treaty. In fact, only one reservation, proposed by the Republican Senator Norris of Nebraska, was passed, stating that there were no secret commitments modifying or adding to the Treaty in any way.²

1. Myers, State Papers of Herbert Hoover, I, pp.351-6 gives text of message

2. Congressional Record, Vol.72, US Senate, 71st Congress, Special

Eventually the combination of Senators Reed and Robinson, using their influence as majority and minority leaders respectively, wore down the opponents, and the Treaty Bill was finally passed on 21 July, by the overwhelming majority of fifty-eight votes to nine.

It had taken fifty-three days of committee hearings, and seventy hours of debate on the Senate floor, three months after the signature of the document in London. One can look for comparison at the debates over the Washington Treaty, which was considered in 1922 by the Congress elected at the same time as Wilson's downfall, at the height of the isolationist reaction to the World War and peace settlement. Then the Washington Naval Treaty was considered in Committee for seventeen days, and discussed on the Senate floor for only eight hours - the delay of fifty-two days on that occasion between the signature and ratification was accounted for largely by the pressure of other Senate business.¹

One interesting side-light on the opposition to ratification in the two countries is a table which appeared in the New York Times on 13 July, which compared the statements of American and British opponents to the London Treaty. The similarity of the fears of Admirals and Big-Navy supporters, each professing to believe that his particular navy was now condemned to permanent inferiority, makes amusing reading.² The ratification was generally welcomed in the press as a great triumph for the 'spirit of peace', with the usual dissidents.³ What did give cause for foreboding of the future was the bitterness and stubbornness of the opponents of the Treaty, a group which although small represented both

1. D/S 500.A15a3/1015: undated memorandum, comparison between debates in the Senate on Washington and London Naval Treaties.

2. New York Times, 13 July, 1930, p.2 reprinted as insertion in Congressional Record, 71st Congress, Special Session, Vol.72, pp.122-24, 14 July, 1930.

3. Literary Digest, 2 August, 1930, pp.5-6

parties and all sections of the country, even relatively cosmopolitan New York. These men wanted an American 'Big-Navy' purely to maintain American isolation, and from a viewpoint which was more or less explicitly anti-British. During the coming decade such a standpoint became more prevalent and, one may judge with the benefit of hindsight, more dangerous to the true interests of American security.

In Japan, the division produced by the conclusion of the Treaty were such as to precipitate a constitutional crisis over ratification. The Japanese Naval Board was both more important constitutionally, and was headed by a more dynamic figure, than either the British Board of Admiralty or the US General Board.¹ Admiral Kato Kanji, the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Navy, maintained that the Naval Board was the instrument by which the Emperor alone exercised his prerogative of determining the size of the Navy.² The Liberal Cabinet of Hamaguchi, on the other hand, insisted that it was charged with the conduct of affairs of state, and because political and economic considerations were involved, as well as purely naval calculations, it was constitutionally correct to have authorised the acceptance of the Reed-Matsudaira compromise without the approval of the Naval Board.³ The critical question, then, was whether the Cabinet had the right to determine the size of the Japanese Navy.

The dispute came to head when Admiral Kato resigned on 10 June, along with the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, leaving Admiral Takarabe, the Minister of Marine and delegate at London, apparently victorious in the

1. See Sadao Asada, 'Kato Tomasaburo and Kato Kanji' in G. Jordan, ed., Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Essays in honour of Arthur Marder.

2. Chitoshi Yanaga, Japan Since Perry (New York, 1949), pp.464-66.

3. D/S 500.A15a3/940: Castle (Tokyo) to Stimson, a review of the question as debated in the Diet up to 19 May, 1930. The Naval Board's case is put in 500.A15a3/971, Neville (Charge, Tokyo) to Stimson, 30 May, 1930.

struggle which had been conducted at a bureaucratic level between the 'Control Faction', or those who supported the Cabinet and Navy Department, and the 'Fleet Faction', the Naval Board.¹

In July, however, Prime Minister Hamaguchi and Minister of Marine Takarabe submitted the Treaty to the Privy Council for ratification. Many of the Councillors were openly hostile to the Cabinet and had supported Admiral Kato.² Takarabe was involved in private negotiations to placate the more recalcitrant Admirals, and some formula was apparently found, although no record appears to exist, in English at any rate, of a formal agreement.³ In the Privy Council debates the 'Control Faction' emphasised their wish to build up the fleet once the Treaty expired in 1937, and the reduction in vessels could be compensated for by improvement and expansion of existing equipment, by more intensified training, and by further utilisation of air power.⁴ The 'Fleet Faction', apparently mollified by these assurances, acquiesced when ultimately the Emperor ratified the Treaty without reservation on 2 October.

The ratifications of the three powers, and of all the British Dominions except the Irish Free State, were deposited with the British Government in a ceremony on 27 October, 1930. The Irish deposited their instrument of ratification on 31 December, and the next day, 1 January, 1931, the Treaty went into effect as far as Britain, the United States, and Japan were concerned.

1. D/S 500.A15a3/990: Neville to Stimson, 11 June, 1930; also Sadao Asada, 'The Japanese Navy and the United States', in D. Borg and S. Okamoto, ed.s, Pearl Harbour as History: Japanese-American Relations, 1931-1941, (New York, 1973), pp.225-259, 650-63.

2. Yanaga, op.cit., p.465.

3. D/S 500.A15a3/1044: Nevill to Stimson, 24 July, 1930.

4. International Military Tribunal for the Far East Index, Prosecution Section, Part 2, Document 891, 'A Record of the Privy Council concerning ratification of the London Naval Treaty of 1930', dated October 1930; Library of Congress.

The point of greatest agreement on naval limitation in the interwar period had even now not been reached. That point, or at least the point of greatest apparent public agreement, came at the beginning of March, 1931, when after almost a year of persistent negotiation the British were able to announce that they had succeeded in finding a formula which brought '...complete agreement on all points' between France and Italy¹ - only to see it evaporate completely over the next month as news of the conclusion of the Austro-German Zollverein Agreement frightened France into rapidly retreating from her position.

The conclusion of the London Treaty led to much speculation in both France and Italy as to the naval situation existing between the two countries, including much comment in the government-controlled Italian press.² In Rome in particular the delegates returning from London were received with much public enthusiasm and Mussolini's praise and congratulations upon its achievements. The rate of progress which followed did not, however, reflect the level of interest therein.

The first moves after the return of the delegations was the familiar tactic of staking out ambitious building programmes as positions from which to bargain. At London, discussion had tended to assume informally a French annual building programme in the area of 40,000 tons, with an Italian figure commensurate with that.³ On 30 April the Italian Council of Ministers decided to lay down during 1930 a total of 42,900 tons of new construction, and although Grandi had succeeded in reducing this from 50,000 tons it still

1. British White Paper, Cmd.3812 'Memorandum on the Results of the Negotiations with France and Italy for the Reduction and limitation of Naval Armaments, Feb. - Mar.1931'.

2. Memorandum, 1 Sept., 1930, 'Franco-Italian Naval Situation, April 22 - Sept.1, 1930': D/S Confidential Files, 500.A15a3/1086½.

3. D/S 500.A15a3/1527½: Memorandum 28 April, 1931, 'Present Status of the Franco-Italian Naval Agreement', by Division of Western European Affairs.

represented a gain of 13,000 tons over the previously projected programme.¹ In reply, the French let it be known that her Ministry of Marine was considering a programme of 55,000 tons for the year, as compared with the projected construction under the Statut Naval of 49,483 tons,² and the programme she had announced before the Conference of 42,536 tons.³

The next ten months saw repeated attempts to close the gap between the French and Italian attitudes, culminating in the acceptance of a draft agreement on 28 February, 1931. The negotiation took place in five phases, which it would be tedious to recount in detail, although some account will be necessary to understand the degree of mutual suspicion which led to the final breakdown in April 1931. The first phase of talks took place in May, when Henderson, Briand, and Grandi all attended the 59th session of the Council of the League in Geneva. These came to nought, largely because of inflammatory speeches made in Rome by Mussolini at the same time that Grandi in Geneva was attempting to reassure Henderson and Briand about Italy's intentions following the announcement of her increased building programme.⁴ A heated controversy between the French and the Italian press ensued, although it was accepted in diplomatic circles that Mussolini's speeches for home consumption were not necessarily to be taken seriously.⁵

By July the newspapers had cooled off from their earlier indignation somewhat, and Count Manzoni, the Italian Ambassador in Paris, was able to arrange a limited naval building holiday between the two countries, to the

1. DBFP. 2/1, No. 198: Graham (Rome) to Henderson, 3 May, 1930; also D/S 500.A15a3/1086½, op.cit.

2. D/S 500.A15a3/1086½, ibid.

3. DBFP, 2/1 No.200: Henderson to Graham (Rome), 7 May, 1930.

4. D/S 500.A15a3/1086½, ibid.; New York Times, editorial, 27 June, 1930; DBFP, 2/1, No.210: Graham (Rome) to Henderson, 28 May, 1930; No.125: Tyrell (Paris) to Henderson, 31 May, 1930.

5. D/S 500.A15a3/1086½, ibid.

effect that no new ships would be laid down before January 1931, to facilitate renewed negotiation in a more reasonable atmosphere. With this agreed, preparations were made for direct talks between the leading 'experts' of the two countries' Foreign Offices, M. Massigli and Signor Rosso, to begin in Paris in August.¹

This second phase of negotiation, from which Britain was excluded at French request,² was as unsuccessful as the first, although on this occasion the press of the two countries were kept completely in the dark to prevent further public controversy. During August and September the technical experts sought a solution in an agreement as to construction programmes, whilst avoiding touching on any question of principle with regard to parity.³ Both countries submitted proposals for building programmes for the two navies, but still no progress was made: the French wished to replace their existing fleet steadily whilst keeping the Italian building down to the replacement level of the currently inferior Italian fleet, whilst Italy would only consider equal building programmes. The question of parity could not be avoided. In October the talks were suspended again.⁴

This time the United States as well as Britain began to take a serious interest in the Franco-Italian situation. On 15 October Murriner and Hugh Gibson called at the British Embassy in Washington. They feared the impact on the Preparatory Commission at Geneva if the deadlock still when it next met on 6 November. Furthermore, reports were reaching the State Department of an imminent announcement in Paris of an extended

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.232, Note by Sir R. Vansittart for the Prime Minister, 6 Aug., 1930; D/S 500.A15a3/1086½.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.232, op.cit.

3. D/S 500.A15a3/1238: Memorandum from Claudel (French Ambassador, Washington) 5 Nov., 1930.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.235; Henderson to Tyrell (Paris), 1 Oct., 1930.

building programme, which would make an agreement still more difficult. Consequently, Stimson wished to initiate a joint demarche vis a vis the French and Italian Governments by Britain, Japan, and the United States. Meanwhile Gibson would sail immediately for Europe.¹ After ten days of hesitation Britain fell into line with the American suggestion, which the Japanese had immediately agreed to. The Foreign Office had doubted the accuracy of the State Department's information as to French intentions, and feared that a demarche might do more harm than good. Strong American pressure - and possibly new information from intelligence sources - appears to have made Vansittart change his mind, and Lord Tyrell and Sir Ronald Graham in Paris and Rome respectively asked that the governments to which they were accredited reopen talks on naval limitation.²

At the end of October, Hugh Gibson visited Paris and Rome, and proposed to Prime Minister Tardieu and Mussolini that France and Italy should break the deadlock by making unilateral declarations that during the lifetime of the London Treaty their programmes would not exceed given levels. The levels, worked out beforehand in consultation with the British and US governments, would be announced ostensibly without reference to each other, and without prejudice to the questions of parity or superiority, solution of which would thereby be deferred until the end of the Treaty in 1936.³

Whilst such a scheme was apparently acceptable to the French, Gibson was rebuffed in Rome by Signors Grandi and Rosso, who thought that the proposals were '...simply a re-hash of proposals repeatedly put forward' by the British.⁴ Nevertheless it was decided to reopen conversations

1. DBFP, 2/1 No.238: Lindsay (Washington) to Henderson, 15 Oct., 1930.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.250: Graham (Rome) to Henderson, 27 Oct., 1930, and Tyrell (Paris) to Henderson, 28 Oct., 1930.

3. DBFP, 2/1, No.257: Graham to Henderson, 1 Nov., 1930.

4. DBFP, 2/1, No.271: Memorandum by R.L. Craigie on his conversations at Geneva, Rome, and Paris, 1 Jan., 1931.

between the civilian 'experts', Massigli and Rosso, at the Preparatory Commission session in Geneva, with Craigie participating once again.

After a month of effort in Geneva Craigie secured tentative agreement from Italy to a compromise plan, which the French agreed to submit to their government for consideration. This in essence proposed that the two countries should drop the figures they had announced in earlier schemes, in particular Italy abandoning her plans for theoretical parity in every category of surface vessels, whilst France should, for the period of the Treaty, accept the de facto position of parity already achieved in both 8-inch and 6-inch cruisers. To avoid the appearance of establishing a ratio in each category, the proposed form of agreement would contain no figures at all, but would lay down instead the principle of a construction holiday in the categories of submarines and 8-inch cruisers, and of construction only for replacement in the remaining categories. Thus would honour be satisfied and controversy deferred.¹

The position by the end of the year, then, was that Italy was prepared to agree to a temporary settlement which meant continuing French superiority, whilst France was still hesitant to agree. On the Italian side this retreat from their previous intransigence was in large part due to her precarious economic and financial position; she had been badly hit by the economic depression whose full force began to be felt in Italy in the autumn of 1930. She had attempted, without success, to secure loans in both the United States and Scandinaviam and might well have to swallow her pride and attempt to raise a loan in Paris, as France as at this time the European economy least severely hit by the international economic crisis. This weakness on Italy's part, however, had the effect of hardening the French position, as it became felt that France had only to wait a little and Italy would come on hands and knees and beg France for a loan at almost any price.²

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.271, Memorandum by R.L. Craigie on his conversations at Geneva, Rome, and Paris, 1 Jan., 1931.

2. DBFP, 2/1, No.271, *ibid.*

A further factor was that December saw another political crisis in France, and consequently the attention of all civilian figures involved in the naval situation was distracted for most of that month. The Cabinet reshuffle saw a change at the Ministry of Marine, with the result that the new Minister's unfamiliarity with the naval position caused the Admirals to have much greater power in decision-making, under the leadership of Admiral Violette, the Chief of the Naval Staff. The rejection of the compromise proposals by France on 13 January was therefore not surprising.¹ Nevertheless, the gap between France and Italy was perceptibly narrower than before.

Britain now faced a deadline imposed by the pending announcement of the French and Italian construction programmes for the financial year 1931-2. It had to be assumed that, without an agreement by that time both countries would propose new construction which would make agreement impossible.

A crisis was in fact precipitated in mid-February, when the new Minister of Marine, M. Dumont, announced that whilst he had held back his annual bill for naval construction out of consideration for the international naval situation, the pressing requirements of national defence required that he introduce it forthwith. The next day he indicated publicly his intention to build a new type of battle-cruiser constructed in reply to the German pocket battleship, which would throw all the five powers' programmes out of joint.² If any agreement was to be reached, it would have to be concluded right away, while the two sides were still close. The resumption of competitive building had untold dangers, not least that Britain might have to invoke Article 21 of the London Treaty, the 'escalator clause'.³ Other countries would have joined in a new naval race, just at the time when the Western powers were looking forward to the opening

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.279; Tyrell to Henderson, 13 Jan., 1931.

2. A.J. Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1931, pp.264-5.

3. See, for example, statement by A.V. Alexander, in a speech at Walthamstow, The Times, 7 March, 1931.

of the General Disarmament Conference at the beginning of 1932.

On 23 February then, a British mission comprising the Foreign Secretary, Henderson ; the First Lord of the Admiralty, Alexander; Craigie; and other experts, went to Paris to consult Tardieu and Briand, and thence to Rome to see Mussolini and Grandi. In Paris, the British ministers finally got Briand to agree on a comprehensive programme of building and replacement which they felt would satisfy Italy. The agreement Henderson and Alexander proposed was based upon the lines of the Craigie-Massigli talks of December as regards auxiliary surface vessels, although further developments were incorporated as regards capital ships and submarines. In the capital ship category it was proposed that the total tonnage France and Italy might retain under the Washington Treaty be increased from 175,000 tons to 181,000 tons, so that France could build her new battle-cruiser without scrapping under-age vessels. On submarines, France would agree not to increase her tonnage after the 1930 programme was completed, thus accepting a limit of 81,989 tons in total. While this figure was too high to satisfy Britain, which had accepted a limit of 52,900 tons at London, she agreed not to invoke the escalator clause unless 'a more satisfactory equilibrium' was not reached at the General Disarmament Conference. A draft of an agreement along these lines was drawn up, incorporating the Craigie-Massigli building holiday in 8-inch cruisers, and the agreement only to undertake replacement construction in 6-inch cruisers and destroyers, but allowing the French to retain over-age vessels in these categories.¹

Alexander and Henderson then went to Rome and found there, to their great relief, satisfaction with the terms of the proposed agreement, and a thoroughly cordial welcome. Before their departure for Paris once again on 28 February, Mr Henderson was able to announce that an agreement had

1. DBFP, 2/1, No.285, Tyrell (Paris) to Sir R. Vansittart, 24 Feb., 1931.

been reached in principle.¹ For the next few days it looked as though all would now be plain sailing. On 1 March, back in Paris, Henderson joined with Briand in sending a telegram to Grandi, informing him that they accepted the Italian acceptance, and that they were ready to recommend the agreement to their governments for approval. On 11 March the 'Bases of Agreement' were made public in the capitals of the five powers.²

The preliminary agreement reached at the end of February reflected concessions by all of the three European naval powers. France, in particular, had considerably reduced the claims she had put forward in London in respect of auxiliary vessels - French claims in the cruiser, destroyer, and submarine classes were, in fact, reduced by 78,000 tons. Of this, 30,000 tons were contributed by her acceptance of seven 8-inch gun cruisers in 1936, as opposed to the ten she had previously claimed: and 18,000 tons represented a reduction in her submarine building programme. Britain, for her part, had accepted the French submarine total of 81,989 tons, despite the limit in the London Treaty of the British Commonwealth to 52,900 tons of such vessels. This concession was made under protest, the British government reserving its right '...should it not be possible at the 1932 Conference to arrive at a satisfactory equilibrium between French submarine tonnage and British Commonwealth destroyer tonnage' to increase their destroyer fleet to meet the threat. On Italy's part, she consented in effect to defer for nearly six years her demand for Franco-Italian naval parity. Nevertheless, it was expressly understood that no permanent ratio was established between Britain, France, and Italy.³

The hopes that the 'Bases of Agreement' raised were to be disappointed rapidly. On 19 March a Drafting Committee met in London, comprised of the

1. Toynbee, op.cit., p.265.

2. British White Paper, Cmd.3812 of 1931: 'Memorandum on the results of the Negotiations with France and Italy for the reduction and limitation of Naval Armaments'.

3. Cmd. 3812, ibid.

omnipresent Craigie, Massigli, and Rosso, with legal and naval advisers. Within two days the Committee adjourned for consultation between the Committee's members and their governments, as it became clear that the understandings with regard to light cruisers and destroyers was more apparent than real. France claimed the right to begin construction, for completion after the expiry of the Treaty at the end of 1936, of a large number of vessels to replace ships becoming over-age in 1937, 1938, and 1939. The French maintained that the proposed agreement would in reality only regulate building programmes for the years 1931 to 1934 inclusive, because of the time lag in construction of new vessels for service after 1936. The British and Italians took strong exception to such an interpretation of the bases of agreement, maintaining that the principle underlying all the negotiations had been the regulation of building programmes for the six years ending with 1936. More pertinently, the agreement on light cruisers and destroyers had been based upon the assumption that the existing French superiority in these categories would be maintained through the retention of vessels which would become over-age by 1936. Any interpretation of the terms of the agreement which would give France the right to lay down tonnage which would be ready in 1937 to replace her over-age vessels, would increase France's effective superiority.¹

The problem arose because the opening sentence of the paragraph in the Bases of Agreement which dealt with light cruisers and destroyers read that the tonnage of new construction to be completed shall not exceed the 'tonnage which is replaceable in this category before the 31st December, 1936'. However, the Italians - and British - pointed to the last sentence of the Bases, which stated that 'no precedent' was 'being created for the final solution of the question whether, and if so in what manner, tonnage remaining over-age on the 31st December, 1936' might 'ultimately be replaced'.

1. DBFP, 2/2, No.326: Vansittart to Graham (Rome), 24 March, 1931.

The Italians and British did not object to the laying down of ships which would replace vessels becoming over-age in the years 1937-9 which indeed was explicitly provided for in Article XIX of the London Treaty; but to the laying down of ships to replace vessels which were already over-age on 31 December, 1936. The argument was much more than semantic; it affected the whole question of the ratio between the two countries, which was again brought into dispute.¹

On March 19 a further note of uncertainty had been injected into the international situation when news reached Paris of the Austro-German Zollverein agreement, which caused the French to slow down negotiations.² Talks dragged on through April without any progress being made, and the work of the Drafting Committee was suspended on 7 May. Contacts thereafter were maintained between the three governments concerned, primarily at Geneva, but no serious new proposals were considered before the opening of the Disarmament Conference in February 1932. The London Naval Treaty had come within a hair's breadth of being made a full five-power treaty, and the failure to secure the agreement which it seemed at one point had been reached in fact drove France and Italy further away from each other than ever. Blame for the breakdown must be placed squarely on France, although whether there had been a genuine misunderstanding - as France claimed - or whether France had deliberately gone back on her original position and was in fact making a new claim which her negotiators had not had in mind when they accepted the Bases of Agreement, must remain a matter of controversy.³

1. DBFP, 2/2, No.326 (ibid); No.329: Tyrell (Paris) to Graham (Rome), 24 March, 1931; etc.

2. See Toynbee, *op.cit.*, p.274; Briand told the French Senate on 28 March that he had learned of the plan 48 hours before other governments were informed.

3. See Toynbee, *op.cit.*, p.273.

The Bases of Agreement marked the high tide of naval disarmament between the two World Wars. The failure to implement the Bases of Agreement prevented the London Naval Treaty from establishing in Europe the balance of naval relations it achieved very temporarily in the Pacific.

The ultimate failure of France and Italy to agree reflected a number of circumstances which did not influence the balance between the three 'High Seas' powers. First, Continental European powers were doubly vulnerable to attack, while invasions of Britain, America, or Japan could only come by sea, France and Italy were equally threatened by land attack. Naval weapons were only one arm of those powers' defence forces, and not necessarily the most important. Consequently they argued that restrictions should be applied to all weapons or to none.

The three High Seas powers were seriously threatened only by a very limited number of adversaries: each other. The establishment of rigid limits on their three navies largely removed those threats to their home territories or vital overseas interests, and their security was enhanced by their relative geographical isolation. France and Italy, however, were not only coterminous in their territories, but France in particular faced another potential land threat in the shape of Germany. There were direct political quarrels between France and Italy, most notably over North African colonies, which were absent - except for the issue of war debts - between the High Seas powers in 1930. Lastly, the reality of the recent Great War was far more immediate in France and Italy, upon whose territories the land war had been conducted, and consequently the preoccupation with a strong defence was much greater in those countries. The prevailing concept of the 'National Interest' excluded the pursuit of security through arms limitation, unless this was comprehensive and limited to guarantees from other powers. Paris was, therefore, ultimately opposed to a settlement exclusively of naval matters, and Rome seemed sympathetic but was not enthusiastic. With such attitudes, their governments lacked the will to make the necessary compromises.

Washington, London, and Tokyo, on the other hand, wanted a treaty, and their governments' political prestige rested upon its conclusion.

The three-power treaty did represent a very considerable achievement in spite of the non-adherence of France and Italy. For the first and last time in history, all of the naval weapons of the three greatest naval powers were limited, and a relative balance of naval strength agreed. Those powers had renounced their freedom of action in their own defence in the interests of international agreement. The Treaty demonstrated what was possible where determination existed on the part of the governments, and where there was no major threat from outside upon the negotiating powers. The exception and transient nature of those two conditions, however, was to be demonstrated all too clearly during the life of the Treaty.

Chapter V

FAILURE AT GENEVA

In the preceding chapters, a muted but continuous theme has been the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, whose rôle in the naval negotiations had been secondary, or used as a last resort when more direct channels were blocked or exhausted. The Franco-Italian problem, however, demonstrated the central importance of the problem of European security to all aspects of arms control in the inter-war period. The failure to secure Franco-Italian adherence to the London Treaty caused the British naval authorities to look again to the forthcoming Disarmament Conference as offering the possibility of a more comprehensive settlement of European security questions. This would permit the extension of the Washington-London system both to France and Italy and to lesser naval Powers on comparable and proportionate lines.¹ The Admiralty did not want further reduction of the British naval forces: merely the limitation of other Powers' presently uncontrolled forces. In the United States Navy Department, comparatively insulated from the pressures created by Mediterranean naval rivalry, feelings were cooler towards the impending Conference. The General Board of the Navy approved in October 1931 a massive volume of position papers for the Conference known as the 'Grey Book'.² While this claimed that the 'Navy Department heartily approves of limitation and reduction of armaments....as a means of promoting efficiency and economy', it outlined the Navy's opposition to any attempt at limitation by global tonnage totals,³ personnel limits,⁴ budgetary controls,⁵ and the restriction of naval aircraft.

1. ADM 116/3269, Notes by Captain R. Bellaires for First Sea Lord, 'Naval Disarmament Policy up to January, 1933'.

2. National Archives Record Group 80, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Confidential Correspondence: File A 19 (Box 91), known colloquially and henceforth cited as the 'Grey Book'.

3. Grey Book, Section II, p.9.

4. *ibid.*, p.10.

5. *ibid.*, p.13.

Along the existing lines of quantitative reduction, the Board suggested reductions in the submarine and destroyer classes, the latter to be dependent on the former.¹ In the qualitative area, the Board listed its opposition to almost all possible constraints upon the existing characteristics of different classes of vessel, urging again only the abolition or the reduction in size of submarines, and graciously agreeing to a reduction in the size of vessels in the London Treaty's exempt class from 600 tons to 100 tons displacement.² The Board did favour the abolition of chemical warfare, but stated that it would 'defer to the judgement of the War Department with respect to (such) questions'.³

The General Board's attitude may be at least partly explained by the Administration's failure to build up to the limits set by the London Treaty. Since its signature, the United States Congress had authorized no new vessels, and little progress had been made towards completing the cruisers authorized in February, 1929. In the summer of 1931, President Hoover announced further cuts in naval construction expenditure and the suspension of construction for the fiscal year 1933. The General Board feared that an attempt at further reduction might be used as an excuse for an even greater degree of unilateral reduction in the United States Navy.⁴

Although the War Department was also apprehensive about the Conference the Navy allowed its feelings to show more openly. The State Department therefore attempted to by-pass the General Board altogether, consulting only with Admiral Pratt, the Chief of Naval Operations. While Pratt shared the General Board's concern that the Navy be brought up to Treaty strength, he

1. *ibid.*, pp. 94-6.

2. *ibid.*, pp.51-62, 94-6, 144, 167-8.

3. *ibid.*, pp.236, 302.

4. See, for example, Rear Admiral Bristol to Commander G. McC. Courts, MS Bristol Papers, Library of Congress, Box 91.

he nevertheless had the reputation of being Anglophile and sufficiently broad-minded to accept that American security might be achieved by other means than the purely military. Recognizing that Pratt was more favourably inclined to the State Department's openly expressed support for disarmament, Stimson requested that Pratt personally select the naval advisers for the US delegation. Those chosen were all considered personally close to him and sympathetic to his views. Pierrepont Moffat, the Chief of the State Department's Western European Division, noted that the naval team 'shows that the Administration is able to dispense with the services of the Big Navy group as represented by the General Board'.¹ The civilian delegates reflected a judicious blend of expertise and political balance. Stimson was appointed Chief of the Delegation, although Hugh Gibson, still Ambassador to Belgium, was appointed Acting Head in Stimson's absence - recognition that the Conference would be very lengthy and that Stimson could do little more than attend on ceremonial or critical occasions. The third experienced diplomat on the delegation was Norman H. Davis, a Democrat who had served as Acting Secretary of State under President Wilson, had been the US financial expert at the Versailles Conference, and had worked privately for a number of League bodies. Further political breadth was given by the remaining two delegates, Senator Claude Swanson, a senior Virginia Democrat, and Doctor Mary Emma Wooley, a distinguished historian and President of Mount Holyoke College, who in practice represented the churches, womens' and peace movements of America. Hugh Wilson, the American Minister at Berne, at first an alternate delegate, was later upgraded to full delegate as it became clear that the length of the Conference was such that delegates with other responsibilities in the United States could not spend all their time in Geneva.²

1. J. Pierrepont Moffat, diary, 6-13 November, 1931, MS in Gibson Papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford, Cal.; copy in Library of Congress.

2. The full delegation, with technical advisers, is listed in League of Nations Conference Document (LoFN. Conf.D.) 47(1), 'List of Delegates and Members of Delegations'.

The Delegation consequently suffered from a major difficulty: those of its number who could not devote adequate time and attention to their role at Geneva were precisely those who for political reasons felt the need to return from Geneva with some concrete achievement. However, when entertaining the delegates at lunch before their departure for Europe, President Hoover said that he did 'not feel that we could have many instructions to give' to the delegates, given that America would not be taking the leading role at Geneva. The US could not take the initiative, 'Since the Navy... was already strictly limited and our Army was on the lowest possible terms even for the maintenance of internal order.'¹

The British delegation was similarly top-heavy with politicians who could not devote their full attention to the Conference. Six Cabinet Ministers were accredited as Delegates: Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon, and J.H. Thomas, Viscount Hailsham, the Marquess of Londonderry and Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell for the Dominions, War and Air Offices, and the Admiralty, respectively. To give continuity to the British representation in Geneva, the Foreign Office sent Craigie and a strong team of assistants, and the Admiralty contributed Vice-Admirals Frederic Dreyer and Dudley Pound, respectively Deputy Chief of the National Staff and Second Sea Lord.

The history of the Disarmament Conference is one of the most complex episodes in interwar diplomacy, and naval issues are hard to separate from the broader political issues. As the position of the Conference and of the political balance in Europe became more precarious, naval questions at Geneva were delegated to sidelines in the search for a more comprehensive settlement. To avoid an unbalanced and false picture, it is necessary to look not only at naval issues, but also the broader political questions to which they became

1. Memorandum of conversation at lunch, White House, 5 January, 1932, in Norman H. Davis Papers, Box 20, File: 'Trip to U.S. by N.H.D., March 1932.'

subordinated.

The Conference had been in preparation for longer than any comparable event in diplomatic history. During the 1930 London Naval Conference, the Preparatory Commission was already in its Sixth Session, which was adjourned on 6 May, 1929, and did not meet again for eighteen months. The London Treaty removed one of the main stumbling-blocks to the Preparatory Commission's progress, by adopting a method for the reduction of naval armaments; but the failure of France and Italy to sign the Treaty caused a lengthy postponement in the work of the Preparatory Commission while the Anglo-Franco-Italian negotiations continued.

When in November 1930, the Preparatory Commission finally reconvened, two important and controversial principles were debated: the question of budgetary, as opposed to 'direct' or quantitative, limitation of arms and military materials; and the question of conscription as opposed to a voluntary, long-service army. The positions adopted by France - no limit on trained reserves, and no 'direct' limitation of materials - were adopted by a majority for incorporation in the Draft Convention, but against German opposition.¹ Naval issues provided, however, an opportunity for participation in the debates by Powers not directly involved in the question of Central European security, and gave the smaller naval Powers their first opportunity to air their views on naval limitation in an international forum. Several naval questions were raised, but a reasonable degree of unity prevailed among the Washington Powers. One question, though, saw France isolated from the other four naval Powers: the limitation of naval personnel. France advocated separate limits for officers and for men in all three armed services, something which Lord Cecil, for Britain, opposed for the world's navies. He was supported by the American, Japanese and Italian delegates, and a compromise

1. The draft Convention as finally adopted is published in Cmd.3757 of 1931 and in Documents on International Affairs, 1931. The Minutes of the Sixth Session, Second Part, of the Preparatory Commission were published as L.of N. CPD.1(i) (January, 1931). (Documents of the Preparatory Commission, Series X)

was quickly reached whereby limitation would be sought on the basis of a 'global' total of naval effectives, but detailed breakdowns of the numbers of officers and men would be published.¹

The naval chapter of the proposed Convention had been drafted by the naval advisers of the five Powers,² and, as the Draft Convention left the determination of final figures for the forthcoming Conference, agreement on the methods for reduction proved relatively simple. The principle of global limitation was, as under the London Treaty, combined with limitation of the five categories of combat ship; but the draft provided for transferral of tonnage between categories within limits to be agreed at the final Conference. The minor naval Powers demanded greater proportional freedom to transfer tonnage, which was acceptable in principle to the Washington Powers, but provoked dissent as to the level of global tonnage below which navies would be granted the greater freedom of transfer. After a lengthy debate in a specially-constituted sub-committee,³ agreement was reached that Powers whose total tonnage did not exceed 100,000 tons should be granted full freedom of transfer, the right of transfer being progressively restricted above that level. At British request, one reservation was added: full freedom of transfer would apply only to surface vessels, thus preventing small Powers from deploying a fleet consisting entirely of submarines.⁴

The draft fixed the limits for the displacement and armament of the different categories of vessel at the levels accepted at London, except for an alteration in the specification for the aircraft carrier class, inserted at Japanese request, which proposed that the maximum gun caliber permitted

1. LofN. Doc.CPD.1(i), *ibid.*, pp.24-28 (7 Nov., 1930).

2. British preparations are filed as ADM 116/2826. The chapter becomes Part II, Chapter B of the Draft Convention.

3. Naval Sub-Committee: minutes published with the minutes of the Preparatory Commission(L.of N.Doc. CPD.1(i)), pp.136-194 (17-20, Nov.,1930).

4. *ibid.*, pp.165-167, fourth meeting of the Sub-Committee, 19th Nov.

should be 8" instead of the 6.1" of the London treaty.¹

In addition to the 'direct' limitation of naval weapons by quantitative and qualitative limits, the Draft Convention also made provision for 'indirect' control by budgetary limitation. Budgetary limitation was adopted for land armaments largely at the urging of Lord Cecil, who opposed direct enumeration of weaponry on the questionable grounds that it was easier to conceal, say, a machine gun, than it was to conceal expenditure. Hugh Gibson, the principal American delegate at the Commission, announced his inability to agree to any controls over American expenditure,² and abstained from voting on the principle of budgetary limitation for both land and naval armaments. His objections to naval budgetary restrictions were, however, considerably less strident, as such constraints seemed unlikely to add to the existing direct limitation system.³ The principle of budgetary limitation was accepted, by majority votes, for both land and naval armaments, and for the total arms expenditure of each country, although surprisingly the Commission rejected it - by another majority vote - for air armaments.⁴

Two other points relating to the naval clauses of the Draft Convention were the subjects of controversy. The principle of allowing an exempt class, as in the London Treaty, was challenged by the Soviet Union, and although defeated, a reservation was added referring to the possibility of reaching special agreements on vessels exempted from the tonnage limitations.⁵ The final issue was the use of merchant ships as auxiliary cruisers. Here the

1. Draft Convention, Chapter B, Article 15; debate on this is in L. of N. Doc. CPD.1(i).

2. See New York Times, 13 Nov. 1930.

3. L. of N. Doc. CPD.1(1), Minutes of the Preparatory Commission, pp.110, 132-3

4. *ibid.*, pp.176-194. This became Article 29, Part III, of the Draft Convention.

5. L. of N. Doc. CPD.1(i), Minutes of the Preparatory Commission, pp.183-4.

majority adopted a clause, opposed by the British, permitting the stiffening of the decks of merchant ships to carry 6" guns, although forbidding other preparations 'in time of peace for the installation of warlike armaments' on merchant ships. This amounted to acceptance of the armed merchant vessel, or auxiliary cruiser, as a legitimate 'defensive' weapon of war, despite the near-impossibility of limiting such vessels by treaty.¹

The Draft Convention was adopted on 5 December, 1930, over Soviet and German objections. The Soviet Union objected that it did not go far enough, and Germany opposed the lack of an express provision for the termination of Germany's inequality of status under the Treaty of Versailles.² In the final meeting of the Preparatory Commission, various delegates expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the Commission. Hugh Gibson summed up the prevailing opinion when he stated that the Draft Convention had not come up to expectations, and that if the Conference were to accept the Convention as it stood the most that could be hoped for was the stabilization of armaments at their existing level rather than any real reduction.³

In January 1931, the League set 2 February, 1932, as the date for the opening of the Disarmament Conference.⁴ The Conference would be held, like the Preparatory Commission, at Geneva; and Arthur Henderson, the British Foreign Secretary, was invited to serve as its Chairman - but only after the name of Dr. Benes, of Czechoslovakia, had been canvassed and rejected due to German and Soviet pressure. Those Powers which were not members of the League, the principle such nations being the United States, Soviet Union, Brazil and Turkey, were duly invited to participate and accepted; and the League attempted to obtain full information from each Power as

1. Draft Convention, Article 19 (Part II).

2. L. of N. Doc. CPD.1(i), Minutes of the Preparatory Commission, pp.399-416.

3. FRUS, 1930/1, p.201: Gibson to Stimson, 4 Dec., 1930.

4. FRUS, 1931/1, p.488: Wilson (Berne) to Stimson, 23 Jan., 1931.

as to its current levels of personnel, reserves and material.¹

The year 1931 saw three major developments which directly bore upon the forthcoming Conference. The most auspicious of these was the proposal by Italy for an 'arms truce' to freeze the current levels of armaments.² The suggestion was rapidly welcomed by the United States and on 29 September, the League Assembly adopted a resolution calling on all Governments represented at the Conference to 'refrain from any measure involving an increase in their armaments', and to declare their acceptance of such a truce.³ The truce was generally accepted by the Powers, although its actual impact on arms procurement was negligible. The British Government stated that they considered that their current building programmes for naval, air and land material was entirely consistent with the truce, as it was not intended as anything other than replacement for existing weapons. Similarly, the United States Government accepted the truce on condition that it met general acceptance (which it did) and that it should not apply to construction already in progress or authorized.⁴

A second, less auspicious, development in 1931 was France's adoption of a particularly intransigent and uncooperative stance based upon her formula of 'no disarmament without security'. France's role in any Conference was central because of her involvement, directly or indirectly, in all of the three great European political questions posing barriers to disarmament. These were, in descending order of significance in 1931, the Franco-German imbalance and mutual fear; the Franco-Italian naval rivalry; and the fears of France's Eastern European allies of the Soviet Union. All

1. L. of N. Doc. C.384.1931.IX, pp.1-2.

2. Speech by Signor Grandi in the League of Nations Assembly, 8 Sept., 1931; published in J. Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1931. See also A.J. Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1931, p.291.

3. *ibid.*, p.294; J. Wheeler-Bennett, ed., *op.cit.*, 1931, pp.39-40.

4. FRUS, 1931/1, p.470: Stimson to Greene (Berne), 29 Oct., 1931.

three areas were affected by the announcement on 21 March, 1931, that the Governments of Germany and Austria intended to create a customs union, or Zollverein.¹ The implication of an eventual Anschluss threatened the balance of power between Germany and her neighbours to the West, South and East, and appeared to violate the Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain.² The Zollverein project was referred by the British and French Governments to the Council of the League, which in turn referred it to the International Court at the Hague. Before the Court published its verdict, however, the Viennese Credit-Instalt Bank collapsed, precipitating a financial crisis in Austria which placed the Austrian Government at the mercy of loans from France. The political price of such assistance, renunciation of the Zollverein plan, was duly paid when the Austrian Chancellor announced the abandonment of the plan on 3 September.

During the period of strained relations in Europe which resulted from the proposed Zollverein, the French Government issued on 20 July a memorandum on disarmament and security which expounded the French view in great detail and with great vehemence. This statement was attached to the return of figures of armaments requested by the League in its attempt to compile accurate information on the armaments of the Disarmament Conference's participants; but it was clearly intended to serve as an opening gambit for the Disarmament Conference itself.³

1. The text of the agreement, the Protocol of Vienna of 19 March 1931, is given in Documents on International Affairs, 1931.

2. Article 80 of the Treaty of Versailles and Article 88 of the Treaty of St. Germain. See also the terms of the Austrian Reconstruction Protocols of 1922, published in Cmd.1765 of 1922, 'Agreement for guaranteeing a Loan to Austria, signed by Representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Austria'; and Cmd.3764, 1931, 'International Agreement regarding the Financial Obligations of Austria....'

3. Its text was published as L. of N. Doc. 1931.IX.9; also in New York Times, 22 July, 1931; and by the Quai d'Orsay on the same day - copy with commentary in State Department files, 500.A 15 a 4/305 with covering letter from US Embassy, Paris.

The first part of the memorandum reiterated the French view that her armaments were already reduced to 'the lowest point consistent with her national security in the present state of Europe and of the world'. France required reliable guarantees of security, in accordance with Article VIII of the Covenant of the League, before she could undertake further reduction. The French interpreted Article VIII to mean that each state must maintain sufficient armaments to protect itself against aggression until a system of 'enforcement by common action of international obligations' was effective. Moreover, the Memorandum went on, although Part V of the Peace Treaties - the clauses imposing military limitations on the 'ex-enemy' Powers - was vital to the organization of peace, states not so limited are 'by no means.... under the obligation of adopting either the methods or the figures' laid down in Part V. It was clear that France would adhere rigidly to her policy of 'security first', and that France would not accept limitation of her armaments to the levels imposed on Germany.

The third omen for the Conference in 1931 was the Manchurian Crisis, the first resort to armed force by a Great Power since 1918. Japanese military operations opened in mid-September; within four months all of Manchuria had been occupied and the conflict had spread to Shanghai. The conflict was as significant to the League of Nations as to the strategic balance in the Far East. The Council of the League sat in session from September to December to discuss the matter; but although both China and Japan were members of the League, and despite its repeated calls for disengagement, the League was helpless - and was seen to be helpless. Moreover, in Japan itself, parliamentary democracy effectively died between December 1931, when the Liberal Government resigned because of its inability to control the Army in Manchuria, and May 1932, when Mr. Inukai, the new Conservative premier was assassinated and replaced by a militarist Government under

.

Admiral Saito.¹

With such clouds over the international scene, it is not surprising that serious doubts were entertained about the Conference. In December, the British and American Governments consulted anxiously about the Conference; each was relieved to find the other eager to go ahead as planned.²

The Conference did open on 2nd February, 1932, with sixty nations represented at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The Conference progressed through a number of phases, of which the first easily definable stage lasted from February to 23 July, 1932, when it adjourned for a prolonged interval. The first few weeks were devoted to the presentation, in Plenary Session, of the plans of the participating countries, and to general discussion. Of these plans, mention must be made of those advanced by France, Great Britain and the United States.

The French Plan was put forward in a manner sadly typical of French diplomacy in this period.³ It was announced on 5 February, three days before the general debate was due to allow each delegation to put forward its proposals, in order to secure the tactical advantage of being first in the field, in an attempt to make the French policy of 'security first' dominate the Conference's deliberations. The plan concentrated on 'The Organization of Peace', by conferring upon the League of Nations far greater powers to impose compulsory arbitration, define 'aggressors', and to make war as an international policeman; and the creation of an international force under League auspices. The proposals included League control of all aircraft, military or civil, above a certain tonnage to be agreed; the prohibition

1. Detailed accounts of these events can be found in Captain M.D. Kennedy, 'The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-35'; Henry L. Stimson, 'The Far Eastern Crisis, 1929-33' (3rd ed., New York, 1936); and the RIIA series of 'Surveys of International Affairs'.

2. Memorandum of conversation between Mr. Castle and the British Ambassador, 17 Dec., 1931: D/S 500. A 15 a 4/665.

3. Published as L. of N. Conf. D.122 (1931.IX.47).

of bombing, and of chemical, bacteriological, and incendiary warfare. In the naval sphere, capital ships carrying guns of more than 8" calibre or of more than 10,000 tons displacement, and submarines larger than an agreed tonnage, would be allowed only to Powers which undertook to place them at the disposal of the League - the Powers only being able to use such weapons for their own defence once the League had determined that they were victims of aggression.

The British objectives were announced by Sir John Simon on 8 February.¹ Simon did not present a written document, but proposed that the two principles of quantitative and qualitative disarmament should be pursued broadly as laid down in the Draft Disarmament Convention. For naval disarmaments, Simon wished to see the Washington and London Agreements continue, with possible reductions in the sizes of warships and guns, and the abolition of the submarine.

Hugh Gibson promised that the United States Government would consider the plans put forward by other Powers 'with an open mind', but he put forward proposals himself which went further in their suggested specific measures of arms control than those of Britain or France.² Like Simon, Gibson suggested the use of the Draft Convention as a basis for discussion, and of the Washington and London Treaties for naval arms control, with reductions in tonnages once France and Italy joined the London Treaty. He also called for the abolition of submarines, of chemical and bacteriological warfare, and of tanks and heavy mobile guns, which were styled 'offensive' weapons. Gibson now advocated budgetary as well as direct limitation, and produced one entirely novel suggestion: that land effectives should be divided into two categories - those employed for the maintenance of internal order, which number presumably could not be reduced; and some additional force designed

1. See 'Survey of proposals made by various delegates during the General Discussion', L. of N. Conf. D.99 (1932.IX.25), 25 Feb., 1932.

2. FRUS, 1932/1, p.25: Text of address by Gibson, 9 Feb., 1932.

for national defence, whose size would be related to neighbouring States' forces. Gibson suggested that the Conference determine the necessary sizes of the two elements, and agree to eliminate all forces in excess of these.

The French, British and American proposals were followed by a range of suggestions from all the Powers assembled at Geneva, and ranged from the Soviet proposal of complete and absolute disarmament to the Polish idea of 'moral disarmament' by international control of education and the media.¹ By the end of the general debate, fifty-one speakers had taken part and nineteen sets of written proposals had been submitted. The Conference subsequently resolved itself into a number of committees and commissions to analyse these proposals, and enlarge the areas of agreement into a unified plan.²

Once the Technical Commissions were established, Norman Davis returned to Washington, where he pressed for the United States to take a more active role at Geneva.³ Davis persuaded Stimson and Hoover to put forward new proposals relating to the quantitative limitation of 'offensive' armaments.⁴ Stimson agreed to go to Geneva himself to try to raise support for them from the European Powers.⁵

1. LofN. Conf. D.82 (1932.IX.23) and Conf. D.98 (1932.IX.24).

2. See LofN. Conf. D.103, 'List of questions referred to the Commission for Examination'.

3. Memorandum by Norman H. Davis (undated - March 1932) entitled 'Strategy', filed in N.H. Davis Papers, Box 20, folder 'Trip to US by ND in March 1932'.

4. Memoranda in N.H. Davis Papers, Box 20, folder as above.

5. D/S 500.A 15 a 4/957: Stimson to Gibson, 1 April, 1932. Stimson sailed on 8 April, on the US-registered Ile de France. Norman Davis was able to take the faster, but British-registered Berengaria on 6 April. American law required Cabinet Officers and Diplomatic Personnel to travel upon vessels of American registry wherever possible, but Norman Davis was not a paid employee of the Department of State, being in private law practice. Stimson went to Europe with the encouragement of both British and French Governments as expressed through their Washington Ambassadors. The French Ambassador, M. Claudel, in proclaiming his Government's optimism about the chances of any American intervention, observed that 'the emptiness of everyone's pocket was acting to facilitate the Disarmament Conference'.

Before he arrived, the new American proposals were placed before the General Commission of the Conference immediately after the Easter recess on 11 April. Gibson explained that 'the abolition of aggressive armaments would constitute a first and essential requisite, not only for the reduction of armaments, but for the establishment of security'. The resolution called for the Conference's Land Commission to draw up plans for scrapping tanks, heavy mobile guns, and stocks of gas; and for the Political Commission to prepare for signature undertakings by the States not to use these weapons in time of war.¹

Despite strong support from many countries - notably Great Britain and Germany - the emphasis on qualitative disarmament did not satisfy the French requirement of 'security first'. The gap between the French desire to internationalize 'aggressive' armaments and the Anglo-American wish to ban them altogether was therefore the focus of attention when Stimson arrived in Europe on 15 April. En route to Geneva, he called on M. Tardieu in Paris, and was confronted with a request for American participation in a security pact.² Despite Simon's willingness to participate in international consultation in a time of crisis, he could not commit the United States to any more rigid agreement. He could only say that the United States would make no objection to a regional European security agreement. Stimson summed up his feelings to the British Ambassador in Washington, on his return, saying that

.. this Disarmament Conference, unlike the others (the naval Conferences), is really a European Peace Conference, with European political questions to be settled, and...the necessary preliminary work of settling them must be done by the leaders of Europe.³

1. D/S Subject Files, 500. A 15 a 4/General Committee/33; FRUS, 1933/1, p.76: Address by Hugh Gibson, 11 April, 1932.

2. FRUS, 1932/1, p.109: Gibson (from Stimson) to Cotton, 21 April, 1932.

3. D/S 500.A 15 a 4/1048, 17 May, 1932, Memorandum of conversation between Secretary of State and Sir R. Lindsay on the former's return from Europe.

At Geneva, the end of April saw the first of many efforts to resolve the conflicting positions. On 21 April Premiers MacDonald and Tardieu arrived in Geneva to join Stimson, Chancellor Brüning and Signor Grandi. Unfortunately, sustained five-power negotiations were impossible as Tardieu had to return to Paris almost immediately to campaign in a forthcoming general election; and MacDonald had to cut short his visit to enter hospital for an operation.¹ Without the high-level, concentrated attention which the chief political problems required, and which both Stimson and MacDonald sought, there was little hope for their solution. By the beginning of May, the leading statesmen had left Geneva once again, with no progress made. The major political issues had crystallized into three intractable questions. The first was the continuing naval instability posed by the failure of France and Italy to reconcile their differences and fully enter the London Treaty system; the second was the demand by France for 'security first', or some form of international guarantee of peace; and the third was the demand by Germany for equality of status. These problems, and particularly the latter, dominated the Conference for the next three years.

The principle of qualitative limitation was accepted by the General Commission in a resolution of 22 April which asked the competent special Commissions to select those weapons 'whose character is the most specifically offensive, or those most efficacious against national defence, or most threatening to civilians'.

The attempt to define offensive and defensive weapons of war involved the Technical Committees in much unprofitable discussion; each nation sought to prove that the weapons they favoured were defensive while those they did not possess were offensive.² The Naval Commission heard the familiar

1. D/S 500.A 15 a 4/1048.

2. Report of the Air Commission to the General Commission, 22 May, 1932: Conf.D.123 (1932.IX.48); Report of the Naval Commission to the General Commission, 28 May, 1932: Conf.D.121 (1932:IX.45); Report of the Land Commission to the General Commission, 7 June, 1932: Conf. D.122 (1932.IX.47).

arguments of different countries repeated with regard to submarines, aircraft carriers and capital ships of different sizes and characteristics, and predictably failed to reconcile them.

The failures of both the Technical Committees and the informal political discussions to give a lead to the Conference caused increasing worry. In the United States, Hoover was much disturbed by the lack of progress. On 24 May, he read to his Cabinet a memorandum he had composed personally, setting out the case for a further American initiative.¹ Hoover felt that 'For the Disarmament Conference to dissolve with a mere minor agreement would be a calamity'. He accepted that America could do little to solve the fundamental political conflicts of Europe, but he believed that it might be possible for a properly formulated, bold and constructive suggestion to 'lift the spirit of the entire world' and lead to a breakthrough at Geneva.

Hoover realized that for any American plan to achieve the necessary dramatic impact, it would have to demonstrate American willingness to sacrifice her own position in the interests of peace. Significant reductions in American armaments could only come from the Navy, and consequently many of the ideas Hoover originally suggested dealt with naval reductions. The President put forward the following naval suggestions:

1. Reduce by one-third the Washington and London Treaty battleship strengths.
2. Abolish all aircraft carriers.
3. Reduce cruiser strength provided for the three signatories of the London Treaty by one-third and require that France and Italy undertake no further construction in that category.
4. Reduce destroyer strength provided for the three signatories of the London Treaty by one-third and require that France and Italy make no increase in tonnage above present construction.
5. Abolish all submarines.

1. Copy in D/S 500.A 15 a 4 1047 : Memorandum for Cabinet, 24 May, 1932.

The President also suggested that a one-third cut be applied to the defence components of all armies, that is, to those forces maintained above the notional level required for the maintenance of internal order; and that all military aviation, tanks, heavy mobile guns, and poison gas be entirely abolished. Henry Stimson strongly disputed that the United States could so galvanize the Europeans,¹ but at Hoover's insistence, an outline of these proposals, modified to improve their acceptability both within the U.S. Government and in Europe, was given to the British and French delegations on 18 June. Careful discussion with those countries was not possible before the Plan was made public, however, as a 'leak' reached the Press that a new initiative was in the offing, and the President determined to launch the Plan immediately.² It was accordingly announced at a specially-convened session of the General Commission at Geneva, and simultaneously by Hoover in Washington on 22 June.

The definitive Hoover Plan differed from the President's original ideas chiefly in the proportionate reductions suggested in naval forces. The naval section of the Plan now proposed to cut aircraft, cruiser and destroyer totals by one-fourth, capital ships by one-third, and submarine totals by one-third or to 35,000 tons, whichever was lower. French and Italian totals would be calculated as though they had entered the London Treaty by the abortive accord of 1 March, 1931.³

The Plan retained the proposals to reduce the 'defence component' of armies by one-third, and eliminate 'aggressive' armaments, but diluted the proposal to abolish all military aviation to the abolition of 'all bombing-planes'. Despite this, it had a dramatic effect on public opinion in Europe, and the Plan was rapidly accepted by the majority of the minor

1. Memorandum by H.L. Stimson, D/S 500.A 15 a 4/1078½: 25 May, 1932.

2. DBFP, ibid., No.250 (pp.554-5).

3. The Hoover Plan is published in full in LofN. Conf. D.126 (1932.IX.49); DBFP, ibid., Appendix V; and Documents on International Affairs, 1932.

Powers represented at Geneva.¹ Of the Great Powers, however, only Italy was quick to accept the Hoover proposals 'entirely and in all its parts'. There was a two-week gap before the British response to the Hoover Plan was published, during which time the private conversations continued as before - although the attention of the Conference, and of the Governments concerned, had been captured by the Hoover proposals.

In London, the Hoover Plan was received with great misgiving. To the Admiralty, it was quite unacceptable, because of the British doctrine of 'absolute requirements'. It raised, in an acute form, Britain's original conflict with the United States at Geneva in 1927, where the latter had sought reduction by limiting numbers of ships while the British Government had sought to maintain numbers but to reduce the size of each ship. However, the British were in a very difficult position politically. The warm welcome the proposals received from public opinion in Britain and abroad forced the British Government to consider further naval reduction. The dilemma was how to respond with counter-proposals which would appear to be as constructive and far-reaching as the Hoover proposals, yet which would meet Britain's own requirements.² The formula that was adopted, the British Plan of 7 July, 1932, met a cool reception in Britain from both politicians and press.³

The opening paragraphs of the British statement welcomed the Hoover proposals and professed a 'deep desire to promote cooperation and agreement'.

1. Davis Papers, Box 20, File: 'Hoover Proposals, July 1932' - Records of two telephone conversations between (1) Gibson and Stimson, 7th July; (2) Davis, Gibson and Castle, 8th July, 1932.

2. ADM 116/3269: Report to First Sea Lord on 'Naval Disarmament Policy up to January 1933', by Captain R. Bellairs (undated, c.Feb. 1933).

3. Based on a draft filed as Cabinet Paper 4122 (1932). This had been agreed between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary at Lausanne, and was approved by the Prime Minister on 27 June, 1932. Its acceptance by Cabinet is listed as Cabinet 41(32), Conclusion 4, CAB 23/72. Their final form is published in LofN. Conf. D. 133 (1932.IX.50); DBFP, *ibid.*, Appendix VI; and Hansard, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.268, cols. 624-9.

However, Commander Kinkaid, one of the US naval advisers at Geneva, noted that 'The counter-proposals advanced in the British statement might remain unchanged if the opening paragraphs stated complete and total disagreement with the Hoover proposals.¹ The British naval proposals reverted to qualitative limitation at the expense of quantitative: but they threatened the stability achieved by the Washington and London Treaties by changing the displacements of every type of vessel except the destroyer, and changing the gun size of all large vessels - to 11" for capital ships and 6.1" for aircraft carriers and cruisers. As the existing standards had been set at Washington and London largely to meet British requirements, such changes could be counted upon to infuriate the Americans, especially as existing naval armaments had not yet become fully standardized on the Treaty lines.

In Lausanne, Ramsey MacDonald was deeply concerned about the effect of the British proposals on Anglo-American relations and cooperation at the Conference. He admitted his surprise at the text of the British plan to Norman Davis, and urged on him that the two countries' navies 'were of trivial importance in comparison with having the US and England go step in step'.² It seems doubtful that the Admiralty would have got all they wanted in the Cabinet if MacDonald had been in London to counter Conservative distrust of the Americans' motives in putting forward the Hoover Plan.³

General debate on the Hoover Plan ended on 8 July, with the great majority of States having expressed their acceptance, in most cases without reservation, of the American Plan.⁴ The minority, including Britain, was

1. Memorandum, 8 July, 1932, by Commander T. Kinkaid, USN.; N.Davis Papers, Box 20, File 'Draft Resolutions, June-July, 1932'.

2. N.H. Davis Papers, Box 20, File 'Hoover Proposals, July, 1932'; record of telephone conversation, Davis, Gibson and Castle, 8 July, 1932.

3. CAB 23/72.

4. States which declared their acceptance of the Hoover proposals during the general debate were Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Portugal, Canada, New Zealand, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Switzerland, Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil. States which reserved their opinion or did not declare themselves included Japan, France, Poland and Germany.

sufficiently powerful to block the way to general agreement. On 9 July, final Act of the Lausanne Conference was signed, freeing the European leaders to devote more time to Disarmament Conference, but the summer adjournment was not imminent. A draft resolution was prepared summing up the work of the Conference to that date.¹ The text made no mention of the German demand for equality of treatment, or of the French requirement for 'security first'. The declaration did state that the Conference would be 'unanimously guided by the principles underlying President Hoover's declaration', but made no endorsement of the Hoover Plan nor mention of the British counter-proposals. Moreover, no mention was made of naval armaments save to invite 'the Powers Parties to the Naval Treaties of Washington and London....to confer together and to report to the General Commission, if possible before the resumption of its work, as to further measures of naval reduction which might be feasible as part of the general programme of disarmament'. In so doing, the Conference virtually washed its hands of naval matters and admitted that naval limitation should be dealt with exclusively by the Washington Powers. The Soviet Union and Germany voted against the resolution on the familiar grounds that it did not advance the cause of total disarmament or recognize Germany's claim to equality of status. Most other nations supported it with reluctance, and only on the understanding that the Conference would consider more radical and definite measures when it reassembled in the autumn.² The resolution was rightly regarded as a very poor achievement for five months' work.

During the summer, Germany made repeated attempts to gain acceptance in principle of her equality of status,³ and having failed to do so, withdrew her delegates from the Conference. The various Commissions and

1. Published as LofN. Conf. D. 136 (1932.IX.51) and in DBFP, ibid., Appendix VII.

2. FRUS, 1932/1, p.316: Gibson to Stimson, 23 July, 1932.

3. The details of these attempts may be found in Toynbee, op.cit , pp.258-300.

Committees started work again in September without German participation.

In the middle of September, Norman Davis and Admiral Hepburn, the senior naval adviser to the delegation, passed through London on their way back to Geneva, to try to re-establish the pre-Hoover Plan Anglo-American co-operation on naval matters. After discussions with MacDonald and the First Lord, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, it was decided to continue 'purely unofficial' conversations in London, the participants being Robert Craigie of the Foreign Office and Allen Dulles for the State Department. It was carefully minuted that the conversations 'were of a purely private nature, and whatever ideas might be forthcoming from them would in no way commit either Government.'¹ However, the Craigie-Dulles conversations were the first bilateral Anglo-American naval talks since the London Conference, and Norman Davis visited London frequently during October and November to keep up their momentum.

Dulles told Craigie that he considered the publication of the Hoover Proposals, without previous consultation with Great Britain, to have been a mistake; and made it clear that he sought a compromise which would meet the main British requirements without entirely abandoning the principles of the Hoover Plan.² Over the next two months Craigie and Dulles narrowed the gap between the two sides very considerably. In the battleship class, Dulles indicated American willingness to consider a ship of 28,000 tons armed with a 12-inch gun, and that they might further agree to a total limitation in this category of 390,000 tons for each nation. This would enable the British to build fifteen ships of their preferred size of 26,000 tons, although the United States could operate only fourteen vessels of the full, 28,000-ton size if they built to such a displacement.³ Dulles'

1. ADM 116/3269: 'Report on Naval Disarmament Policy up to January 1933', Part IV.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*: Davis to Stimson, 19 Oct., T.G. 301 (London) and Davis to S Stimson, 25 Oct. 1932, T.G. No.308 (London), both in Davis Papers, Box 10.

willingness to consider reduced limits for displacement and armament of battleships, with the backing of Hepburn, Davis and Stimson, was a clear change from the rigid policy hitherto of maintaining the Washington Treaty limits. Remarkably, there seems to have been no reference to the Navy Department concerning this, either by Admiral Hepburn or through the State Department.

In the classes of cruisers and destroyers, the British emphasized their need to increase their Treaty tonnage totals after 1936. Their case was two-fold: first, that Britain had consistently maintained that her absolute security requirements were higher than the level she had been prepared to accept in the short-run; and secondly, that there appeared to be no end in sight to the Franco-Italian naval rivalry, and that France was contemplating a level of cruiser and destroyer forces which would necessitate increased British building to maintain an equilibrium. Before deciding cruiser and destroyer force levels for Britain and the United States, therefore, it was agreed to proceed and suggested in the Hoover proposals and first secure an agreement between France and Italy on figures also acceptable to Britain. Such a course met with Stimson's warm approval: it was far better to complete the existing Treaty before opening up a Pandora's Box by questioning the principles of the Washington System, which could only benefit the Japanese.¹ Negotiations to reconcile the views of the three European Powers were therefore reopened at Geneva in early November, with close co-operation between the British and Americans restored.

At Geneva, Craigie and Davis jointly approached their French and Italian colleagues for a further attempt at 'completing' the London Treaty. Both delegations professed themselves anxious for agreement, but neither showed any willingness to retreat from their previous positions. Italy proposed

1. ADM 116/3269, *ibid.*, Part IV; Davis to Stimson, 19 Oct. T.G. no.301 (London), Davis papers; D/S 500.A15 a 4 Naval/156, Stimson to Davis, 4 Nov., 1932, T.G. no.231.

that the two countries should adopt a policy of equal annual building programmes for the years up to 1936, which policy would ultimately give Italy equality with France; although the present imbalance between their relative strengths would have been unchanged by such a policy in the four years until 1936. The French were, nevertheless, adamant that they would not accept equal building programmes with their implication of eventual parity.¹

The French, in turn, proposed the cessation of all construction by France and Italy after the completion of their announced 1931 and 1931 building programmes. The problem with this, though, was that Italy had not at that time announced her 1932 building programme, and it seemed that France was trying to prevent such a programme being undertaken, to prevent an Italian capital ship being built in reply to the new French Dunkerque.²

Meanwhile, in the Disarmament Conference, attention was focused chiefly on finding a way to meet the German claim to equality of status which would both bring Germany back to the Conference table, and ensure European, or at least French, 'security'.

A second French plan, put forward by M. Paul-Boncour on 4 November, was based like its predecessor on the organization of security by international obligations, but it sought to make this more acceptable to the United States and Britain by suggesting a regional basis of organization.³ The heart of this proposal was for a European Pact of Mutual Assistance which would include France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Spain. The plan did imply giving Germany equality of status within the framework of the European security pact, and provided for Germany, like other European States, to have a short-service conscript army, albeit of

1. FRUS, 1932/1, p.560; Undated memorandum respecting Naval Conversations, 7 October to 14 December, 1932.

2. FRUS, 1932/1, p.560, *ibid*.

3. L.ofN, Conf. D. 146 (1932.IX.58).

limited size - which would end one of the military provisions of the Versailles Versailles Treaty most objectionable to Germany. France also proposed that the declared naval strengths published in the League of Nations' Armaments Year Book for 1932 should be taken as the basis for a universal but unspecified percentage reduction of naval forces.

Supplementary British proposals were put forward by Sir John Simon on 17 November.¹ On the naval side, Germany would be permitted the types of vessels she was forbidden by the Versailles Treaty - that is, submarines and capital ships of more than 10,000 tons; but it was stipulated that any new German construction should not increase her total tonnage.

On the basis of the Simon and Paul-Boncour proposals, Germany entered into five-power talks with British, French, Italian and American representatives at Geneva,² and on 11 December agreement was reached on a formula which granted Germany equality of rights in a system of arms control which would provide for European security.

Norman Davis took advantage of these five-power talks to press the idea that a Convention should be drawn up before the Christmas adjournment, to record the agreements already reached, and to establish a Permanent Disarmament Commission to prepare for a further General Disarmament Conference in 1935, the same year as the naval conference provided for in the London Treaty.³ This would effectively close the present Conference and postpone the solution of the more intractable problems in the hope of improvement in the world political situation. It was not acted upon, though, because of probable opposition from the smaller Powers, whose publics - even if not their Governments - still had high expectations of a comprehensive agreement being reached at Geneva, and who were becoming increasingly resentful of the private talks of the big-power 'club'.

1. Published as Cmd. 4189 (1932).

2. See DBFP, 2/3, Ch.IV, especially No. 220 (p.377).

3. DBFP, ibid., Annex to No.210 (pp.333-4).

Additionally, the practical problems of agreeing a Draft Convention in the short time remaining before Christmas were overwhelming. The delegations were committed, therefore, to trying again, with German participation in the New Year.

In proposing the suspension of the Conference for two years, it is possible that Norman Davis was motivated by personal considerations. The defeat of the Hoover Administration at the polls led to Davis's name being canvassed for the Secretaryship of State in the new Administration. His experience as Acting Secretary in the Wilson Administration, and his experience since then, stood him in good stead, and a tangible outcome of the Conference, even of limited scope, would help his chances.¹

When the impracticability of concluding the Conference immediately with an acceptable Convention was recognized, Davis reverted to the attempts to include France and Italy in the London Treaty. Further conversations in London between Davis, Craigie and Bellairs resulted in a proposal being agreed on 12 December for submission to the French and Italian Governments.²

In the new proposals, no rights under the Washington Treaty as regards capital ships and aircraft carriers would be given up. An exchange of letters would, however, take place between France and Italy, indicating that France would construct only the Dunkerque and that Italy would not construct more than one ship of similar tonnage. No further construction would take place in the 8-inch gun cruiser, and in the 6-inch cruiser and destroyer categories construction should cease after the 1932 programme, with special provision for Italy to have a smaller 1932 programme than usual because the Italian financial year (and therefore her announcement of building programmes) started six months later than the French.

Serious consideration of the new plans was prevented by a French

1. A letter from Under Secretary Castle to Norman Davis of 16 Nov. 1932 (Davis Papers, Box 8), noted 'how well the outgoings and incoming Administrations are cooperating'. Castle also told Davis how much he hoped Davis would get the Secretary's job.

2. DBFP, *ibid.*, Appendix III.

Government crisis. On 13 December the Government of M. Herriot failed, and although before Christmas a new Cabinet was formed by M. Paul-Boncour which might have been expected to give greater attention to the naval question, the timing proved to be critical; before attention could seriously be paid to the Anglo-American proposals, the Christmas adjournment had begun at Geneva, and another opportunity was lost.¹

Unpropitious timing was equally responsible for the quiet burial of another proposal in December. Just as the Conference was concentrating on the German question, and Britain and America were distracted by the Franco-Italian question, the Japanese delegation chose to present its own plan for naval disarmament.² This divided all naval vessels into 'more powerful or aggressive' weapons and 'less powerful or defensive' weapons, with the former group consisting of capital ships, aircraft carriers, and heavy cruisers, and the latter group consisting of light cruisers, destroyers and (to Anglo-American annoyance) submarines. There would be parity in the 'defensive' classes between the major powers, subject to further downward reduction through regional agreements, which would be concluded to cover four areas - the Pacific, the Atlantic, Europe and South America. A Power belonging to more than one group would participate in the negotiations of every group to which it belonged.

The Japanese proposal was clearly unacceptable to the British and Americans.³ The only specific reductions suggested were in the battleship and heavy cruiser classes, but with a considerable increase in the Japanese ratio in these classes. In the light cruiser class, Japan proposed totals of 150,000 tons maximum for each Power - including France, Italy and presumably also the lesser Powers, subject to adjustment by the regional

1. ADM 116/3269, *ibid.*

2. This was printed as L.of N. Conf.D.150, but not published in the general series of League publications.

3. D/S 500 A 15 a 4/Steering Committee/255: 'Analysis of the Japanese Proposals', undated (Dec. 1932).

Table

Summary of Japanese Proposals: Consequences for the Three Major Powers

	Maximum Displacement	Maximum gun Calibre	Suggested max. tonnage totals for:		
			USA	UK	Japan
Battleships	25,000 tons	14 inches	275,000 t.	275,000 t.	200,000 t.
Heavy Cruisers	8,000 tons	8 inches	96,000 t.	96,000 t.	980,000 t.
Light Cruisers	6,000 tons	6.1 inches	150,000 t.	150,000 t.	150,000 t.
Destroyers	1,500 tons	5.1 inches	150,000 t.	150,000 t.	150,000 t.
Submarines	1,800 tons	5.1 inches	75,000 t.	75,000 t.	75,000 t.

conferences. This compared with the London Treaty figures of 189,000 tons for the British Empire, 143,500 tons for the United States, and 100,450 tons for Japan. The proposed submarine fleet maxima was 75,000 tons displacement, as against 52,700 tons in the London Treaty; submarines were declared to have 'slight relativity' and to be indispensable for the defence of lesser Powers. Finally, the Japanese suggested that an agreement might be reached to ban aircraft carriers - the category in which the actual Anglo-American lead over Japan was greatest.

In all, the Japanese Plan was precisely what Stimson had feared if it became known to Tokyo that any alteration of the Washington-London Treaty principles was being considered. The suggestion for a modification of existing ratios was especially inappropriate in British and American eyes at a time when the world was fearfully watching the evolution of Japanese imperialism in China. It was in vain for the Japanese to argue that the proposals would not increase her strength sufficiently to enable her to attack either the United States or Great Britain; it was generally accepted that Japan was already impregnable in her home waters, and any increase in her strength therefore appeared to be quite unnecessary for defensive purposes. Ignored and resented by the other principal naval Powers, the Japanese Plan was shelved and quietly forgotten over the Christmas recess.

The General Commission of the Conference reconvened at the beginning of February 1933, with an agenda headed by the second French Plan of November, 1932.¹ Although Germany was again represented, it was now a different Germany from that which had left the Conference in the preceding autumn. Hitler had become Chancellor on 30 January, and, while the ultimate intentions of the Nazis were not clear, their demands for revision of the Versailles Treaty caused grave apprehension in those States which had benefited from the Treaty.

The initial debate on the French Plan soon showed that it had no chance of general acceptance. It was particularly objectionable to Italy and the Netherlands as it made no provision for Great Britain to be incorporated into the system of continental security. This Plan, too, was soon tacitly shelved, and joined many others in limbo. The General Commission, with no solution in sight to the deadlock, marked time by discussing the means of supervising and policing any agreement that might be made.

March 1933 saw two developments of the highest significance for the naval balance of power. One of these, the presentation of new British proposals, the MacDonald Plan, at Geneva finally gave the Disarmament Conference a satisfactory basis on which to proceed. The second was the inauguration of the Roosevelt Administration at Washington. For four years the Hoover Administration had followed a policy which can be charitably described as 'disarmament by example', or, in other eyes, 'disarmament by neglect'. During the Hoover Administration, no new keels had been laid down in the United States, initially because of the need to bring about a rapprochement with the British, then because of the search for economy in the financial crisis. Although completion of vessels from earlier programmes had continued into 1932, by 1933 virtually no work was being done in the United States in shipyards dependent on naval contracts.

1. See above, p.232.

Roosevelt was well aware of the state of the Navy,¹ he had been Deputy Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson, and maintained a strong interest in all things maritime throughout his life. Roosevelt sought to increase employment in the United States, and to resist aggression outside the United States; both policies could be supported by building ships for the Navy. On 7 March, three days after taking office, the new Secretary of the Navy, former Senator Claude Swanson, announced at his first Press Conference that the new Administration's policy would be to build the US Navy right up to the Treaty limits.²

Although at first the Navy Department, like all other Federal agencies, was required by the new Administration to submit proposals for drastic economies in expenditure, the \$50 millions of 'cuts' worked out over April and were almost immediately rescinded,³ and followed by the announcement that the Federal Public Works Program would include the sum of \$46,000,000 for laying down 30 new ships. This programme was increased on 15 June, to a three year building programme of 37 vessels, to be financed in part by \$238,000,000 allocated out of the funds authorized for the National Industrial Recovery Act. Work on twenty-one ships was to start forthwith, sixteen of them to be paid for out of the public works allocation, and the remaining five from the current Navy Department budget. By August contracts had been signed for all of the vessels. A third increment of the rebuilding of the Navy was signalled in the December annual report of the Secretary of the Navy,⁴ when Swanson recommended the construction of 101 further ships to bring the fleet up to full Treaty strength by the end of 1936.

1. Roosevelt to Malcolm Peabody, 19 Aug. 1933; in Edgar B. Nixon, ed., Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs (henceforth cited as Nixon, Roosevelt), (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), Vol.1. 1, p.370.

2. New York Times, 8 March, 1933.

3. New York Times, 25 May, 1933.

4. Navy Department, 'Annual Report....to Congress', 1933.

In all, legislation in 1933 and 1934 funded or authorized new tonnage almost doubling the total already afloat, an increase that could not fail to affect American relations with both Britain and Japan. That this happened was due not only to an enthusiastic President but also to a favourable climate in Congress. In the House of Representatives, which dealt exclusively with financial bills, the two key men in the Seventy-Fifth Congress were Representatives Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, and William Unstead, Chairman of the Navy Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Both men were 'Big Navy' supporters; and both had Committees willing to follow the lead of the President. The combination of Presidential leadership and fears about Japanese actions created general agreement that it was necessary to maintain the Navy at Treaty strength. This resulted in the Vinson-Trammell Act of March, 1934, which provided blanket legislation for ship construction and replacement up to Treaty limits.¹

The Japanese reaction to the new American construction came on 2 September, 1933, when it announced in Tokyo that the new American naval programme had 'stimulated Japan to accelerate her own naval construction'.² The extent of this was shown in December with the announcement of a construction programme of twenty two ships, again designed to reach the limits of the London Treaty.³

Against this background of unilateral actions, a burst of hope occurred at Geneva with the MacDonald Plan of March, 1933, which had an effect on the Governments and diplomats involved in the Conference as dramatic as the impact the Hoover Plan had had on the Press and public opinion in the previous year. During February, the British delegation at Geneva had been

1. W.H. Heinrichs, 'The Role of the U.S. Navy', in Borg and Okamoto, eds., Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations, 1931-1941, p.207.

2. New York Times, 4 September, 1933.

3. New York Times, 5 December, 1933.

led by Anthony Eden, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. On 1st March he returned to London, and told the Cabinet in frank terms that the Conference was deadlocked and would fail altogether without some significant initiative.¹ The Cabinet authorized MacDonald and Foreign Secretary Simon to go to Geneva and make a fresh initiative to settle the Franco-German division.

MacDonald and Simon left London for Paris on 9 March, en route to Geneva, with little clear idea of what to do once they reached there. In Paris, MacDonald and Simon told M. Daladier, 'That

That now to attempt a great plan was out of the question; the only thing to do was to see the chief delegates separately and then consider what were the best means of bringing the Conference to an end, either by adjournment or by other means.²

At both Paris and Geneva, MacDonald found a continuing deterioration in the political situation, due both to developments in Germany and to the change in behaviour of the German delegates at Geneva. The German delegates had assumed a strongly intransigent attitude, possibly because of the domestic political need of the new Nazi Government to 'make itself felt' at the Conference, but in part, it was feared, reflecting the true nature of the new regime.

In Geneva, MacDonald and Simon found an attitude of frustration approaching despair of being able to achieve any positive result.³ The delegates looked to MacDonald to make a new proposal - anything to get away from the current fruitless arguments - and a feeling rapidly grew that a new British proposal was not only in preparation but was vital. On 13 March MacDonald told Paul-Boncour and Massigli that he shared this feeling; after the consultations he had had, he

1. Cabinet 13(33).1 (1 March) and Cabinet 15(33).1 and 2 (8 March, 1933): CAB 23/75.

2. DBFP, 2/4, No.290 (p.502): Meeting in Paris between British and French Ministers, 10 March, 1933.

3. DBFP, *ibid.*, pp.511-526.

...had come to the conclusion that a simple adjournment would be a great mistake. An attempt should be made to put some kind of a plan before the Conference embodying points on which agreement had been reached, and embodying standards of land material, ships, aircraft, etc. Whatever was done must be done soon.¹

MacDonald put forward his new Plan on 16 March, after he, Simon and Craigie had spent two days solidly drafting in their Geneva hotel with only the most perfunctory consultation with their colleagues in London.² The three men produced a detailed draft convention incorporating, for the first time in any proposal laid before the Conference, concrete figures for numbers of effectives, aircraft and land material. All Continental European land forces, excluding troops stationed overseas, would be reduced to a common militia basis, with eight months as the suggested maximum period of service. To placate France, provision was made for consultation between all the signatories in the event of a breach, or a threatened breach, of the Kellogg Pact.

The naval chapter sought to extend the London Treaty provisions to France and Italy to stabilize the naval balance until 1935, when a conference of all naval Powers would meet concurrently with the scheduled Conference of the Washington Powers. The truce in the building of capital ships which was included in the London Treaty would be extended to all nations signatories of the Convention, with the reservation that Italy could build a single capital ship of not more than 26,500 tons displacement in response to the Dunkerque. There would be no construction of eight-inch cruisers, except as provided in the London Treaty, and all other construction would be exclusively for replacement and would conform to the category

1. DBFP, *ibid.*, No.299; Record of a conversation between MacDonald, Simon, and Paul-Boncour, 13 March, 1933.

2. D. Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald (London, 1977), pp.753-5, recounts MacDonald's own views of his Plan, the strain he was under at the time and the weariness evident in his partly incoherent speech to the Conference. Cabinets 17(33) and 18(33) on 13 and 15 March, discussed Simon's telegrams outlining the emerging Plan. The Plan was published as LofN. Cof. D. 157 (1933.IX.2), 16 March, 1933, with separate annexes and corrigendum dated 17 March.

limitations already in force. All the previous proposals for further naval limitation would be referred to a Permanent Disarmament Commission for examination.

The British proposals received a very warm welcome in Washington. Roosevelt told Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador, that he 'was all in favour of the most drastic action possible' and was therefore 'quite inclined to support the line' taken by the British Government.¹ The naval proposals were praised as 'an excellent plan' by Admiral Pratt, and even received grudging praise from the General Board.² The US Navy's only serious objection, in fact, was to the air element of the proposals: MacDonald had allocated 500 aircraft as a maximum air force to each of the five major naval powers, while Pratt wanted a naval air ratio of 5:5:3. He was rapidly overruled by the President.³

At Geneva, the reception given to the MacDonald plan was similar to that accorded the Hoover Plan. It was welcomed at once by Italy and many smaller States, and given a more guarded reception by France and Germany. The French delegates did, however, express their pleasure that the new plan incorporated French ideas on the standardization of European military forces. The Germans welcomed the proposed doubling of the Reichswehr and the implicit cancellation of the Disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty. The MacDonald Plan was therefore adopted as a basis for continuing the discussions of the Conference.

On 25 April, the Conference began a first reading of the MacDonald draft Convention, while its author was in Washington visiting President Roosevelt. The Washington conversations dealt principally with the

1. DBFP, ibid., No.314: Lindsay to Vansittart, 16 March, 1933.

2. Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Confidential Correspondence, 1927-39, File A-19: CNO's notes on British Proposals of 16 March, 1933 at Geneva: 22 March, 1933: and General Board Report, 21 March, 1933 in same file.

3. Nixon, Roosevelt, i, p.185; FDR minute on memorandum by William Phillips, 27 May, 1933.

forthcoming World Economic Conference, but one aspect of disarmament was discussed. Although Roosevelt had instructed Davis to support most of the MacDonald Plan, he ordered that the United States should abstain from committing itself to Part One of the draft, the section dealing with security, which required that a Conference of all signatories of the Convention be held in the event of aggression. American participation in even such a watered-down security arrangement would meet strong opposition in Congress.¹ As a result, however, of pressure on Roosevelt from MacDonald and M. Herriot, the former French Prime Minister, also visiting Washington, Davis was instructed to announce that the United States would 'undertake to refrain from any action....which would tend to defeat the collective effort....' which the States accepting Part One chose to take against any aggressor.² Such cooperation with collective action for security was, despite its evasive wording, a major change in American policy, and a major concession to the French. A unilateral declaration by the President might avoid domestic criticism and Senatorial opposition to cooperation, but might have the same weight as, for example, the Monroe Doctrine.

A major obstacle which had meanwhile emerged at Geneva to the MacDonald Plan concerned the provisions for qualitative disarmament. The cause of the problem was Germany. Herr Nadolny, the chief German delegate, submitted a series of amendments to the draft whose object was to permit Germany to acquire any of the type of armaments operated by other States but not banned by the Convention; for example, military aircraft, submarines and tanks, all of which she was forbidden. The German position was that either all European States should disarm immediately, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to Germany's level, or Germany would rearm to whatever level the Conference determined for the other major European Powers. The further

1. Nixon, op.cit., I, pp.56-8; Memorandum by Pierrepont Moffat for William Phillips, 19 April, 1933.

2. DBFP, *ibid.*, pp.157-9, 167; 168-9 and 173-4.

implication was that Germany would rearm in any case if no agreement was forthcoming at the Conference.¹

Overtures were made by the Germans to Britain specifically about naval weapons. Roger Bellairs met German representatives at Geneva on 29 April, and was confronted with a series of objections to the naval chapter of the draft Convention. Germany wished to acquire at least some small 'sample' submarines, a new battleship to offset the Dunkerque, and to be allowed to build more cruisers and destroyers than the draft permitted, to enable her to build up to Versailles Treaty strength. Bellairs refused to hold out any hope of British support, as any increase in German naval strength would upset the fragile balance with France and Italy. He reported pessimistically, 'My arguments, I believe, were understood but I doubt if they will prevent any amendments'.²

The situation regarding Germany had become so serious that it was feared that a speech by Hitler on foreign policy, scheduled for 17 May, would be so intransigent as to disrupt the Conference. On 16 May, Roosevelt addressed a message to the Heads of State of each nation represented at Geneva. After reiterating the American position in favour of abolishing aggressive weapons, he suggested an agreement not to increase armaments, and a universal non-aggression pact, whose parties would undertake to send no armed forces of any kind across their frontiers. He concluded with an unmistakable message to Hitler:

Common sense points out that if any strong nation refuses to join with genuine sincerity in these concerted efforts, progress can be obstructed and ultimately blocked. In such an event, the Civilised World will know where the responsibility for failure lies.³

1. Toynbee, op.cit., 1933, pp.262-7.

2. DBFP, op.cit., pp.176-9, Memorandum by Rear-Admiral Bellairs on a conversation with Baron von Rheinbaben and Admiral von Freyberg, 29 April, 1933.

3. FRUS, 1933/1, pp.143-5; Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, II, pp.185-191.

This message, requested in desperation by Norman Davis, had the desired effect in the short-term.¹ Hitler's speech the following day was moderate and pacific in tone, describing the British Draft Convention as a 'possible basis for the solution' of the disarmament question.² The speech restored a spirit of conciliation to Geneva.

In this more relaxed atmosphere, Norman Davis announced the United States' preparedness to cooperate with the security provisions of the Draft Convention. He told the General Commission on 22 May that America would consult with other states in the event of a threatened breach of the peace, and that, if the US Government independently concurred as to which State had violated its obligations, it would refrain from any action tending to defeat the collective effort which the other states might take to restore peace. Moreover, the United States would support a system of supervision to carry out the provisions of the Disarmament Treaty, including provision for periodic international inspection. It was emphasized, though, that American agreement to participate in such arrangements for (essentially European) security would not be given as part of the Treaty, but by way of a unilateral declaration in the event of the conclusion of a satisfactory treaty.³

The wider significance of the American declaration, effectively ending twelve years of isolationism, was recognized and welcomed. A US Government was not willing to consider the institutional participation in the international system. However, the declaration's specific contents were disappointing - even though it was recognized that the Administration's change of policy was restricted by the continued adherence of much of Congress to isolationism. The French, the principal potential beneficiaries of American participation, regretted that America was reserving

1. FRUS, 1933/1, pp.140-1 and 141-2; Hull, Memoirs, I, pp.226-7.

2. Text is in The Times and the New York Times, 18 May, 1933, and Documents on International Affairs, 133.

3. FRUS, 1933/1, pp.154-8; also Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments; Series B, Minutes of the General Commission, Vol.II, p.474.

her right to make her own judgements about aggression, and that American intervention - when she was finally satisfied about aggression - would take so negative a form.¹ However, the Davis declaration implied a great deal more than appeared on the surface. In maritime questions, for example, the undertaking to 'refrain from any action tending to defeat' collective measures meant abandoning the long-standing American attitude towards 'Freedom of the Seas' and the whole question of neutrality, which had been such a disruptive factor in Anglo-American relations.

At this stage, the Conference again faced an impending time deadline, threatening to cut off discussions at the Conference just as things appeared to be going well. The World Economic Conference was scheduled to begin in London on 12th June. Most of the leading delegates to the Conference would move to London, and make serious negotiations at Geneva impossible. Because fundamental differences of opinion clearly still existed, despite the conciliatory effect of Hitler's 17th May speech and the Davis Declaration, it was agreed to adjourn the Conference after the (non-committal) first reading of the MacDonald Plan, and for Arthur Henderson, as President of the Conference, to conduct negotiations to facilitate a second draft which might resolve some of the outstanding problems.²

From this adjournment, the remaining course of the Disarmament Conference was steadily downhill, and its history contains little with a direct bearing on the naval balance. The patterns of negotiations until the Conference's final adjournment sine die reflected the deterioration of the European political situation from the summer of 1933. Before the Conference met again in October, the London Economic Conference had failed to achieve anything worthwhile, and Nazi pressure had begun to be exerted upon Austria, to the grave concern of France and Italy. Meanwhile reports

1. DBFP, op.cit., pp.274-5.

2. Minutes of the General Commission, Vol.II, pp.570-8.

began to reach Paris of the progress of secret German rearmament.¹ With such developments it is not surprising that the French attitude grew considerably more rigid. It is hard to say whether, or at which point, the French Government effectively abandoned the principle of disarmament in response to developments in Germany; but their attitude in the summer of 1933 was well assessed by Arthur Henderson:

They talk about security and the necessity for security and the need for armament and say that they will give the minimum of disarmament for the minimum of security and the maximum of disarmament for the maximum of security. But when asked directly to name the minimum of disarmament they are evasive and non-committal. And when requested to name the maximum of disarmament they are not responsive.²

Pessimism grew in Britain and America. In September MacDonald wrote to President Roosevelt that

...the Disarmament situation is becoming increasingly difficult. The conduct, the pose and the spirit of the German Government have raised fear and unsettlement where, largely owing to us, calmness and confidence had begun to operate.³

MacDonald went on to refer to another problem - 'the same unfortunate hesitations arise from the more remote country, Japan'. Arthur Henderson also encountered difficulties in that quarter. In a conversation with the Japanese Ambassador in Paris, Naotake Sato, Sato had insisted - amongst other things - on an increased naval ratio for Japan. Henderson claimed he told Sato 'that he had made a mistake and come to the wrong Conference, that this Conference was for disarmament.'⁴

At the end of the summer discussions between Daladier, Norman Davis and Anthony Eden continued at Geneva on the fringes of the regular Assembly of the League, and included consultation with German and Italian representatives. These revealed not only that the positions of both France

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.295. Conversations between Sir R. Vansittart and M. Corbin (French Ambassador to London), 1 August, 1933.

2. Breckinridge Long to Roosevelt, 17 July, 1933: Nixon, op.cit., pp.317-30.

3. MacDonald to Roosevelt, 27 Sept. 1933: Nixon, Roosevelt, i, pp.410-2.

4. Long to Roosevelt, 17 July, 1933: Nixon, Roosevelt, i, pp.317-20.

and Germany had hardened during the summer, but also a marked decrease in the willingness of Britain to take a diplomatic lead in advocating disarmament or to act as an 'honest broker'. One reason for this was shown by MacDonald's statement to Norman Davis that Henderson's return to Parliament at a by-election that summer 'made it difficult for the British Government (which) would be unwilling to carry on confidential disarmament conversations and negotiations with the virtual leader of the opposition sitting in.'¹ Another complicating factor was a deterioration in Anglo-American relations as a result of two things: the rejection by President Roosevelt of an agreement for monetary stabilization, worked out at the Economic Conference by MacDonald and Raymond Moley, one of the American delegates there; and the action of the American Administration in beginning to build the US Navy up to Treaty limits.² Davis reported to Washington, however, that although MacDonald was

...still (pre)occupied with the Economic Conference and the naval question...he is firmly convinced of the importance and is desirous of cooperating with us and remaining on the most friendly terms with us.

With the Great Powers rapidly losing interest in disarmament, and easily finding reasons to justify their disinterest, the talks continued in Geneva into October. The Disarmament Conference had ceased to be a plenary meeting of the nations and had become, in effect, a conference on European political problems in which Britain, France and Italy were the main participants and with the United States, in the form of Norman Davis, sitting on the outside but with full access to what was going on. Davis was described by Roosevelt as acting as an amicus curiae - 'he is not trying to tell them what to do, but when they get in a jam, Norman

1. Davis Papers, Box 9: Memorandum of conversation between Davis and MacDonald, 17 Sept. 1933.

2. Nixon, Roosevelt, i, pp.339-42: Louis Wiley to Roosevelt, 31 July, 1933, with enclosures (letters from Lords Londonderry and Derby to Wiley), gives a good indication of the difficult state of Anglo-American relations of this time.

Davis is talking to them and suggesting ways and means of getting out of that particular jam.¹

Davis was in no position to suggest a solution for the disastrous 'jam' the Conference was getting into in October. France demanded a 'trial period' during which Germany would not re-arm, before she would undertake any reduction. Germany's response was to declare that she could not agree with any element of self-respect to being put on probation. In an effort to save Germany's 'face', Sir John Simon suggested a compromise on the equality issue on 14 October when the Bureau of the Conference reconvened. Simon proposed that the Disarmament Treaty should permit Germany to obtain complete qualitative equality by the end of the Treaty, but that this equality should be reached in a number of stages over a period of eight years. Furthermore, Germany, in accordance with the MacDonald Plan, should be allowed to convert her long-service army of 100,000 men into a short-term conscript army of twice that number pari passu with similar reorganization of other Continental armies. A system of supervision and control would be established to insure the faithful execution of the Treaty.²

The Simon proposals were supported by France and Italy, and by Norman Davis, who pleaded that the Disarmament Conference should not be turned into a Rearmament Conference. The German representative, however, immediately attacked the proposals as inadequate, and a few hours later the German Government announced its withdrawal both from the Conference and the League. Germany gave as her reason the impossibility of satisfying her claim to equality of rights. In fact, the main divergence between the German position and that set forth in Sir John Simon's speech related to the date on which German rearmament should begin. Germany held out for immediate rearmament while the other major Powers felt that to permit such a step would not only be contrary to the aims of the Conference, but

1. Nixon, Roosevelt, i, pp.1419-22: Record of President's Press Conference, 11 Oct. 1933.

2. Toynbee, op.cit., pp.302-4.

would further undermine the sense of security in Europe upon which reduction of armaments had to be based. They had held, therefore, that the first stage of the Treaty should be devoted primarily to the reorganization of Continental armies and a limitation to present levels of the heavy types of war material, to be followed subsequently by the utmost possible reduction of this material in the later stages of the Treaty along with a limited rearmament of Germany to permit her to attain equality.¹

Germany's withdrawal effectively paralyzed the Conference. Naval and other questions were abandoned, and the United States played no further active role, in accordance with the policy enunciated by Norman Davis on 26 October: the United States would gladly continue to do its part while there was a possibility of successfully carrying on disarmament negotiations, but could not intervene in purely European aspects of the picture, and would not take an active part in the continuing European diplomatic conversations, since the implications were primarily political.²

The British Government still played a significant role in the spasmodic diplomatic attempts to reconcile the European Powers in 1934, but the purpose of this policy became more and more simply to manage the course of European rearmament without creating more new enemies or breaking down the increasingly fragile structure of European stability.

British interest in arms control reverted to the naval field, as preparation began for the impending 1935 naval conference. The Bureau of the Disarmament Conference continued to meet periodically, but its most significant items of business became tributes to the memory of those who had died violently in the new climate of European politics - King Alexander of Yugoslavia, Dr. Dollfuss of Austria. In February, 1935, the Bureau

1. Records of the General Commission, Vol.III, pp.646-651: also Records of the Disarmament Conference, Series C: Minutes of the Bureau of the Conference, Vol.II, pp.178-186.

2. Dept. of State, Press Briefings, Information Series, No.45, 25 Sept, 1934.

finally adjourned sine die.¹

With the end of the Disarmament Conference, all hope for extending naval limitation and reduction died in Britain. Peace campaigns might continue to urge the contradictory policies of collective security and unilateral reduction of armaments, but in government circles the debate on naval policy had changed from one of 'How much limitation?' to 'How much rearmament?' In the United States, naval rearmament had begun even before hopes faded of a successful conclusion of Geneva, even though the public commitment of the US Administration to further education was to continue up until the next Naval Conference. The termination of the Disarmament Conference, nevertheless, marks the real end of the search for disarmament between the wars. Between 1934 and 1936 the British Government tried with increasing desperation to salvage something of the Washington System from the wreck of the disarmament effort.

1. Records of the Conference, Minutes of the Bureau, 58th, 59th, 60th and 61st meetings; FRUS, 1934/1, pp.63-120.

Chapter VI

THE END IN THE PACIFIC

Preparations for the London Naval Conference of 1936 were very different from the negotiations which had preceded the previous naval Conferences. The date and the agenda of the impending Conference were fixed by treaty, so that governmental attention was focussed upon it long in advance. The major difference, though, lay not in the fact or the nature of the preparations, but the political background against which they took place. By 1933-4, it had become clear that the high tide of disarmament was receding. The General Disarmament Conference had failed, and the threats to British and American security had increased. In both countries, the Governments were forced to accept the need for some rearmament; and the economic situation had improved enough to permit a limited increase in defence spending.

A new complication had been added to the strategic balance - the air rearmament of Germany. To Britain this posed a greater long-term danger than Japanese naval expansion: and the Treasury accordingly sought to give naval rearmament second priority. The Admiralty fought vigorously for their own 'requirements', and the political-bureaucratic battle determined British policy towards naval limitation. The naval negotiations of 1934 were in one sense a British search for a diplomatic escape from the strategic reality: the need for full-scale air and naval rearmament. The failure of these negotiations led to the political decision of late 1935 finally to commit Britain to full rearmament.

British preparation for the next Naval Conference began in earnest in early 1934 as soon as the failure of the Geneva Disarmament

Conference was certain. The Ministerial Committee on Disarmament reviewed the position at Geneva on 6 March, 1934,¹ and recognised for the first time the need to prepare for the event of a complete collapse of all disarmament negotiations. A request for consideration of the British position in such an event was made to the Cabinet on 14 March.² The Admiralty, however, had already considered the position very carefully.

The Admiralty had strongly supported the naval chapter of the British Draft Convention, put forward at Geneva in March 1933.³ This sought to stabilize the naval balance by extending the London Treaty to the non-signatories until the end of 1936, when that treaty expired; meanwhile, everything would hopefully be renegotiated at the next conference. The construction of large vessels would be frozen, and if smaller vessels only were constructed between 1933 and 1936, it might bode well for general acceptance of smaller battleships and cruisers at the next conference - a long-established British goal. However, the increased tension in Europe resulting from the collapse of the Geneva conference threatened a new naval race between the Continental powers, in which it would be very difficult to control the sizes of vessels. The Admiralty also feared that the existing Treaty levels were now insufficient in a number of categories - notably destroyers and light cruisers - to provide for Britain's security.

The Admiralty therefore wanted two things: to continue to pursue naval stability by agreement, and to gain greater flexibility to meet Britain's security needs by means of an increase in her permitted

1. DCM(32) 33rd Meeting, 6 March, 1934.

2. CP 68(34), Memorandum by Sir J. Simon on the consequences of a Breakdown of the Disarmament Conference, 9 March, 1934. Cabinet 9(34)2, 14 March, 1934.

3. See Chapter 5, p.245; Published as L.of N. Conf. D. 157 (1933.IX.2) 16 March, 1933.

totals of light cruisers and destroyers. In late 1933, therefore, the Admiralty twice proposed to the Foreign Office that naval negotiations be opened with the other naval powers. In line with the development of naval limitation thinking at Geneva, it was argued that even if new building could not be prevented, at least it might be qualitatively restricted and thus a degree of stability would be retained.¹

The major obstacle to securing qualitative limits was the attitude of the United States. Quantitative limitation gave the Americans everything they wanted; there was no reason why they should want to give it up for qualitative limitation which might take away much of their superiority on a ship-for-ship basis. Britain had repeatedly been frustrated by American insistence upon large vessels in both the battleship and cruiser classes. There was no sign that there would be any change in their attitude. Moreover, to suggest qualitative limitation to the Americans invited a counter-demand for discussion of quantitative levels in return. The British feared that the United States would refuse to discuss limitation until Britain had set out her own requirements for increased cruiser and destroyer tonnage, and her attitude towards the probable Japanese demand for equality or a higher ratio.²

The United States at this time was pressing ahead with Roosevelt's plan to build a full-strength Treaty navy.³ While this was justified

1. CAB 21/404, International Conferences: Suggested Naval Conversations. Memorandum, 25 October, 1933. FO 371/17383, W.13204/117/98, Memorandum by Bellairs, 15 November, 1933.

2. FO 371/17596, A 1977/1938/45: Memorandum by R. Craigie, 9 January, 1934.

3. See above, Chapter 5, pp.241-2.

to the American public and in diplomatic circles purely in terms of the increased employment and other economic benefits the building programme would bring, Roosevelt was also aware of the diplomatic advantage it would confer upon the United States in future naval negotiations.¹

While the United States building programme was entirely within the quantitative and qualitative limits set by treaty, one aspect of it was especially worrying to the British. Among the 32 warships funded under the National Industrial Recovery Act in July 1933 were four 10,000-ton, 6-inch gun cruisers - a type conforming to the treaty limits but hitherto unbuilt. A memorandum by the Admiralty's Director of Plans pointed out that the new type would overshadow the Imperial Japanese Navy's existing large (8,500 ton) 6-inch cruisers, necessitating a Japanese response, and compelling the British in turn to follow suit. This would put an end to hopes of reducing the size of light cruisers at the next naval conference.² The Cabinet agreed that an approach should be made with a view to persuading the Americans to reduce the size of these ships, but this was rejected out of hand.³ Consequently, the British increased the tonnage of vessels in their own regular building programme, introducing two Southampton class 8,900-ton, 6-inch gun cruisers in their 1934 programme.⁴

By 1934, Japan had achieved effective parity with the United States, simply by building up to treaty limits. The Vinson-Trammell Bill,

1. FDR Papers, Hyde Park, Official File 18, Navy Department 1933-July 1934, Box 1: Roosevelt to Swanson, 18 January, 1934.

2. FO 371, W 10329/117/38, Memorandum by Rear Adm. Bellairs, 7 September, 1933.

3. Cabinet 50(33)7, 5 September, 1933. FO 371/17383, W 10330/117/98; W 10728, W 10734/5, 10790. FRUS, 1933/1, pp.382,6. DC(M)(32)58, 27 September, 1933.

4. Cabinet 57(33)1, 26 October, 1933; CP 213(33), Memorandum by First Lord, 31 August, 1933.

introduced into Congress in January 1934, was designed to raise the US Navy to treaty strength, and thereby restore naval superiority over Japan. It authorized, but did not allocate funds for, 102 vessels and 1,184 naval aircraft over a seven-year period ending in 1942. Its rapid passage, and signature by the President in March 1934, showed that there was finally a majority in Congress for a 'Big Navy', even if it was dependent upon Presidential pressure.¹

However, to meet the diplomatic challenge posed by the naval situation, close co-operation with the British would be necessary, or the United States would be isolated internationally - which would strengthen the hand of domestic pacifist and 'little navy' influences.

Co-operation with Britain was urged by Norman Davis, the chief American delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference, as early as November 1933.² In the State Department, the heads of Far Eastern and Western European Departments, Stanley Hornbeck and Pierrepont Moffat, agreed that a common front should be formed with Britain to coerce Japan.³ However, the officer in charge of the Japanese section, Edward Dooman, feared that Anglo-American co-operation might lead to Japan refusing to negotiate at all; he argued that if Japan was going to renounce the treaty restrictions anyway, it was better not to give her an excuse. Even so, he accepted that America should avoid any dispute with Britain, which might serve to encourage the Japanese.⁴

1. Congressional opinion, and public reactions to the Bill, are reviewed in New York Times, 11 February, 1935; National Archives, Committee Papers, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, SEN 73A-F10(112B), Memorial, 29 January, 1934; both cited in Burns and Urquidi, eds., Disarmament in Perspective, ACDA RS-55, Vol.III, pp.219-220.

2. GB 438-1, 'Notes on talk of Mr Norman Davis, 18 November, 1933'.

3. D/S 500.A15 a3/14, Memorandum by Hornbeck, 14 December, 1933; 500. A15 a3/16, Memorandum by Moffat, 15 December, 1933.

4. D/S 500.A15 a3/15 and /34, Memoranda by Dooman, 15 December, 1933 and 6 February, 1934.

It was therefore agreed that differences of opinion with Britain should be resolved before any discussions with Japan opened.¹

In Tokyo, opinion was running so strongly against the London Treaty limits that during 1933, the senior officers who had supported the civilian government in the bitter fight over the ratification of the London Treaty in 1930 were forced to retire from the service prematurely. The Japanese Admiralty came to be dominated by members of the 'Fleet Faction', opponents of treaty limitations led by Admiral Kato Kanji. Moreover, any hope of civilian control over the naval authorities faded as the naval staff regulations were altered to give the Chief of Staff - Admiral Kato - full responsibility for determining the size and composition of the fleet. The Cabinet was thus prevented from overruling the Navy in future.²

Popular feeling in Japan was aroused by the radicals who increasingly dominated the country's politics, who pointed to the American building programme, and statements made in the United States to justify it. When Secretary of the Navy Swanson said the US Navy must be second to none, and sufficient in strength to protect all American overseas possessions, the Japanese were quick to grasp that any fleet capable of defending the Philippines was also capable of attacking Japan. The Japanese construction ordered in 1933 was designed to offset the new American building, but further American programmes could not be met in a like manner: by the end of 1933, Japan was only 600 tons below her construction limit under the London Treaty. The US was 157,280 tons below her limit.³

1. D/S 500.A15 a3/28½: Memorandum by Hornbeck and Moffatt, 12 February, 1934.

2. FRUS, *ibid.*; FO 371/17158, F 7949/820/23: Snow to FO, 24 November, 1933; F 7313/8202/23: Memorandum by Vivian (Naval Attache, Tokyo), 25 October, 1933.

3. US Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 60, February 1934, p.261.

With no further leeway left in the treaty limits, and popular and naval opinion pressing for a stronger navy to match the perceived American threat, it was not hard to predict that the existing ratios had little chance of continuation. Statements of Japanese naval leaders in 1933 showed that Japanese feelings had gone even beyond the position Japan had adopted in her 1932 proposals at Geneva.¹ Then, Japan had proposed ratios of 11:8 in battleships, 12:10 in heavy cruisers, and equality in other classes. Twelve months later, Admiral Kato had written in the Japanese press, 'We must insist on equality of armaments which is the prerogative of every independent nation'. Even more bluntly, another senior Admiral told the American naval attaché, 'We are going to the 1935 conference with a demand for parity. If our demand is rejected, we shall return home'.²

In Britain, however, eagerness to clutch at any straw to avoid the possibility of confrontation in two separate theatres, Europe and the Far East, led many to seize upon tension between Japan and the Soviet Union³ and memories of the Anglo-Japanese alliance to urge the pursuit of closer Anglo-Japanese relations. As might be expected, the Treasury, seeking as ever to avoid increased defence expenditure, took the lead, a new initiative being called for by Neville Chamberlain in the CID and by Warren Fisher in the Defence Requirements Committee.⁴ They were supported by some members of the services, notably the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who told Hankey that he 'would rather fight the

1. See Chapter 5, pp.

2. FRUS, *ibid.* pp.218-9.

3. See Malcolm Kennedy, Great Britain and the Estrangement of Japan, 1917-1935, pp.285-90 for the Soviet-Japanese war scare of December 1933. Tension along the Manchurian-Soviet border served to support the Japanese Army's claims for funds against the Navy's demands for increased expenditure.

4. CID. 261st meeting, 9 November, 1933.

Americans than anybody else'.¹

Countering the views of the British 'appeasers' of Japan were the rival arguments of advocates of naval expansion, and of advocates of co-operation with the United States. The Japanese threat caused increasing awareness of the need to choose between Japan and the United States in the Pacific. The choice was made difficult partly because neither power was an ardent suitor of Britain, and partly because both powers had interests in the Far East which ultimately conflicted with those of Britain. While Chamberlain and Fisher assumed the pro-Japanese position, the Admiralty steadily adopted the pro-American. This depended in large part upon the views of the First Lord and the First Sea Lord. Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, the First Lord, certainly went out of his way to show that his own views were pro-American. He told the American Ambassador in London, Robert Bingham, that he felt Britain and America 'ought to be able to carry out our naval programmes along lines best suited to our countries, without suspicion, competition or hostility',² and later told Norman Davis that he thought 'co-operation between our two governments in dealing with the Japanese was essential'.³ The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield, produced a massive paper in March, 1934,⁴ which reviewed British 'strategic requirements'. For the first time in any major strategic appreciation in the inter-war period, the United States' position was nowhere mentioned as a standard for British building. Instead of a One-Power standard, the Chatfield Memorandum gave as the standard for British building the combined strength of Japan plus 'the

1. CAB 21/369, file: 'Imperial Defence, General Annual Review, 1933', letter Hankey to Chamberlain enclosing letter from General Montgomery-Massingberd, 30 October, 1933.

2. Roosevelt Papers, Hyde Park, PSF, London Naval Conference File, Bingham to FDR, 8 March, 1934.

3. Roosevelt Papers, loc. cit., Davis to FDR, 23 April, 1934.

4. Memorandum by First Sea Lord, 14 March, 1934, ADM 116/2999.

strongest European naval power'. This was a return to the Two-Power standard first set in 1889, with the remarkable exception that the strongest single power against which the Royal Navy could be measured was entirely omitted from the standard!

The arguments for and against the appeasement of Japan must be seen in the light of the activities of the Defence Requirements Committee, and to assess these it is necessary to go back in time somewhat. The Ten-Year Rule governing the preparedness of the British armed forces was itself thirteen years old in March 1932 when the Far Eastern crisis forced the British Government to reassess its validity.¹ The Treasury, nevertheless, strongly opposed any change in the Rule.² There was no point, Chamberlain argued, in strengthening Far Eastern bases unless Britain was prepared to use them; and 'the fact is that in present circumstances we are no more in a position financially and economically to engage in a major war in the Far East than we are militarily'. The Ten-Year Rule was not to be treated as an exercise in prophecy, but as a 'working hypothesis intended to relieve the Chiefs of Staff from the responsibility of preparing against those contingencies which the Government believe to be either remote or beyond the financial capacity of the country to provide against'.³

Chamberlain lost the battle chiefly because the Foreign Office defected to the side of the services. Simon and Vansittart considered 'with regret' that the assumption of no war for ten years was no longer valid. The Cabinet, meeting the next day, concurred and abolished the

1. C. Thorne, The Limits of Foreign Policy, The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-3 (London, 1972), gives the best account of Western reactions to Japanese policy in China.

2. CID 1087-B, 11 March, also circulated as CP 104(32). The decision was taken at CID 255th Meeting (CAB 2/6), 2 March, 1932, to which the future of the Ten-Year Rule was referred by the full Cabinet (Cabinet 12(35)5, 10 February, 1932).

3. Emphasis in the original.

Ten-Year Rule, although noting 'the very serious financial and economic situation that still obtains'. Moreover, the decision was taken too late to have any impact on the Services' Estimates for 1933, which were presented to Parliament in April 1932. These cut military spending to its lowest level in the inter-war years.

Nevertheless, the fact that the decision to abandon the Ten-Year Rule did not have an immediate impact does not detract from the significance of the decision itself. It was an admission that Britain was weak, and that war would come within ten years. It was therefore an implicit recognition of the need for rearmament; and a recognition that arms control had failed to give Britain sufficient security.

In 1933, the Services sought to capitalize on the advantage this recognition gave them. Their first victory came in April, when the Cabinet took note of the importance of the naval base at Singapore, and yielded to the combined pressure of the Service departments to rectify the weaknesses of the half-completed base. It was agreed that the five-year Singapore defence plan should be speeded up with a view to its full implementation in half that time.¹

The first full challenge of the Services under the new circumstances came with the production of the 1933 annual review of Imperial Defence Policy.² This was prepared during the summer of 1933 by the Chiefs of Staff and by Maurice Hankey in his role as Secretary to the CID. It began by reviewing the failures of the League and 'collective security', and discussed the threats against which Britain should prepare: Japan and Germany, in that order while Germany was still complying with various provisions of the Versailles Treaty. The problem of Japan was essentially

1. CID 1113-B, 12 October, 1933. Circulated as CP 264(33), 10 November, 1933. (CAB 24/244).

2. George G. Peden, British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939, reviews this and subsequent defence reviews at length from the standpoint of the Treasury. See in particular pp.106-21.

a naval one, and naval requirements therefore received most attention. The responsibilities of the Navy were defined as 'firstly, the provision and operation of a main fleet in the Far East ... and secondly, behind the cover of this main fleet, the protection of our sea communications...'. This necessitated the modernization of the battle fleet after 1936, and a seventy-vessel cruiser force; and additionally, deficiencies would have to be remedied in the oil reserves, docking facilities, and munitions stocks.

The Chiefs of Staff review came before the Committee of Imperial Defence in November.¹ After a fruitless debate as to whether relations with Japan could be restored to their former amity, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made a fateful admission: that 'It could hardly be said that the military situation had improved, although, perhaps, the financial situation was not quite so difficult. It seemed to him, therefore, that the centre of gravity had somewhat shifted...' Thus, with Chamberlain's reluctant blessing, the CID recommended that a 'special panel' of permanent officials be formed to 'prepare a programme for meeting our worst deficiencies'. The appointment of the Defence Requirements Committee was confirmed by the Cabinet the next day. This fateful meeting on 9 November marked the beginning of British rearmament. It also marked the beginning of two years of intense debate within the British government, and a desperate search for political alternatives to rearmament, before a full commitment to naval rearmament emerged in Britain.

The Defence Requirements Committee comprised the three Chiefs of Staff, the permanent heads of the Foreign Office and the Treasury, and

1. CAB 2/6, CID 261st meeting, 9 November, 1933.

the Cabinet Secretary as Chairman.¹ The Committee began to meet at the end of November, and faced the critical problem of deciding what priorities to attach to which potential enemies.² The Chiefs of Staff had already made their view clear in the review of Imperial Defence Policy. To the Services, the order of priority was the Far East, Europe and India. The civilian departments were not so sure. Vansittart argued that although Japan posed a greater threat to the Empire in the long run, Japan would not launch an attack unless Great Britain was already engaged in a conflict elsewhere, which would prevent her deploying her full strength against Japan. An effective deterrent in Europe was the best security for the Far East, particularly as the Soviet threat to Japan reduced the danger in that quarter.³

Sir Warren Fisher took Vansittart's argument further. If Germany was the more serious threat, Britain should concentrate her efforts on neutralizing that threat while trying to come to terms with Japan. To do this, Britain would have to demonstrate to Japan her independence from the United States in the Far East, which would necessitate negotiating bilaterally with Japan before the next Naval Conference. If successful, this policy could produce security in the Far East both more rapidly and more cheaply than building up a 70-cruiser fleet. The alternative of relying on the Americans to restrain Japan, was unthinkable to Fisher on the grounds that the Americans were 'totally unreliable'.⁴

1. Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield; Air Chief Marshal Sir Edward Ellington; Field Marshal Sir Edward Montgomery-Massingberd; Sir Warren Fisher (Permanent Secretary to the Treasury); Sir Robert Vansittart (Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office); and Sir Maurice Hankey.

2. The records of the DRC's meetings are filed as CAB 16/109.

3. CAB 16/109, DRC 3rd meeting, 4 December, 1933.

4. CAB 16/109, DRC 12th meeting, 30 January, 1934, memorandum by Sir W. Fisher to the Chiefs of Staff, number DRC 12. See also DRC 9, 12 January, 1934, and DRC 16, 12 February, 1934.

Fisher's policy required that Britain tell the United States that the ratio system was defunct. The United States could construct as many vessels as she liked: Britain would construct her own fleet independently, to her own requirements. Chatfield responded that the Japanese fleet was inexorably linked to American building; the more the US built, the more closely Japan would approach British fleet levels. The existing 5:3 ratio against Japan was essential to British security, and the only way to maintain this was to continue parity with the USA.¹

Vansittart broke the deadlock by insisting that a full discussion of naval policy was outside the competence of the Committee. The Committee confined its report to remedying the 'worst deficiencies' in the services' existing establishment, and did not recommend changes in defence policy. The battle lines drawn in the DRC, however, were to hold for the next two years. Fisher was supported in part by the Army and Air Force out of self-interest, with the 'Europe-first' policy. On the other side was Chatfield, backed quietly by Hankey.² In the middle was Vansittart, realising the greater long-term importance of Germany but equally distrustful of Japan and aware of the need not to break with the United States over the naval issue.

The DRC referred the question of priorities, and thereby of future naval construction, back to the Cabinet. The Admiralty was quite happy to have this future determined in Cabinet, separately from the short-term correction of their immediate deficiencies. Once it became clear that the Treasury's objective was to cut future naval construction, the

1. CAB 16/109, DRC Paper No.6, 12 January, 1934, and DRC 12th meeting, 30 January, 1934.

2. Hankey later wrote to Baldwin, 'To speak quite frankly I am apprehensive of Warren Fisher's influence in this question. I don't think that he is a fit man or that his judgement is at its best. Moreover he has never been sound about the Navy or understood the defence question in the Pacific.' Hankey to Baldwin, 23 August, 1934; Baldwin Papers, Section E5, Vol.134.

usefulness of the DRC to the Admiralty was limited. There existed an alternative channel through which naval policy could be formulated without reference to the Treasury: the planning of the next naval conference.

In January, 1934, Robert Craigie, by now indispensable in disarmament matters, proposed that the Foreign Office and the Admiralty should coordinate their plans for the Naval Conference and submit a joint memorandum to the Cabinet.¹ The Admiralty eagerly undertook to prepare a long statement of its position concerning the Empire's security, naval limitation and fleet strength, to which the Foreign Office would append its comments. This became the Chatfield Memorandum, which put forward the new two-power standard and the demand for seventy cruisers.

This paper was still under preparation when in March 1934 the DRC came to its compromise conclusions. At this point, Vansittart with his intermediate position was crucial in determining the future course of British planning. He argued in the DRC that, contrary to the Treasury's opinion, the naval building programme was outside its terms of reference; but he offered Fisher something in exchange for giving way in the DRC. The Admiralty-Foreign Office plans for the Naval Conference would not be submitted directly to the Cabinet, and the Treasury would be included in the planning process. Consequently, a new Ministerial Committee on the Naval Conference (1935) was established to consider all aspects of the naval question, and to receive the Admiralty-Foreign Office paper.²

1. FO 371/17596, A 1977/1938/45, Memorandum by Craigie, 9 January, 1934 but not circulated until later; CAB 21/404, Foreign Affairs, International Conferences, Suggested Naval Conversations: Hankey to MacDonald, 26 January, 1934; Craigie to Hankey, 27 January, 1934. FO 371/17596: A.1978/1938/45, Chatfield to Vansittart, 23 January, 1934.

2. Hereafter cited by its customary abbreviation, NCM (35). Its records are filed as CAB 29/147 (minutes); /148 (papers); and /149 (Records of Conversations with Other Powers and other Papers).

In the early stages of joint planning for the forthcoming Conference, the Foreign Office was chiefly concerned with the tactical problems of approaching other Powers, ascertaining their views and reconciling them with the positions the Admiralty was busy preparing. This was a diplomatic problem of some complexity, as any approach to one power ran the risk of misinterpretation by other Powers. The initial problem was whom to approach first. America was no longer an adversary power with whom there were serious disagreements that must be settled as a preliminary to any wider agreement. The major threat was now Japan, so that it was logical to attempt to agree with her first. However an approach to either power carried dangers. If the Japanese sensed that an Anglo-American agreement, as in 1930, was imminent, they were likely to adopt an intransigent attitude. Equally if the Americans sensed the revival of an Anglo-Japanese alliance, tacit or overt, they too would adopt an inflexible approach.

The dilemma was resolved for the British by the Americans making the initial approach. At the beginning of March, Norman Davis arrived in London, en route to Sweden on other business, but with instructions - despite public denials of this in Washington - to raise the question of how to proceed on the naval question.¹

Before any talks with the United States or Japan could begin, however, the Chatfield Memorandum was circulated. The demand for a two-power standard which formed its basis was received with shock and anger in the Foreign Office. Craigie minuted that it would make further naval agreement quite impossible.² Chatfield had stated a very strong case, with little attempt to consider the views of the arms controllers. The

1. FO 371/17596, A 2060/1938/45. Record of meeting at Foreign Office 9 February, 1934.

2. FO 371/17596, A 1979/1938/45, Minute by Craigie, 9 March, 1934.

Navy saw the function of the Foreign Office simply: to win acceptance of British naval expansion at the Conference. A new treaty should allow the Admiralty to meet its self-proclaimed two-power standard, both by permitting a larger British fleet and by holding the fleets of other navies to a level which would allow the larger British fleet to meet the Admiralty's requirement.

Chatfield met Vansittart and Craigie on 20 March, 1934, and defended his memorandum as a conservative and minimal presentation of the case.¹ In view of the fears of the Dominions, he argued, it was unthinkable to withdraw the fleet's protection from the Far East, as Fisher wanted. As it was still necessary to be able to face Japan in the Far East, the Navy had to be prepared accordingly.

The problem with Chatfield's position was that his policy required close co-operation with the United States in the Pacific. Britain could not afford to let the United States increase her own fleet vis-a-vis that of Britain, as it would provoke the Japanese to build in reply, and would reduce the British margin over Japan. The Admiralty's proposed building programme would fulfil the Two Power Standard only if the fleets of the other powers were tied to prescribed levels; and Japan would not be tied unless the United States was. The United States, however, could be expected on her past record to oppose much of the Admiralty's programme. The Admiralty was therefore nailing its colours to the mast of a programme which could only work with American concurrence, but which was unacceptable in many of its fundamentals to the Americans.

In April and May, 1934, the British Government came to accept the need for rearmament, against continuing Treasury resistance. The decision was reached separately in the two ill-named Cabinet sub-committees,

1. FO 371/17596, A 2416/1938/45, Minute on a Meeting between the Admiralty and FO representatives, 20 March, 1934.

the Ministerial Committees on Disarmament and on the Naval Conference, which dealt with different aspects of the problem. The Disarmament Committee, considering the report of the Defence Requirements Committee, dealt almost exclusively with the problems of European security, which had been given first priority in the DRC's report. The Naval Conference (35) Committee, considering the Chatfield Memorandum, wrestled with the problems of Far Eastern defence. The European problem required a response in the air and possibly on land; the Far Eastern problem was primarily naval. By dividing up the threats, and the service requirements, in this way, the Treasury's position was weakened and further consideration of comparative priorities avoided. On the Naval Conference Committee, the Admiralty's statement of requirements was hard to challenge whilst it was not in direct competition with the other services and other threats. The Navy's list of demands was presented as a fait accompli in the Chatfield Memorandum, which convincingly met the requirements of the existing political situation in the Far East. For the Navy's demands to be rejected, either the political situation had to be changed by diplomacy, or the Cabinet had to abandon Britain's responsibilities in the Far East. The former was ruled out by the Foreign Office, the latter by the Dominions and in all probability by backbench feeling among the Government's supporters.

In June, 1934, both Ministerial Committees presented interim reports. By May, the Disarmament Committee had come around to accepting the DRC's proposals for air expansion, which made the Royal Air Force the main instrument of British policy in Europe as a deterrent against Germany.¹ Chamberlain sought, unsuccessfully, to challenge the premises

1. The preparation of the DC(M)'s interim report on the DRC's proposals was discussed at the DC(M)(32) 41st to 46th meetings, 3 to 17 May, 1934, CAB 16/110.

of Far Eastern policy again when the Committee reviewed the Far Eastern provisions of the DRC proposals. He submitted a memorandum on the Navy's programme which amounted to a complete reversal of existing policy. It suggested that the plan to send the fleet to Singapore in an emergency be 'deferred', which meant in effect scrapped, and that naval construction would be cut to the extent that no new ships would be laid down in 1935.¹ When the Committee discussed the Far East, however, on 25 June, Chamberlain's thesis was attacked on all sides.²

The Disarmament Committee accepted the need to strengthen Singapore, and refused to rule either for or against naval building. Chamberlain was not particularly worried. He wrote, 'The reactions of my colleagues to my Defence Proposals were as I expected very unfavourable. But I pitched the note on purpose a little high and I don't at present despair of ultimately getting most of what I want'.³

Responsibility for the future naval programme therefore now fell almost entirely upon the Committee on the Naval Conference. Here the Treasury faced an even greater problem in trying to restrain proposed expenditure. The Chatfield Memorandum presented the Navy's requirements in a way which concealed their demands in a cloak of technical detail and discussion of tactics for the Naval Conference. Fisher complained that many members of the NCM(35) Committee actually believed that the Admiralty's construction proposals had already been approved by the DRC, and that they were simply reviewing elaborations upon the

1. CAB 27/511, no.120.

2. DC(M)(32) 50th meeting, 25 June, 1934: CAB 16/110.

3. Neville Chamberlain Papers 18/1/877: letter to Hilda Chamberlain, 1 July, 1934, quoted in David J. Wrench, 'The Influence of Neville Chamberlain on Foreign and Defence Policy, 1932-5', RUSI Journal, Vol.125, No.1, p.52.

DRC's report in order to prepare for the Naval Conference.¹ The Admiralty had succeeded in decoupling its requirements both from those of the other services, and from discussion of broad strategic issues.

The Naval Conference (35) Committee spent only one meeting discussing the political assumptions of the Admiralty's programme before proceeding to the technical details.² Chamberlain found himself isolated once again in advocating this case,³ and being in any case weakened with 'flu at the time, he did not press to any conclusion. Up to now he had sought to propose political solutions for increasing Imperial security as alternatives to defence expenditure. From now on he would use a simpler and more potent weapon against that expenditure, the Treasury axe.

In its technical discussions, the Naval Conference Committee rapidly accepted the Admiralty's plans for construction and expansion.⁴ The Committee then concentrated upon how best to defend the Admiralty's position in the forthcoming negotiations. In doing so, the Committee made de facto decisions on economic and strategic questions which the Treasury had failed to have properly debated.

The British expected Japan to reject the ratio system and the United States to defend it. The Foreign Office advocated, and the Admiralty accepted, the pursuit of a middle course, avoiding alignment with either power.⁵ However, this required clarification of the American and

1. CAB 21/404: Foreign Affairs, International Conferences: Proposed Naval Conversations, 1933-5. Fisher to Hankey, 26 June, 1934, with enclosure, Memorandum by Fisher for Chamberlain, 6 June, 1934.

2. This was the NC(M)35 1st meeting, 16 April, 1934.

3. CAB 29/149, NCM(35)3: Comments by Sir W. Fisher on Memorandum by the Naval Staff (Chatfield Memorandum), 23 April, 1934.

4. The interim report of the NC(M)(35) is CAB 29/148, NCM.12, circulated on 11 June, 1934. The technical discussion of the Chatfield Memorandum took place at NC(M)(35) Meetings Nos. 2,3,4 and 5, (19 and 23 April, 17 and 31 May, 1934).

Japanese positions before the British middle course could be charted. Such a policy was similar in concept to the line taken at the Disarmament Conference over the Franco-German dispute: and it entailed the same risks of alienating both sides. The only time that the risks of non-co-operation with the Americans were discussed was when the Committee examined the Admiralty's objective of seventy cruisers.¹ MacDonald, and Craigie for the Foreign Office, urged that in the interests of agreement Britain should propose a lower figure. The Admiralty were adamant about keeping a target of seventy within ten years, having learnt from the bitter experience of 1929 when they gave way to MacDonald's request that they reduce their requirement from seventy to sixty vessels only to have MacDonald further concede a limit of fifty cruisers under American pressure. Finally, a compromise future of sixty cruisers was agreed if a treaty were to be concluded for a six-year period only, but retaining the figure of seventy as a long-term goal and as an initial bargaining gambit.

The Naval Conference Committee agreed, at the prompting of the Foreign Office, to issue simultaneous invitations for preliminary discussions to Japan and the United States. These were sent out on 18 May; and while this gave the appearance of strict even-handedness, the Foreign Office anticipated the United States arriving first in order to satisfy her renewed requests for co-operation in opposing Japan at the Conference.²

In April, Norman Davis visited London again to see Robert Craigie and Admiral Little, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff.³ Davis announced

1. CAB 29/147, NC(M) (35) 3rd meeting, 23 April, 1934.

2. FO 371/17597, A 3955/1938/45, 25 April, 1934. CAB 21/404, Craigie to Hankey, 3 May, 1934, and exchange of minutes, 11-17 May, 1934. FO 371/17597, A 4517/1938/45, Minute by Craigie, 15 May, 1934. NC(M)(35) 5th Mtg., 17 May, 1934.

3. The British record of this meeting is NC(M)(35).2, CAB 29/148. The American record of these conversations is missing from the State Department's files, but a copy survives in the Davis Papers, Box 9 (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

that the United States would reject any Japanese demand for a higher ratio, whatever Britain's position. Craigie and Little refused to commit themselves, but their statements convinced Davis that the British were more closely aligned with America than they actually were. Admiral Little told Davis that the Navy was opposed to any increase in the Japanese ratio; that Japan already had 'defensive' parity, and that he did not see how any claim to an increase could be justified. Craigie agreed that nothing had happened to increase Japan's defensive requirements, but pointed out that the British Government had made no formal decision. Both sides agreed to decide whether to stand together against Japan 'as soon as possible'.¹

Davis also wished to sound out the Admiralty's requirements for any future treaty. Admiral Little repeated the British view that smaller capital ships were desirable once battleship replacement began. He told Davis that the British sought a 25,000-ton, 12-inch-gun ship, but conceded that 'perhaps they would, if necessary, consent to a 30,000-ton battleship with 14-inch guns'.² On the cruiser question, the British record states that the objective of seventy cruisers was put to the Americans, but the American record, while going into the size and armament of cruisers in great detail, makes no mention of such a proposal. In view of its extremely controversial nature, it seems most unlikely that it could have been raised at the 12 April meeting: certainly when the British raised the question later, Davis was surprised and disappointed at the British demand.

The 12 April meeting concluded with Davis and Craigie agreeing that

1. 'Memorandum of a Conversation between Mr Craigie, Adm. Little, Ambassador Bingham and Mr Norman Davis at Claridge's Hotel, London, 12 April, 1934', Davis Papers, loc. cit., pp.2-3.

2. *ibid.*, pp.4-5.

full consultations should start as soon as possible, which meant as soon as the British Cabinet reached a decision. This took longer than Davis anticipated because of the protracted debates in the Disarmament and Naval Conference Committees. Ambassador Bingham, more in touch with the proceedings in London, had to write to Davis and Hull telling them not to be impatient; eventually the British would realize the impossibility of dealing satisfactorily with both Japan and the Europeans and would turn up in Washington 'to ring our door bell, hat in hand'.¹

Hull's and Davis' aim was straightforward: facing only one potential enemy, they sought to build a defensive negotiating position which would both protect the ratio system and, if that proved impossible, cast the blame for its collapse squarely upon Japan. For this they needed British support; without it, they risked not only obloquy for causing the failure of the Conference but also increased vulnerability in the Far East, facing a hostile Japan without the tacit support of the other western powers. The American position was therefore entirely incompatible with the British quest for the middle ground, which difference was to lead to considerable tension and bitterness.

The British invitation was quickly accepted by the United States,² and Davis and two technical advisers proceeded to London in mid-July from Geneva, where he had attended the final full session of the Disarmament Conference - participating in what Bingham called 'the completion of funeral arrangements for an attempted European disarmament convention'.³

Davis spent a month in London, from 18 June to 19 July, during which

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1. D/S 793.94/6710, letter, Bingham to Hull, 7 May, 1934.
 2. D/S 500.A15 a5/61, Hull to Bingham, 24 May, 1934.
 3. FRUS, 1934/i, pp.65-7, D/S 500.A15 a4 General Committee/906, Bingham to Hull, 17 May, 1934.

period all the old Anglo-American antagonism came to the fore, as though the strategic balance of the 1920s had not altered. During the lengthy delay before the opening of the talks, the State Department had become increasingly impatient with the British, and suspicious that their hankering after Anglo-Japanese cooperation in the Far East would cause them to make concessions to Japan behind America's back. Stanley Hornbeck, the head of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, argued that, 'There is ... no reason why we should discuss or enter into any agreement by ... which Japan would, with our assent, become relatively stronger and we become relatively weaker in naval armament'. The United States should refuse to discuss modifications in the ratios, and if the conference was cancelled as a result, 'we could, it is believed, view that development with equanimity. We could not be subject to any military attack or formidable diplomatic assault because of it'.¹

Norman Davis, more Anglophile in outlook and committed to the principle of arms control by international agreement, was more eager for agreement.² Davis' problem was that his mandate to negotiate was indeed very restricted. Not only was the ratio not to be altered, but the President and his State Department advisers appear simply not to have considered the likely British requirements. Roosevelt, searching for a 'simple platform' that would demonstrate domestically and internationally his desire for disarmament, proposed that the US pursue a reduction in overall naval armaments of between a quarter and a fifth. If this was not possible, the United States should insist that the present Treaty

1. FRUS, 1934/i, pp.230-2, D/S 500.A15 a5/45½, Memorandum, Hornbeck to Hull, 31 March, 1934. Hornbeck's position, which was shared by others in the State Department, was frequently reiterated in further memoranda: e.g. D/S 500.A15 a5/159, 24 May, 1934.

2. FRUS, 1934/i, pp.245-6, D/S 500.A15 a5/74, Davis to Hull, 2 June, 1934.

strengths be held and in no way increased.¹ Such a policy reflects an extraordinary failure to consider concern for their security both in Europe and the Far East. This may be attributed to the fact that in the State Department, the talks were handled almost entirely by Hornbeck's Far Eastern bureau, with no balancing input from the Division of Western European Affairs. But while the occasional telegrams from Davis in Geneva and Bingham in London put the case for sympathy and co-operation with the British, there was a quite astonishing omission: neither Bingham nor Davis, like the State Department, ever considered that the British might put forward claims to a larger fleet. Attention was so focussed on Japan that no-one appreciated that the logical policy for the British, in the face of increased threats in European and Far Eastern waters, was to ask for additional cruisers and destroyers.

Formal conversations began on 18 June. The British listened politely while Davis put forward his ideas about maintaining the Treaty ratios and tonnages, with possibly a reduction in the latter.² Then on 20 June, the First Lord of the Admiralty put forward the Navy's requirements, as approved by the Ministerial Committee. Britain wanted to begin battleship replacement immediately upon the expiry of the existing treaty, substituting the smaller 25,000-ton design for her existing battle fleet. She wanted to put a ban upon the construction of all large cruisers, and to allow construction only below 7,000 tons and with the smaller gun. The Royal Navy, moreover, wanted seventy vessels in that category, including the ten over-age vessels. If the powers'

1. FRUS, 1934/i, pp.237-8, D/S 500.A15 a5/58, Memorandum by Phillips (under-Secretary of State) of conversation with Roosevelt, 24 May, 1934.

2. FRUS, 1934/i, D/S 500.A15 a5/94, Bingham to Hull, 18 June, 1934. Records of these conversations were additionally kept by Adm. Little, kept in the US Navy Department, Operational Archives, General Board records, series VIII: 'Records of London Conversations 18 June - 19 July, 1934'. The British records are filed as NC (USA) Meeting minutes, CAB 29/149, copies in FO 371/17598.

submarine fleet were kept at existing treaty levels, they wanted another 50,000 tons of destroyers. Otherwise, the additional vessels would not involve an increase in the existing tonnage levels, which would remain the same but be comprised of larger numbers of smaller ships.¹

The American delegates were 'greatly surprised and shocked', and said so.² Davis reported to Washington that the British position was 'so unacceptable from our point of view as a basis for a treaty, that we have all come to the conclusion after full consideration that we should tell MacDonald frankly that the possibility of agreement ... is so remote, that we feel that it would serve no useful purpose to continue further with the discussions on such a basis'.³

Davis told the Prime Minister this on 27 June, by when he had strengthened his position by obtaining a public message from President Roosevelt, pleading that 'the difficult situation of modern civilisation throughout the world demands for the social and economic good of human beings a reduction in armaments and not an increase', and calling for 'a renewal of the Washington and London Treaties for at least ten years on the basis of a 20% reduction to be accomplished during that ten year period'.⁴

The surprise of the Americans at the British proposals was matched only by that of the British at the American reaction.⁵ The British were also shocked that Davis had no more complete or detailed plan to present in return for the British figures; Davis replied that there was no

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1. FRUS, 1934/i, D/S 500.A15 a4/105, Bingham to Hull, 22 June, 1934.
 2. NC(USA) 4th meeting, 27 June, 1934: CAB 29/149.
 3. FRUS, 1934/i, D/S 500.A15 a4/109, Davis to Hull, 25 June, 1934.
 4. FRUS, *ibid.*, D/S 500.A15 a5/111, Roosevelt to Davis, 26 June, 1934.
 5. FO 371/17598, A 5184/1938/45, Memorandum by Craigie, 23 June, 1934: Minutes by Vansittart, Craigie, Sir J. Simon.

detailed programme as the United States sought only to maintain a status quo.¹ The American refusal to consider the British requirements as a basis for negotiations seemed to the British utterly illogical.² Yet in the light of hindsight, there is a very clear logic in the American position. Changes in the treaty structure were likely to work to the disadvantage of the Americans, who were therefore prepared to sacrifice the treaties altogether rather than accept a 'second-best' arrangement. Unlike the British, they were confident of their ability to outbuild the Japanese in an unrestricted building race. They held firm, therefore, on the 5:3 ratio, knowing that, if Japan refused to continue it, Japan would be blamed for the Treaty's collapse, and the United States could build against Japan with a clear domestic political conscience. To admit the reasonableness of British increases would call the whole ratio structure into question, and open the door to Japanese demands. Only if the Japanese (or somebody else) renounced the existing treaty structure could the United States admit the British claims to higher figures, for then the Americans would find themselves building beyond the Treaty limits, with their construction squarely pegged upon Japanese building.

The Anglo-American talks had rapidly come to a standstill.³ MacDonald went to Canada on 1 July on a holiday enforced by his doctors, leaving both sides holding resolutely to their positions. Norman Davis left for the United States on 19 July, to the relief of the British, with a statement that the talks would continue once Japanese delegates had

1. NC(USA) 4th meeting, *ibid.* See also Simon to Baldwin, 27 June, 1934 (copies to Hankey and Eyres-Monsell), CAB 21/404; printed in DBFP, 2nd series, XIII, No.1, note 13 (p.5).

2. FO 371/17598, A 5314/1938/45: Memorandum by Little, 28 June, 1934.

3. A good summary of the talks is given in DBFP, *op. cit.*, No.1: A5167/1938/45, Craigie to Osborne (Washington, acting Charge d'Affaires), 20 July, 1934.

arrived.⁹² Meanwhile, British attention became focussed on Europe.

The late spring and summer of 1934 saw a series of events calculated to bring Germany to the forefront of British minds: the expansion of the German armed forces: the purge of the SA; the end of the Disarmament Conference; and then the Austrian crisis. In reaction to these, France floated the idea for an 'Eastern Locarno' in June, while simultaneously wooing the Soviet Union, which now supported French demands for 'security before disarmament'. Moreover, evidence accumulated that Germany was violating the naval provisions of the Versailles Treaty. The 1934 German naval budget showed a 90% increase in 'non-recurrent' expenditure, and repeated German denials did not quieten fears that this was destined for pocket battleship and submarine construction.² France responded to the German naval budget by announcing the laying down of another Dunkerque-class ship of 26,000 tons; and on 11 June, Italy replied by announcing her intention of building two 35,000-ton ships - which would bring the Italian capital ship fleet up to the maximum size permitted under the Washington Treaty, and threatened the British goal of reducing the size of capital ships.

With the threat of a return to unrestrained competition in the Mediterranean, Britain tried first to dissuade the Italians from their announced building, then, accepting the impossibility of this, to persuade the French not to reply with 35,000-ton capital ships of their own.³ British policy with regard to the European naval balance turned out, however, to take a surprisingly different course from that which she took

1. The Times, 17 July, 1934. Also FRUS, 1934/i, D/S 500.A15 a5/70, Grew to Hull, 31 May, 1934 (pp.242-3).

2. DBFP, Nos. 388/9.

3. FO 371/17582, A 4848/198/45 and A 5042/198/45: Drummond (Rome) to Simon, 13 and 21 June, 1934.

with regard to the 'High Seas' balance in 1934. Instead of trying to pursue a middle course, as she did between Japan and the United States, Britain rapidly adopted a pro-French alignment.

The case for Anglo-French agreement as a route to a European naval settlement was made by Robert Craigie in memoranda submitted in the summer of 1934.¹ Faced with an Anglo-French accord, Craigie believed the Italians and Germans would fall into line; and France was certainly a power with which the chances of agreement looked high. Like the United States, she was anxious to preserve the naval status quo; unlike the United States, though, she was strongly concerned with the changing European balance, which she viewed with even more misgiving than did Britain. In 1934 that balance was still favourable to France. Her total fleet, built or building, displaced about 700,000 tons including 'over-age' tonnage, which compared reasonably well with the 850,000-ton 'ideal' level set by the post-war Statut Naval. This figure gave an edge of some 175,000 tons over Italy, while Germany's fleet was limited by the Versailles Treaty to 108,000 tons in total.² Consequently France had, by a narrow margin, her own European 'two-power standard' of superiority over Italy and Germany combined. The double threat in 1934, that Germany might evade or denounce the Versailles provisions and that Italy might try to close the gap between her and France, gave France good reason to try to reach a new naval agreement. She would not reduce her fleet, but she would be glad to limit her future construction if she could keep her Continental superiority.

Anglo-French and Anglo-Italian talks were planned for the summer

1. FO 371/17597, A 4537/1938/45, 4 May, 1934 and FO 371/17598, A 5511/1938/45, 5 July, 1934.

2. Figures from the annual British Government Command Papers, 'Fleets Statistics'.

of 1934 on the same basis as the American and Japanese negotiations, with a show of even-handedness on the British side. Only the French talks, with M. Pietri, the new Minister of Marine, were encouraged.¹ France was prepared to accept the suggested British qualitative limits on Capital Ships and cruisers, subject to their universal acceptance. She would consider - and here was a real change in the French position - a reduction in her submarine fleet, dependent upon the existing European balance being maintained, to 80,000 tons, and below this level if she could be compensated in other categories. France had no desire to alter the existing ratios, her existing under-age total of 640,000 tons being sufficient if Italy remained inferior to France and if Germany kept broadly at her existing level. Pietri nevertheless indicated that he was prepared to be flexible. Some increases in the German fleet might be acceptable, France would reserve judgement upon a British suggestion that Germany might be allowed to expand its fleet to 178,000 tons if she agreed to respect the new limit. Moreover, if the British approached the Germans to sound out their intentions, the French might object officially, but M. Pietri would privately support the approach.

In contrast, the Italians refused to discuss their newly-announced vessels or their future plans, and firmly adhered to the old formula of parity with the strongest Continental naval power. The two proposed Italian battleships, the Vittorio Veneto and the Littorio, were laid down on 28 October, the anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome.

In the spring of 1934, the Japanese repeatedly insisted that they were not yet ready to discuss technical questions. On 31 May they accepted the British invitation to preliminary talks, but asked that the subject of such talks be limited to the time, place and procedure of

1. The Anglo-French conversations are recorded in CAB 29/149, Anglo-French Meetings: NC(F) 1st meeting, 9 July, 1934; 2nd and 3rd meetings, 10 July; 4th meeting, 11th July, 1934.

the eventual Conference.¹ It was later stated that the Japanese representatives would not arrive until the beginning of October, to give more time for preparation, and that they would then be able to discuss all aspects of the naval question.² In the meantime, the Naval General Staff sent Captain Shosuke Shimomura to Washington and London at the beginning of July to discuss 'the issues that were likely to arise at the Conference'.³

Shimomura gave the Western Powers their first concrete indication of the Japanese Navy's attitude, and confirmed their worst fears. Referring to the wave of assassinations that had followed the 1930 Treaty, Shimomura told the U.S. Naval Attaché in Tokyo that 'no Japanese delegates who signed a treaty agreeing to the present ratio could return to Japan to live and that no government which had so agreed could survive'. It would be best not to hold a Conference if the United States insisted on maintaining the existing ratios; but he held out hope that if Japan were conceded 'the right to build what she feels is necessary', it was possible that Japan would be satisfied with her existing total tonnage, subject to certain adjustments within that tonnage.⁴

Shimomura's attitude confirmed the suspicion that the Japanese considered their naval balance against the United States as being the only important naval problem as far as they were concerned. The Japanese ignored the whole question of the European balance and British strength;

1. FRUS, 1934/i, D/S 500.A15 a5/72, Bingham to Hull, 31 May, 1934; ibid., D/S 500.A15 a5/70, Grew to Hull, 31 May, 1934 (pp.242-3).

2. FRUS, ibid., D/S 500.A15 a5/133, Bingham to Hull, 5 July, 1934; FO 371/17598, A 5385/1938/45, Minute by Craigie, 2 July, 1934.

3. Naval Attaché report No. 161 (Japan), from Capt. Fred Rogers, USN, 3 July, 1934; Davis Papers, Box 36. Also FRUS ibid., D/S 500.A15 a5/107, Grew to Hull, 22 June, 1934 (pp.207-1).

4. Attaché report No. 161, ibid.

Shimomura was reported as discussing Britain with the explanation that 'the British Empire is already an old man'.¹

Hopes that a more moderate line could eventually triumph over the Fleet, or big-navy, faction in Japan, faded in June when the Saito government fell through a financial scandal. The new government was headed by a retired Admiral, Okada, whom the British Ambassador described as 'unyielding'.² The previous Foreign Minister, Hirota, stayed on in the new government, but the Foreign Ministry could no longer control Japanese naval policy.

In the Navy, the growing power of the extremist group was shown in June 1934 when a petition was addressed to the Navy Minister and to the Chief of the Naval General Staff, Prince Fuchimi, signed by all officers of the rank of Captain or above. This appealed for the abrogation of the Washington Treaty and for 'strong unified measures' to be taken to establish the principle of Japanese equality and independence of action; and further called for a Cabinet which would command 'the whole-hearted confidence of the entire nation'. This extraordinary demand was submitted 'in the fear that ... the younger officers might take more hasty and less considered action'.³

Japanese policy for the Conference was determined by the Supreme War Council in August and early September, and became known to the US State Department by the time it was submitted to the Throne for approval on 7 September. Rogers, the US Naval Attaché, reported that the decision had been made to abrogate the Washington Treaty before the end of the year, and to claim the right to equality in armaments. On the other hand,

1. FRUS, *ibid.*, p.271.

2. FO 371/18181, F 4798/373/28, Clive to Simon, 5 July, 1934.

3. Letter, Grew to Hull, 5 July, 1934: Tokyo despatch No. 883, 'Preliminary Naval Conversations'. Copy in Davis Papers, Box 35, though missing from State Department files.

he believed the Japanese to be willing to enter into a new treaty, 'provided Japan's just claims are recognised'. However, she would insist on the adoption of global tonnage limitations for any quantitative limitation treaty.¹

In Western capitals, the months of August and September saw slower progress on the evolution of naval positions. In Washington, Norman Davis still felt complete incomprehension at the attitude the British had revealed in June. He wrote to Atherton that he believed that when the British 'think the matter over a little more and take into consideration the present attitude of the Japanese, they will be forced to the conclusion' that cooperation with the United States to extend the existing treaties was their best policy.²

The State Department, meanwhile carefully assessed the implications of Britain's position at the June conversations in London. This time the analysis was undertaken in the Division of Western European Affairs, where a quite different perspective could be applied from the obsessive concentration on Japan prevalent in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs. The detailed British figures, forwarded by Craigie in July, were shown 'not to be compatible with the conception and practice of the limitation and reduction of naval armaments by international agreement'. Nevertheless the report did point out for the first time that America 'cannot properly presume to determine British fleet requirements', particularly in view of the continuing Franco-Italian naval rivalry. If increases were unavoidable, the State Department concluded, it was better for the United States that the naval limitation system should end, leaving America

1. FRUS, 1934/1, D/S 500.A15 a5/200: Naval Attaché report No. 219 (Tokyo), 7 September, 1934.

2. Davis Papers, Box 2: Davis to Atherton, 12 September, 1934.

free to build as she wished.¹

In London, the end of the preliminary conversations, with their somewhat unexpected outcome, revived the debate over naval policy within the British Government. The increased tension in Europe that caused the Foreign Office to favour increased co-operation with the French, and the Admiralty to press more strongly for rearmament, had a quite different effect on the Treasury. To Chamberlain and Fisher, increased dangers could be dealt with simply: by refusing to face them. The time was ripe to make another attempt to get Japan removed from the 'enemies list'.

In June Chamberlain resorted to his most powerful weapon, the Treasury axe. On 20 June, he presented a financial review of the DRC proposals which amounted to a Treasury veto of the policy of defence on two fronts.² Chamberlain claimed that '...to put it bluntly, we are presented with proposals impossible to carry out... We must postpone the idea of sending out to the Far East a fleet of capital ships capable of containing the Japanese fleet or meeting it in battle. By the adoption of this course we can materially reduce the heavy and increasing ship-building programme of the ensuing five years...'. Chamberlain then detailed the reductions he insisted upon. The Admiralty's deficiency programme, for Singapore and the modernization of the battle fleet, would be cut from £21.1 millions to £13 millions. The new construction programme would be cut from £67 millions to £55.5 millions. This latter cut was more serious than it appeared at first sight. Because of the desperate need for economy at the height of the depression, the construction

1. Craigie to Atherton, 26 July, 1934, enclosure: 'Note on Cruiser Tonnage'. FRUS 1934/i, pp.299-303; D/S 500.A15 a5/160; copy in Davis Papers, Box 35, with annotations by Davis. Memorandum by Noel. H. Field, Division of Western European Affairs, Department of State, 'Analysis of the "Note on Cruiser Tonnage" enclosed with Craigie's personal Communication to Atherton of 26 July, 1934', 25 September, 1934. Davis Papers, Box 35.

2. CAB 16/111, DC(M) (32),120: Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 20 June, 1934.

programmes for the financial years 1932/3 and 1933/4 had been delayed, so that the navy was already committed to spending £11.9 millions in 1935/6 and £9.8 millions in 1936/7 merely to complete existing programmes. The Treasury's total of £55.5 millions over the five years of the plan, or a little over £11 millions per annum, would therefore not allow any new construction during those two years! The Admiralty would, therefore, be unable to meet its target of three new cruisers laid down per year, and its plans for a 70-cruiser fleet would be dealt a serious blow.

At the meetings of the Disarmament Committee on 25 and 26 June, Chamberlain argued the impossibility of meeting the Japanese threat.¹ It would take four years - until 1938 - for a British deterrent to become effective. On the other hand, such a policy, combined with a refusal to grant Japan her desires at the Naval Conference, would cause Japan to expand her own fleet after 1936. By 1939, then, Japanese building would be able to neutralize the British deterrent, so that Britain would end up in no better position to face the Japanese threat in 1939 than in 1934. On the other hand, if the reconciliation was effected, there was no need for the deterrent in any case.

Chamberlain was supported by MacDonald and Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, for quite different reasons. MacDonald had over-ruled the Admiralty's demand for seventy cruisers in 1930 on the grounds that it would destroy any chance of agreement with the Americans. The same argument applied with equal force now. Hoare feared the threat of a German 'knock-out blow' from the air more than any other danger, and felt that expenditure should be concentrated on the RAF. Moreover, he felt, it would be easier to 'sell' expenditure on the Air Force than on the Navy.

The Chancellor's position was the critical one, however. He refused

1. CAB 16/110: DC(M) (32) Meetings No. 50 and 51.

to consider funding the full naval programme; and political and strategic arguments could not detract from his financial argument. To meet Chamberlain half-way, Baldwin proposed a compromise at the next meeting.¹ Up to now, Baldwin had argued that it was necessary to reinforce British diplomacy with a military deterrent when dealing with Japan, and to preserve a balance between the three services. On the other hand, he recognized that opinion in Parliament and the country was chiefly concerned about the threat from the German air force. As the RAF's expansion was relatively uncontroversial, he proposed that this should be agreed to quickly and implemented as soon as possible. On the other hand, to avoid encouraging Japan in the belief that Britain was quitting the Far East, the acceptance in principle of the expansion of the other services was necessary; but these programmes should be spread over a longer period of time if it proved impossible to finance them over five years.

Chamberlain seized upon this opportunity. Most ministers quickly fell in line with Baldwin's suggestion, if only because they could see no other way out. A three-man sub-committee was appointed to draw up the Air Force programme,² while the Ministerial Committee looked further at the priorities of the other two services. On 17 July, Chamberlain claimed that he had no wish to argue with the DRC's recommendations for the army: he merely wished to extend the period over which they were implemented. Hailsham, the War Minister, gave in and accepted a 50% cut in the army's funding for the deficiency programme, believing he could do no better.³ This isolated the Admiralty, and Chamberlain pressed

1. DC(M) (32) 52nd meeting, 2 July, 1934. See also Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p.754.

2. This reported on 11 July: DC(M) (32).123, Memorandum by Baldwin, which was discussed at DC(M) (32) 53rd meeting, 12 July, and approved by Cabinet on 18 July (Cabinet 29(34)3)

3. DC(M) (32) 54th meeting, 17 July, 1934.

home his attack once again. Rather than accept the increasingly likely possibility that the construction programme be cut back, the Admiralty resorted to tactics it had used earlier in the DRC. It withdrew its plans, putting off a decision upon them for a year, but thereby keeping its position intact to be fought for another day, as it had done when the construction requirements were appended without comments to the first DRC report.¹ At the next meeting of the Disarmament Committee, Chamberlain accepted the deferral of decisions on the Navy's construction programme, and went a stage further: he proposed that the Navy's deficiency programme also be withdrawn for the current year, and surprisingly Eyres-Monsell agreed.² The 1935/6 naval estimates, therefore, were formulated according to existing plans, and included no funds for modernization, replenishment of reserves, or for construction beyond the existing regular programme.

The Admiralty's rationale for withdrawing its construction programme was simple. It calculated that the Japanese would show themselves, during the forthcoming negotiations, to be intransigent and threatening, and that its case would then carry the day. Why Eyres-Monsell also agreed to withdrawing the Navy's deficiency programme seems, however, incomprehensible. Chamberlain offered the Navy 60% of the DRC's recommendations for remedying its worst deficiencies: £13 millions, which could go some way towards meeting the Japanese threat by improving facilities and oil reserves at Singapore and the way-stations along the route to the Far East. Yet this was turned down, in what seems very much like a fit of pique: and as a result, one cannot help but question the credibility of the Admiralty's position. If it were truly concerned about the Japanese menace, it would have leapt at the chance of spending £13 millions to

1. DC(M) (32).120, Memorandum by Eyres-Monsell, 18 July, 1934.

2. DC(M) (32) 55th meeting, 24 July, 1934.

rectify the worst deficiencies.

The Treasury fully understood the purpose of the Admiralty's tactical withdrawal, and determined to press home its temporary advantage before the Japanese arrived and proved the Admiralty right. At the end of July, the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss gave support to those who feared Germany as the primary threat; and on 3 August, Warren Fisher telephoned the Cabinet Office to urge that the autumn talks with the Japanese be postponed, to give Ministers time to reconsider their policy after the summer holiday. Commander Clarke, the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet to whom Fisher spoke, found the suggestion 'extraordinary', in which he was supported by Chatfield, Craigie, Vansittart, Simon and Hankey.¹ Having spent so much time and effort in reaching the present compromise position, nobody wanted to fight the issues out once again after the August holidays. The Treasury needed some new development in order to re-open the Far Eastern question.

The pretext that Chamberlain seized upon to re-open the question was a dispatch from Sir Robert Clive, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, which reported in passing a comment by Foreign Minister Hirota, made a month beforehand, to the effect that Japan 'had no aggressive designs and would be ready to sign non-aggression pacts with Britain and America'.² Chamberlain saw a copy of this dispatch on 13 August, by which time he was Acting Prime Minister in the absence abroad of both MacDonald and Baldwin.³ He asked Vansittart why such a non-aggression pact with Japan

1. CAB 21/404, Registered file: Minute by Clarke, 4 August, 1934; Chatfield to Hankey, 4 August; Clarke to Craigie, Hankey to Chatfield, 8 August. FO 371/17599, A 6474/1938/45, Minutes by Craigie and Vansittart, 8 August, 1934.

2. FO 371/17583, F 4798/373/28, Clive to Simon, 5 July, 1934 (received 7 August, 1934).

3. From 8 August to 22 September.

was not pursued,¹ and Vansittart immediately set the Foreign Office to consider the idea.

After two weeks, the Foreign Office's arguments were summed up by the head of the Far Eastern Department, in a minute of 28 August. Such a pact would offend the United States, China, the Soviet Union, and possibly the Dutch. It would infuriate the League of Nations Union: it would risk a boycott of British goods in China; and the Dominions would be unlikely to approve of it. Furthermore, it would be wrong to conclude a pact without including specific guarantees to China, and it was most unlikely that Japan would ever agree to such a clause. A pact might be seen by Japan as a sign of Western weakness and acquiescence in her expansionist designs. Furthermore, in view of Japanese behaviour in recent years, any treaty might be regarded in Tokyo as being only a temporary and expendable indication of goodwill, which would guarantee nothing.² The only civil servant who supported the idea was, rather surprisingly, Craigie. He saw such a pact not as a means of avoiding defence preparation against Japan, but as a way of saving the naval limitation structure. A pact could be 'political camouflage' which might make it possible for Japan to accept the continuation of naval limitation in some form.³

During the discussion of a Japanese pact, Sir John Simon, who on the Naval Conference Committee had advocated the elusive middle course

1. No written record of this suggestion from Chamberlain is present in the Foreign Office records. Vansittart's minute in reply is in FO 371/17599, A 7695/1938/45, 25 August, 1934, and mention of the Chancellor's original enquiry on this subject is made in his later memorandum of 1 September, ((135) below).

2. The Orde memorandum, and all other minutes on the subject, are under the jacket A 7695/1938/45 (FO 371/17599).

3. Craigie's memorandum is published in DBFP, II/XIII, pp.17-18.

between the United States and Japan, suggested that the principle of 'equality of status', which had been ineffectively applied as a palliative to Germany, might be equally applicable to the Japanese ratio problem. If Japan was conceded 'equality of status' as her right in naval affairs, might she not make a 'voluntary' declaration, on a unilateral but negotiated basis, of limits that she would accept for her fleet,¹ Such an objective suited the Foreign Office's 'middle course' between the Admiralty and the Treasury between building against Japan and conceding her what she wanted in the Far East.

The method of 'voluntary declarations' of building programmes had been used by Craigie in 1930-31 in his attempt to resolve the Franco-Italian dispute over parity. Craigie now took the idea up with enthusiasm once again. An important precondition was necessary, though: it had to be the 'moderates' who were determining Japanese naval policy, which to Craigie meant people seeking a higher ratio solely as a matter of prestige. If the 'extremists' were predominant at the time of the Conference, then neither the 'voluntary declaration' nor any other formula for confusing the public would satisfy the Japanese. The problem was that nobody knew for certain which element was predominant in Tokyo.

Up to now, the case for close co-operation with the United States had not been effectively argued. At the beginning of September this gap was filled by an unsolicited memorandum from Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian. Lothian, a former junior minister and publisher of the influential Round Table, was a close friend of Norman Davis as well as of Baldwin and other British ministers.

Lothian saw Anglo-American co-operation as the only deterrent against Japanese aggression.² He felt that 'If....the Japanese refuse to be

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.8, *ibid*.

2. DBFP, op.cit., No.18: 'Memorandum by Lord Lothian on the Anglo-American Naval Problems.' FO 371/17599, A 7185/1938/45; not dated, forwarded to the Foreign Office by Simon on 6 September.

satisfied with their present ratio or something like it Great Britain and USA ought to make it clear that they will build two ships to one against her. If that is made clear there will probably be no difficulty about the ratio,' If Britain and the US could act in concert against Japan in the Far East, it would be easy to reconcile the two other outstanding Anglo-American naval questions - 'parity' and belligerent rights. The first should be dealt with as in 1930: by giving a larger number of small cruisers to Britain and a smaller number of large cruisers to the United States. The second might be solved, Lothian felt, if agreement could be reached with the United States guaranteeing freedom of sea trade except where an embargo or blockade would be declared by agreement against an aggressor state found to be violating the Kellogg Pact or the League's Covenant

Lothian's paper, combined with an article in the Round Table enlarging on his ideas,¹ served, in Craigie's words, to 'bring out the following question: are we going to steer for the kind of Anglo-American co-operation which Lord Lothian outlines, or are we going to line up with Japan (in other words 'throw up the sponge' in the Far East) and so make further Anglo-American co-operation impossible?'² These were not the only options, of course. Britain could pursue the 'middle course' or be firm in all directions. But before the Foreign Office could sell such a policy, the first two options would have to be explored.

Vansittart minuted that Lothian himself should make the approaches in Washington. Lothian went there in October to test the reaction to his suggestion. In a lengthy conversation with Roosevelt he tried to explain Britain's dilemma to the President, and found to his dismay that Roosevelt was neither sympathetic nor receptive to his ideas for

1. Round Table No. 96, September 1934, pp.693-716.

2. FO 371/17599, A 7186/1938/45, Minutes by FO on Lord Lothian's memorandum.

co-operation.¹ As far as the Foreign Office was concerned, this possibility was therefore ruled out.

The approach to Japan was more formal. At Chamberlain's urging, the Cabinet instructed Sir Robert Clive to raise with Hirota his earlier remark about non-aggression pacts, and Chamberlain and Simon were requested to report back to Cabinet.²

Clive's approach to Hirota turned out to be as fruitless as Lothian's to Roosevelt. The Japanese Foreign Minister was full of effusive goodwill but persistently vague.³ Clive concluded he would be happy to see the end of naval limitation, and would like a bilateral agreement with Britain only after the breakdown of the naval talks, in order to smooth Japan's diplomatic path. This was not what the Foreign Office wanted: for it, Anglo-Japanese co-operation would be valuable chiefly as a way of bringing about naval restriction, and would lose its utility if naval limitation had already gone by the board.

Reflecting the lack of response from Tokyo, and possibly also the August 'Mukden Incident',⁴ the memorandum which Chamberlain and Simon prepared for the cabinet showed a considerable degree of scepticism about Japanese intentions which marked a partial climb-down by Chamberlain.⁵ An agreement with Japan might be of use 'as a lever for reducing Japan's naval programme'; but it would have to contain provisions for safeguarding China from further Japanese aggression. If at all possible,

1. Memorandum of 11 October, 1934, Lothian Papers, File 6; printed in DBFP, op.cit., No.27 (copy sent by Sir R. Lindsay to Sir R. Vansittart, 12 October, 1934).

2. Cabinet 32(34).4, 25 September, 1934.

3. FO 371/18184, F 5846 and F 5996/591/23, Clive to Simon, 29 September and 5 October, 1934.

4. An attack by Japanese soldiers on the British Vice-Consul in that city on 19 August, 1934.

5. CP 223(34), 16 October, 1934; printed in DBFP, op.cit., No.29; copy in FO 371/18185, F 6241/591/23.

America should be brought into the agreement to prevent a naval race in the Pacific. Only when it was certain that America would reject a pact should Britain go ahead with a bilateral agreement with Japan.

The Simon-Chamberlain memorandum marks Chamberlain's retreat from the position of advocating a political agreement with Japan irrespective of the naval balance, the extreme 'pro-Japanese' position. Chamberlain had not been defeated, but he was forced to make a tactical withdrawal. The paper said nothing about the British position for the impending naval talks, which the Treasury had never accepted, and it held open the possibility of a bilateral pact with Japan should agreement not be reached on naval limitation. Chamberlain had effectively held to the core of his position, that Britain had to avoid a break with Japan at all costs. Chamberlain foresaw that an Anglo-American combination against Japan would make her Germany's ally against Great Britain. This would not only jeopardise the Empire's security, but would also give the Admiralty the justification for the most extreme demands.

With the extreme pro-Japanese and pro-American positions ruled out, Britain started upon the next round of naval negotiations. On 16 October, both the American and Japanese delegations arrived, on different ships, from the United States. Both delegations included senior naval officers known for their 'hard-line' views: Admiral Standley, the Chief of Naval Operations, for the US, and Rear-Admiral Yamamoto of the Japanese Naval Staff.¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that the British viewed the forthcoming talks with considerable apprehension. Their fears were summed up in a joint Foreign Office-Admiralty memorandum, drafted by

1. British knowledge of Yamamoto was limited to the hostile reports of the Naval Attaché in Tokyo, Captain Vivian: see DBFP, 2/XIII, No.16, Attaché report Tokyo No.6, 5 September, 1934. For the US reactions to Yamamoto, see FRUS, 1934/1, p.307, Grew to Hull, 13 September, 1934. The restrictions on the US delegates' freedom of manoeuvre are illustrated in Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, p.294.

Craigie and Admiral Little,¹ which was submitted to the Ministerial Committee on the Naval Conference on 16 October.² The paper's recommendations were tentative and conditional, given the lack of accurate information on the Japanese position. It was anticipated, though, that the Japanese would initially take an extreme line, reflecting the attitude of her navy. Yet the Ministerial Committee did not believe that even the Japanese navy wanted parity with Great Britain. Japan's desire for friendship with Britain would make it unlikely. Geography made it unnecessary. Britain would never concentrate her entire naval force in the Pacific; the Japanese would accept, in Chatfield's words, that 'the problem of security was not the same for both parties'.

The problem was that the same geographical reality did not limit the United States. As America could easily concentrate her entire fleet in the Pacific, Japan could claim parity with the United States on the grounds of equal security. The Americans would insist upon parity with Great Britain; therefore Japan would claim equality with Britain, too. That the United States should agree, in MacDonald's words, 'to build only what was necessary for her own security', had proved a pipe-dream in 1930 when Hoover was President. Now, with Roosevelt already rebuilding the United States Navy, it was out of the question.

The Ministerial Committee decided that if the Japanese demanded parity with the United States, and the American attitude remained unhelpful, the British would have to present a compromise to break the deadlock. The main elements of this would be the recognition of all parties' rights to equal status; qualitative limitation of new construction; and the separate and 'voluntary' declaration by each Power of

1. Vice-Admiral C.J.C. Little, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff.

2. CAB 29/148, NCM(35).19, 'Suggestions as to British Attitude in the forthcoming Anglo-Japanese Naval Discussions'. Discussed at NCM(35) 6th Mtg., 16 October.

its building plans. It would be necessary for the Japanese to declare future building which would be broadly compatible with the existing ratio; but it was hoped that with time, courtesy and plenty of political camouflage, the moderate elements in Japan could gain acceptance for the British proposal.

When the bilateral talks opened, the fears of both powers' intransigence proved to be justified. The Japanese put forward proposals for what became known as the 'common upper limit', supposedly to guarantee the principles of 'non-menace and non-aggression'.¹ This upper limit would be applicable to the navies of all powers, including the Continental nations. It would be set by Great Britain and the United States, as the Powers with the largest fleets; the others would have the right to build up to that level if they wished, although in practice, the Japanese argued, the smaller powers would build only the number and types of vessels necessary for their own security.

A second element in the Japanese plan followed the lines of their proposal to the Disarmament Conference of December, 1932. Again, vessels would be categorised as 'offensive' or 'defensive' weapons. All 'offensive' weapons would ideally be abolished - which would involve, under the Japanese plan, the scrapping of all battleships, aircraft carriers and heavy cruisers. Other vessels, including submarines, were 'defensive'. Should the reduction of 'offensive' vessels be impossible, Japan would insist on the operation of large numbers of submarines - up to 120,000 tons unless battleships were abolished.

1. CAB 29/149, Anglo-Japanese Meetings. NC (J) 1st and 2nd meetings, 23 and 26 October, 1934. Also CAB 29/148, NCM(35)22, 'Report on the preliminary naval discussions which have taken place with the Japanese representatives', 27 October, 1934, published in DBFP, op.cit., No. 37. Compare the Japanese plan of October, 1934, with that put forward by them in December, 1932, at Geneva: see Chapter V, pp.238-9.

The American delegates presented their proposals in no less an extreme form. Their position was fundamentally the same that they had taken in June. They wanted a 20% all-round reduction, although they were prepared 'as a great concession' to fall back upon the existing levels. Under no circumstances would they agree to increases by Japan or by Great Britain. If naval inferiority could not be imposed upon Japan by treaty, the ratio system could be dispensed with.¹

Faced with the gulf between the Japanese and American positions, the British proceeded with their attempted compromise.² Although the Japanese proposals were disappointing, Chamberlain argued that Japan's position was an initial bargaining stance which would soften later, and that it was more important than ever to attempt a compromise. This could pursue three elements of the Japanese proposals.

First, the 'common upper limit' was acceptable to Britain in theory, as a symbolic demonstration only of each power's equal status, as long as Japan accepted building programmes which would keep her well below the limit. Second, agreement on qualitative limitation might be possible. Although Britain could not accept the arbitrary division between 'offensive' and 'defensive' weapons, there was a fair degree of agreement on qualitative limits for auxiliary surface craft.³ Britain would be most willing to see the heavy, 8-inch-gun cruiser abolished, and she was prepared to see light cruisers and destroyers treated as a single category. Third, the principle of 'non-menace and non-aggression' implied the possibility of a political accord. If some form of non-aggression treaty could be concluded, Japan would presumably be more

1. CAB 29/149, NC (USA) meetings.

2. This was agreed at the NCM(35) 7th Mtg. 29 October, 1934.

3. These had been covered in detail in technical exchanges between Yamamoto and Chatfield, NC(J) 3rd meeting, 26 October, 1934; CAB 29/149.

willing to limit her building programmes. A compromise might still be possible.

In the face of Japanese threats that they would denounce the Washington Treaty if their requirements were not met,¹ Davis tacitly agreed that Britain should pursue the possibility of compromise with the Japanese, and that 'if the Japanese definitely refuse to recede from their position' Britain and America should 'sit down together and discuss how we should deal with the resultant situation, particularly with regard to our own navies'.²

The British proposals were put to the Japanese delegation on 7 November, when Sir John Simon assured the Japanese that Britain would make every effort to meet the Japanese requirements while wishing to preserve the existing ratio relationships.³ Meanwhile in Tokyo Clive enquired whether Japan would consider a non-aggression pact in return for a naval agreement meeting Britain's requirements.

On the same day that the British proposals were submitted to Japan, they leaked in London to the Daily Herald.⁴ The reaction in Washington was of incomprehension and anger, made worse by the failure of the British adequately to explain their compromise proposals to Davis. Craigie denied to Davis that the British and Japanese had discussed a 'rearrangement of categories', but when the press gave details of the qualitative limitation suggestions Hull assumed that Craigie had tried deliberately to conceal British intentions in this field.⁵

1. FRUS, Japan, 1931-41, i, Grew to Hull, 18 September, 1934 (p.253). FRUS, 1934/i, Davis to Hull, 29 October, 1934 (p.319).

2. FRUS, 1934/i, pp.318-21 (ibid.).

3. CAB 29/149, NC(J) 4th and 5th meetings, 7 November, 1934.

4. D.C. Watt, Personalities and Policies, Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the 20th Century (London, 1965), pp.94-99.

5. FRUS, 1934/i, p.326: Davis to Hull, 9 November, 1934. FO 371/17601, A 9264/1938/45, Minutes to telegram, Lindsay to Simon, 11-22 November, 1934.

On 12 November The Times published an interview with President Roosevelt which amounted to a public warning to the British.¹ Roosevelt warned them not to abandon co-operation with the United States for the mirage of agreement with Japan. It was necessary for the Foreign Office and The Times to hastily rewrite certain passages in the interview to tone down its threatening nature. It had the further effect of causing MacDonald to issue a denial, in The Times the following day, that any arrangement was being made behind the Americans' backs.²

After another meeting between the British and Americans on 14 November, when MacDonald and Simon outlined their 'middle course' more clearly,³ David reported to Hull that the pro-Japanese faction in the Cabinet were 'largely controlling the course of the negotiations'.⁴ Even this group was anxious, however, that the United States should be a party to any agreement. Davis recommended, therefore, that America should agree to go along with the British in discussing some 'middle course' with the Japanese, and to see whether the British could extract concessions from them. For political reasons - meaning opinion in Congress - it was important that the US side should avoid giving the impression that they were considering modifications in the present agreement and thus making concessions to Japan. Davis suggested that it be announced that the Japanese had communicated their intention to

1. D.C. Watt, op.cit., p.95.

2. The Times, 13 February, 1934. This assurance was repeated privately by Simon to Davis, reported in Davis to Hull, 13 November, 1934: FRUS, op.cit., p.328.

3. FRUS, op.cit., pp.334-350, 'Minutes of Meeting Between British and American delegations in the Prime Minister's Office at the House of Commons, 14 November, 1934'; NC(USA), 7th meeting, CAB 29/147; DBFP, op.cit., No. 56.

4. FRUS, op.cit., pp.351-3, Davis to Hull, 16 November, 1934.

end the Washington Treaty, and that accordingly the parties were exploring the possibilities of an 'entirely new' agreement.

Davis supported the 'middle way' in the belief that the Japanese would reject any compromise which would meet the British requirements. Once the British had failed in their attempt to get the Japanese to be reasonable, they would fall into line with the American position. Secretary Hull felt very differently.¹ He feared that the British and Japanese would indeed agree, whether through British spinelessness or Japanese duplicity, and that 'any Anglo-Japanese agreement, no matter how negative in form, would be used by Japan all over the Far East as an indication of the resumption of an Anglo-Japanese partnership', thereby isolating and compromising America. Any 'middle course' would be seen as demonstrating British and American weakness. Hull's objective, instead, was to push the British into 'a definite and obvious common alignment' with the Americans on the principle of retaining the existing ratios. The British would then terminate the conversations 'on the clear-cut basis of a Japanese denunciation of the Treaty and their insistence that they are not able to agree to a prolongation of the present system'.

While the Japanese considered their response to the 'middle course', debate was renewed within the British Government over policy towards Japan. The harsh reality of the Japanese demands weakened the resolve of the 'pro-Japanese elements' that Davis saw as controlling British policy. When Lord Lothian met Neville Chamberlain at a lunch arranged by Sir John Simon, Chamberlain assured him that he was now convinced that Japan could not be trusted, and that at the proper time Britain and America would have to stand together and call her bluff.²

1. FRUS, op.cit., pp.353-4 and 355, Hull to Davis, 17 November, 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

2. Watt, op.cit., p.98.

Whether this marked a real change of heart by Chamberlain is doubtful. Davis believed it to be so, but his dispatches reflect the optimism of his good friend Lothian.¹ A diminution of pro-Japanese sentiment did not necessarily mean a growth in pro-American feeling. However on 19 November Matsudaira gave Simon the Japanese reply to the British proposals, which was politely negative.² The Japanese Government could not accept 'nominal equality combined with a binding obligation to preserve existing ratios', Matsudaira sorrowfully explained. Two days later he went into greater detail.³ Japan might be prepared to consider the continuation of some aspects of the Washington system - the future of the non-fortification clauses, for example, and the provisions for advance notification of construction, were open to negotiation; but Japan could continue no contractual obligation to maintain a smaller navy than Britain's and America's. Matsudaira could only hold out the hope of his personal belief that if the common upper limit were accepted, without reservation, Japan would then choose not to build to that level.

All hope for a non-aggression pact and tying Japan to existing ratio levels was now dead. To underline this the Foreign Office circulated to Cabinet a long report on the Japanese political outlook from the Tokyo Embassy.⁴ This pointed to the recurrent rumours in the Japanese and foreign press of an Anglo-Japanese accord, and warned of 'deliberate attempts to fabricate an Anglo-Japanese understanding'. The Japanese had nothing, in reality, to offer in exchange for any political agreement except '....some unspecified concessions in industry

1. FRUS, op.cit., pp.356-8 and 358-9, Davis to Hull, 21 November, 1934.

2. DBFP, II/XIII, No. 67: Simon to Clive, 19 November, 1934.

3. DBFP, op.cit., No. 76, Simon to Clive, 21 November, 1934.

4. FO 371/18184, F 6577/591/23, Sansom to Sir Edward Crowe (Dep't. of Overseas Trade), received in FO 3 November, 1934.

and trade'. British policy was 'far more likely to obtain concessions and favours from Japan if we kept her guessing than if we relieved her anxieties', so 'we ought to hold off, politely telling the Japanese that our friendship is such that it does not need to be sealed by vulgar pacts!'

Another consideration was the question of Japanese oil policy, which had aroused the ire of Western oil companies, and British ministers. The Japanese had legislated a requirement that foreign oil companies operating in Japan construct storage facilities, and maintain fuel reserves for Japanese military use; and imposed Government control of prices, import quotas, and refinery capacity. Furthermore, a Government oil monopoly was being proposed for occupied Manchuria, in defiance of the 'open door' policy. Discussion of these issues came to Cabinet at the same meeting at which the course of the naval negotiations was reviewed.¹

That meeting, on 21 November, saw the 'pro-Japanese' policy in retreat, but not yet routed. Even though a Japanese renunciation of existing treaties was now inevitable, even though the non-aggression pact was dead, even though the idea of binding building programmes was rejected, still the Cabinet believed 'it would be disastrous if the negotiations broke down at the present juncture, and that accordingly every effort should be made to continue discussions with the Japanese'.² When the British next met the American delegation, they asked them in effect to be patient while they had another try at bringing round the Japanese.³ MacDonald stressed to Davis that he wished to continue the

1. Cabinet 41(34)4, 21 November, 1934; CP 262(34).

2. Cabinet 41(34)5, 21 November, 1934.

3. FRUS, op.cit., pp.368-374. 'Memorandum of Conversation in the Prime Minister's Office in the House of Commons on 23 November, 1934': DBFP, op.cit., No. 77.

closest Anglo-American co-operation; but, he added with a hint of a veiled threat, the British '.... must take account of public opinion. It would be the simplest thing in the world, as things stood, to re-establish the Anglo-Japanese treaty'.

The last try at striking a compromise with Japan was prepared at a meeting of the Ministerial Committee on the Naval Conference on 27 November.¹ Once again Chamberlain took the lead in proposing further concessions to Japan, against Admiralty opposition. Could the Japanese be persuaded to postpone their naval expansion for a few years, while the British concentrated on building an air force and army capable of deterring Germany? If the ratio could, in practice, be extended for, say, another six-year period, Britain might at the end of that time be considerably better prepared to counter any Japanese danger, having covered her flank on the Continent; but equally the political situation then might have improved sufficiently for Britain not to be concerned about Japanese naval increases.

Guided by the Chancellor, the Committee evolved a plan which became known as the 'sloping line'. This would retain the principle of programme declarations, although without making them binding by treaty; but it removed British opposition to Japanese naval expansion beyond the 5:3 ratio level. The Committee was willing to allow Japan to close the margin towards parity with Britain if she was prepared to do it gradually. The 'sloping line' of Japanese expansion should not move upwards significantly until after 1942, thus maintaining the status quo during the projected 'dangerous years' of the end of the decade. After 1942, Britain would be prepared to see Japan close the gap very much more rapidly.

1. CAB 29/147, NCM(35) 9th meeting, 27 November, 1934. Also CAB 29/148, NCM(35)33, Memorandum by Simon, 26 November, 1934, and NCM(35)34, Memorandum by Chatfield, 27 November, 1934.

Thus was begun the final stage of the 1934 negotiations, and the final burial of quantitative limitation.¹ The Japanese were only interested in buying time and avoiding rancour in view of their decision to denounce the Washington Treaties, which must take place at the end of the year according to provisions within the treaty. Matsudaira and Yamamoto refused to set aside the principles enshrined in their original plan; but they were prepared to explore the technical details of the new British compromise. In doing so, they stressed that they were acting without instructions and without committing their Government.

This time the British proposals were not divulged to the Americans; and it was perhaps fortunate for Anglo-American relations that they were not. It was very clear to both the British and the Japanese that any increase in the Japanese ratio would be unacceptable to the Americans even after 1942. This overshadowed the December conversations, and enabled the Japanese to use American intransigence as an excuse for the half-heartedness of their own approach. Moreover the Americans were angry that the British were continuing futilely to chase after the Japanese after it was clear that they would not compromise. Hull urged Norman Davis to oppose any further negotiation as a sign of weakness - which indeed it was.² Davis had already formally asked the British to cease all discussions when the Japanese denunciation of the treaties was delivered.³ Once it was clear that the continuing talks were fruitless, the British agreed that the negotiations should be officially terminated before the abrogation.⁴ On 19 December the three Delegations

1. CAB 21/149, NC(J) Meetings Nos. 6 to 10, 30 November to 28 December, 1934.

2. FRUS, op.cit., pp.391-2, 394-5: Hull to Davis, 8 and 12 December, 1934.

3. FRUS, op.cit., pp.381-88, D/S 500.A15 a5/337, Memorandum Conversation, 4 December, 1934.

4. CAB 29/147: NCM(35) 10th meeting, 10 December, 1934; FO 371/17602, A 10101/1938/45: Minute by Craigie, 13 December, 1934.

met, for the first and only time in a tripartite session, and agreed to close the negotiations.¹ No date was set for their resumption.

The official notifications of Japan's abrogation of the Washington Treaty were delivered on 29 December,² under its Article XXIII, the Treaty would expire on 31 December, 1936. Unless a new treaty was negotiated to replace the Washington Treaty and the London Treaty, which automatically expired at the end of 1936, naval limitation would be at an end.

The American role in the 1934 negotiations had been a negative one. The United States knew what it wanted: a clear superiority over Japan of at least 5:3. It was also in the happy position that if it could not gain this by agreement, it could impose it unilaterally. A naval race was not only financially and industrially possible, but might be politically welcome in view of the effects on unemployment. There was, therefore, no incentive for her to alter her stance, or to look sympathetically on the British position.

It is perhaps to the credit of the British that as a result of their diligent pursuit of compromise, the end of the Washington Treaty and of the ratio system came with a whimper rather than a bang. If so, that is about all the credit that can be attributed to them. The 'Middle Course' policy was the pursuit of a mirage; it was a course pursued simply because it reflected the middle ground in the internal politics of the British Cabinet, not because it had a real chance of success. The two 'extreme' alternatives, of siding in practice with either America or Japan, were courses which at least took account of

1. DBFP, op.cit., No. 95: NC(J.D.) 1st Meeting, 19 December, 1934.

2. FRUS, op.cit., pp.415-421; DBFP, op.cit., No. 99, pp.158-9.

the harsh realities of the international situation. Great Britain had no middle ground between the other two powers on which to manoeuvre, because she had no bargaining position from which to deal with them. She was too weak to challenge Japan, and could neither coerce her nor persuade her to change her policy. Nor could Britain afford either to break with, or to rely on, America. Ultimately, the position of Britain was not relevant to the Japanese-American rivalry in the Pacific; but Britain would suffer if those nations' competition broke out into an open naval race, and she therefore had to try to preserve some kind of naval balance. It was unthinkable both from a domestic political standpoint and because of the role of the Dominions that Britain abdicate entirely from the Far East; but once Britain faced a threat in Europe, she was incapable of defending her interests there for herself. She had to rely on alignment with another Power which would guarantee those interests.

Alignment with Japan was superficially attractive partly because it had been done before, with great success, but in a very different world. Britain's and Japan's interests in the Far East were now directly opposed. What might have been possible a generation earlier, some kind of condominium over China at the expense of third powers (and the Chinese) was now ruled out by Britain's weakness; Britain now depended on the principle of free trade in China. Japan's vigorous expansion would only be at the expense of the Western Powers in China, and perhaps more threateningly in the East Indies. If Japan was deflected north against the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union could not act as a counterweight to Germany in Eastern Europe, and Japan might drift into Germany's embrace out of common antipathy to the Russians. Japan was already moving towards autarky in her internal economy - the beginning of the 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' - while threatening British products in her export markets. She could gain very little from

alignment with Britain: some alleviation of her threatened international diplomatic isolation, and the satisfaction of seeing herself recognised as an equal, instead of the inferior power she saw herself as under the constraint of the ratio. It would not give increased security against either of her major potential enemies, the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor was she likely to gain greater acceptance of her policy of aggression in China.

The need in Britain for stability in the Far East went far beyond the balance of power in that part of the world. Both 'pro-American' and 'pro-Japanese' elements in the British Government saw Germany as being potentially a greater danger in the long run. The primacy of defence against the air threat had been accepted by the Government and by public opinion. Japan was a more immediate threat, although in the long run a peripheral one in terms of the Empire as a whole. Both threats required responses, though, and Britain was incapable of dealing effectively with the two simultaneously. The fall of the Pacific naval structure therefore forced upon Britain two policies she was to pursue, with great tenacity but with very little success, for the remainder of the decade. One was to seek American support and co-operation in the Pacific, now that the pro-Japanese alternative was ruled out. The second, made imperative by the failure to remove the Japanese threat, was to try to avert danger in Europe by diplomatic means: the appeasement of Germany.

Chapter VII

THE END IN EUROPE

If 1934 was, in terms of the preoccupations of British diplomacy, the year of Japan, 1935 was the year of Europe. The reasons for this pre-occupation were threefold. First, Japan had finally renounced the treaty limitations upon her in the Far East; but before she could be confronted, it was necessary to reduce the dangers in Europe. Second, the threat from a resurgent Germany in Europe grew to justify the worst fears of the British Government. During 1935 Britain's air 'deterrent' in Europe was overhauled and neutralized by German air strength, thus ending the idea that security could be provided at low cost by such a policy. Third, in the Mediterranean, Italy emerged as a major threat to the security of the British Empire, as Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia and the reaction of the Western Powers drove her into the camp of the 'revisionist' powers.

The deterioration of events in Europe forced the hand of the British Cabinet towards comprehensive rearmament. In particular, it was not possible to defer naval rearmament once it became clear that Britain faced maritime threats on three fronts. By the end of 1935, the British Government came to accept the need for full-scale naval rearmament on the scale advocated by the Admiralty throughout 1934. This did not, however, mean the abandonment by Britain of the search for limitation. The expiry of the treaties on 31 December, 1936, set a deadline by which a new agreement must be negotiated before the resumption of unconstrained naval rivalry. Political developments showed that there was no possibility of self-restraint prevailing in the treatyless period after 1936. The naval race which would ensue would be cripplingly expensive, involving as it did the most capital-intensive military arm. As the deadline approached, therefore, the pressure to achieve some measure of agreement, however limited, built

up in the democratic powers.

The portents for renewed limitation were still not entirely gloomy at the beginning of 1935. The Japanese denunciation of the Washington Treaty was a major blow, but there was still the possibility that, having made her grand political gesture, she might now come around to serious negotiations. Even if Japan were determined to stay outside any new system, it was still possible that a European balance, including Germany and even the Soviet Union, might be worked out. Indeed, political developments in the first half of the year gave grounds for guarded optimism that in Europe at least, a new treaty structure might be created.

The first major political development of 1935 promised to solve the problem that had prevented a comprehensive European naval agreement in the past: the rivalry between France and Italy. The rise of Nazi Germany forced Italy to confront the harsh reality that she had been able to avoid since 1918. Italy was not economically in a position to hold her own as a great military power in a Europe of political tension and military rivalry. Yet with a disarmed Germany she had been able to do just that; relieved of external pressure from the north and east, she could afford the luxury of an anti-French foreign policy while seeking an hegemonistic role in the Balkans. In July 1934, though, the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss shook Mussolini into realizing the threat that a resurgent Germany posed not only to the buffer-state of Austria but throughout the historically Germanic-ruled areas of East and South-East Europe.¹ The logic of the European balance of power therefore required that Italy seek a counterweight to German power, which could come only from a rapprochement between Italy and France.

1. A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1935, i, pp.91-4.

The naval competition between the two Mediterranean powers was only one aspect of their rivalry. Other outstanding 'political' questions were the focus of discussions in Rome between 4 and 7 January, 1935, between M. Laval, the French Foreign Minister, and Mussolini. These produced two significant agreements which appeared to mark the start of a new Franco-Italian alliance. The first was a General Declaration which included provisions for the transfer of parcels of colonial territory, and declared the two countries' intention to cooperate in, amongst other areas, arms control. A second agreement concerned Austria, whereby France and Italy agreed to consult with each other in the event of any menace to her security; and proposed a convention for signature by Austria and her neighbouring states to guarantee 'reciprocal non-intervention'. In return for this tacit alliance against Germany, Italy renounced one of her long-standing ambitions, the establishment of control over Tunis, where there were more Italian settlers than French. It soon became clear that Mussolini's African ambitions lay elsewhere, and that the Franco-Italian settlement had opened the way for the Italian invasion of the hitherto-French-supported Abyssinian Empire.¹

While France pursued her rapprochement with Italy, both countries simultaneously pressed the British to support them in taking a tougher stance against Germany. The British Cabinet, however, was in a difficult position. On the domestic political front, the pacifist Left gained tremendous support for the 'Peace Ballot' during the winter, and the government lost several successive by-elections by large margins.²

1. The texts of the agreements are published in Documents on International Affairs, 1935, i, pp.22-24; but in this text the Protocol on Armaments is incomplete. The full text of this, in French, is published in DBFP, Second Series, XII, enclosure in No.328 (pp.367-8).

2. See Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin (London, 1969), p.791.

Internationally, the Cabinet and the Foreign Office distrusted French efforts to build an alliance with the Soviet Union as another counterweight to Germany. On the other hand, during the winter the newly-established Ministerial Committee on German Rearmament reviewed a gloomy stream of reports of Germany's growing strength.¹ Accurate information was hard to obtain, and ignorance and speculation merely increased the anxiety.

German publicity made it impossible for the British Government to ignore their violations of the Versailles Treaty's military provisions, as it had previously done in its desire to avoid an open breach with Germany. Palliatives, such as the speeding up of the air deficiency programme, did nothing to solve the problem. That required a direct approach to Germany.²

Britain had very little to offer Germany in any negotiation, she could only recognize the reality of German rearmament, and hope that Hitler would impose limits upon it in return. Yet the British felt compelled to negotiate immediately, for fear that their air programme, the supposed deterrent against Germany, would soon be swamped by German rearmament. In the Cabinet on 9 January, Chamberlain, ever the optimist, drew an analogy between relations with Japan and with Germany. Japan had refused to negotiate until the ratio principle had been abandoned: once Britain had moved on to exploring alternatives bases for agreement, Japan had become more cooperative. If the Western Powers moved away from defending the Versailles Treaty, Germany might cooperate in finding an alternative basis for a stable relationship. This argument overlooked two factors: first, that while Japan had appeared more amicable once the ratio system had been set aside, she had not in fact made any significant concessions; and second, that it was not solely within Britain's power to determine the fate of the Versailles Treaty: France had to go along with any new approach.

1. This committee's reports, dated 11 and 18 December, 1934, are filed as C.P.295(34) and 302(34), CAB 24/252. Its records are filed in CAB 27/576, Cabinet Committee on German Rearmament (GR(34)).

The next few months were spent exploring the basis for some new relationship with Germany, and while they saw the final unilateral renunciation of the Versailles Treaty no replacement for it emerged. At the beginning of February Anglo-French talks took place when MM. Flandin and Laval, respectively Premier and Foreign Minister, visited London. These resulted in a joint proposal covering a range of political subjects. Germany was invited to join in an 'Aerial Locarno' agreement, outlawing 'aerial aggression' - meaning the bombing of cities; she was asked to participate in regional security pacts for Eastern Europe and the Danube Basin, to re-enter the League of Nations, and to open discussions on an arms limitation agreement to replace the Versailles Treaty restrictions.¹ Meanwhile, France faced the prospect that during the years 1935-9 only half of the average conscript contingent would be called up for service with the colours each year, due to the low birth-rate during the First World War. To maintain the army at its normal strength, therefore, the Government introduced legislation to double the period of National Service from twelve months to two years. Passed by the Chamber on 15 March, this was used by Hitler as a pretext finally to kill the Versailles Treaty. On 9 March he announced the existence of the Luftwaffe, and on 16 March he re-established universal military service in Germany. A target of thirty-six divisions and 500,000 men was set for the new Wehrmacht.

Although Hitler's announcements pre-empted the Anglo-French effort quietly to negotiate the demise of the Versailles Treaty, the British acted as though nothing had changed. Indeed, it appeared to them that a negotiated settlement was now more imperative than ever. Simon, therefore, was sent to Berlin at the end of March, to pursue the ideas of the air pact and the Eastern security pact further. He was also instructed to suggest German participation in the naval negotiations.²

1. The communique issued to the press on 3 Feb. 1935, was filed as DC(M)(32).136; part of it is published in Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1935, I, 122-3.

2. Toynbee, Survey, 1935, i, pp.132-46.

The naval efforts had been marking time since the end of 1934. The Americans and Japanese had left London, and the attendance of European Governments was fully occupied with developments in and around Germany. The institutions and individuals most concerned with the naval negotiations were, however, eager to continue their pursuit of limitation before it passed entirely beyond their grasp. The naval proceedings concerned issues and powers unconnected with the problems of German rearmament, and both Foreign Office and Admiralty were anxious to press on with negotiations, regardless of developments in Central Europe.

The hiatus which the talks with Japan and the United States had reached provided a natural break at which to consider the European naval balance, where prospects for agreement looked more favourable after the Franco-Italian rapprochement. Furthermore, with the demise of the ratio system, it might be easier to reach agreement in Europe by concentrating on qualitative limitation and programme declarations. Britain decided to see whether these elements would be acceptable to the European naval powers.¹

The British wanted, ideally, to begin with France. Such was the approach they had always made to the European naval balance, and Craigie was unshaken in the belief that Anglo-French agreement was the key to a settlement. However, there were a number of obstacles to this approach.

Pierre Laval, the French Foreign Minister, was entirely ignorant of naval affairs, which tended to give the intransigent Navy Ministry full control over naval policy. Naval issues had been omitted from the Franco-Italian talks in Rome, and the French had asked that the naval question not be discussed when Laval visited London in February.² It became clear to the British that France would not commit herself to anything until German intentions in the naval field became clear. Britain had no option, then, but to begin with Germany.

1. NCM(35).46: Memorandum by F.O. and Admiralty, 17 Jan. 1935;
NCM(35).47: Memorandum by Craigie, 21 Feb. 1935.

2. FO 371/18752, A 1712/22/45: Note by Craigie on a conversation with Cambon, 16 Jan. 1935.

Any approach to Germany had to be handled very carefully. Craigie argued that, 'The main purpose of our enquiry of the German Government would be to ascertain Germany's probable naval requirements for a building programme during the period 1937-42. This would commit neither ourselves nor any other foreign government'.¹ The exchange would be purely exploratory, without envisioning any binding commitments. Nevertheless, there were pitfalls. Hitler could not be asked directly how large a navy he wanted. On past form, he would demand an impossibly high figure and stick to it. He might also raise the question of Gleichberechtigung, which would sidetrack discussions onto matters of the theoretical relationships between Germany and her neighbours, and back onto the ratio question again. Britain would somehow have to confine Germany to discussing her intentions over the following seven years.

The British hoped that German intentions before 1942 would not involve the construction of a fleet of more than 178,000 tons - the existing French margin of superiority over Italy. France would not then need to expand her existing fleet and could maintain her 'two-power standard', while joining Britain in abandoning the Versailles 108,000-ton limit on Germany. On at least two occasions the figure of 35% of the British fleet - some 400,000 tons - had been mentioned as the level desired by Germany; first by Hitler to Phipps, the British Ambassador in Berlin, in November, and again to Lord Allen of Hurtwood on a visit to Berlin in January, 1935.² To reach such a level the German Navy would have to expand fourfold, which neither Craigie nor the First Lord, Eyres-Monsell, believed was practicable before

1. NCM(35).47, op.cit.

2. DGFP, Series C, III, pp.680-2: No.358, unsigned memorandum, entitled 'Observations made by the Fuhrer...to the British Ambassador on the Notification given on 27th Nov. of the British Government's Statement... Concerning German Armaments'; pp.873-8: No.463, Record of interview between Hitler and Lord Allen of Hurtwood, 29 Jan. 1935.

1942.¹ If the Germans did present such a demand, the British tactic would be the same as for the Japanese 'common upper limit' - to set the claim aside and ignore it.

It was imperative to get Hitler to participate in negotiations before the naval limit went the way of the land and air Versailles restrictions, and the suggestion of a 35% ratio became a firm German commitment by unilateral pronouncement. However, although the navy was not mentioned in Hitler's mid-March pronouncements on the Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht, the 35% demand soon appeared in the German press. Moreover, when Phipps saw Hitler to protest the German declarations, he claimed that Germany required 'parity with France on land, sea and air' and that he required 35% of the British fleet.² These two statements were contradictory: the French fleet stood at 50% of the British level. To Vansittart, this discrepancy was a deliberate ruse, and signalled a fresh rise in the German naval claim.³ The confusion that this dual claim engendered was not removed when Simon raised the naval question in Berlin on 26 March.⁴ While he required parity with France, Hitler declared he was prepared to give an 'absolute commitment' to the 35% figure for Great Britain, and 'any assurance which he gave with regard to it would be for ever'. Simon's invitation to begin talks on the naval question was quickly accepted.

The naval implications of Simon's exchanges with Hitler were buried under the impact of other aspects of the talks. Most seriously, Hitler boasted that Germany had already achieved parity in the air with Great Britain. This rendered the British 'deterrent' useless, irrespective of

1. FO371/18732, A 2877/22/45: Note by Eden, 1 Mar. 1935, and F2843/22/45, Memorandum by Craigie for Simon (approved by the Admiralty), 7 March, 1935.

2. FO371/18732, A 2878/22/45: telegrams from Phipps, 16 March, 1935.

3. Minutes to above.

4. The British record of the Simon-Hitler conversations is in DBFP, Second Series, XII, No.651, pp.703-746; the German record is in DGFP, Third Series, III, pp.1064-8.

whether Hitler was lying or not. If he was correct, then the deterrent was obsolete. If the claim was exaggerated, then the deterrent had failed: the British air programme had had no influence on Hitler's actions. It seemed that the British position was far weaker than it had been the previous July, when the air 'deterrent' programme had been announced.

The British response to Hitler's claim approached panic. This was heightened by a Foreign Office assessment, circulated on 10 April, that Germany's first-line air strength actually exceeded the British total by 30%.¹ At the end of April, a Cabinet sub-committee was set up to review the question of air parity, which reported in just a week in favour of ordering an additional 1,500 aircraft within two years, over and above the existing expansion programme. Reflecting the changed atmosphere, the Ministerial Committee on Disarmament was renamed the Committee on Defence Requirements on 27 May. Psychologically the British Government was moving, if not onto a war footing, at least away from the old peacetime complacency.

Britain was equally active diplomatically. In early April she joined with France and Italy at the Stresa Conference to issue a joint statement condemning Germany's unilateral revision of the treaties, which was followed up by a jointly-proposed resolution at the League a week later.² Britain's commitment to the so-called 'Stresa Front' was not, however, of the same order as that of France. Britain saw it not as an anti-German alliance, but as a gesture 'to renew the confidence of the French and Italians in this country, which had been somewhat impaired'.³ It was not Macdonald's intention to try to surround Germany, which could drive her into an alliance

1. The debate as to the actual strength of the Luftwaffe is recounted in the Earl of Avon, Memoirs, i, Facing the Dictators (London, 1962), pp. pp.203-8; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp.811-25.

2. Published in Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs, 1935, i, pp.159-161 and 163-5.

3. MacDonal'd's report to the Cabinet, recorded in Cab.24(35)1, 17 Apr.1935.

of 'pariah states';¹ but France sought just this, and appeared to have achieved it when she followed up the Stresa declaration with a Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance on 2 May.²

The developments in air policy and continental diplomacy in the spring of 1935 naturally overshadowed the naval question. A firm acceptance of Simon's invitation to naval talks had been given by Hitler in March, but time was running out: a tentative framework had to be agreed with Germany before France and Italy would seriously negotiate, and a basis for agreement with France and Italy had to be established before Britain could go back to Japan and the United States to attempt a new 'high seas' balance. For all this to be accomplished before the 1935 Conference was called, Craigie urged, required that the naval talks proceed quickly, and 'as independently as possible' of other matters.³

Craigie was initially restrained by the wider events of European diplomacy. A formal invitation to Germany to send a naval delegation to London had to wait until after the Stresa Conference.⁴ Then, when the invitation was delivered on 23 April, the Germans asked that the talks be postponed until after Hitler's foreign policy speech, planned for the second week of May.⁵ Ominously, this speech was billed as his reply to the Stresa declaration and the League's resolution. Indeed, Admiral Raeder,

1. This was very much in British ministers' minds at the Cabinet meetings before the Stresa Conference: Cab 20 and 21(35)-, 8 April, 1935.

2. W.E. Scott, Alliance Against Hitler: The Origins of the Franco-Soviet Pact (Durham, N.C., 1962)

3. FO 371/18732, A 3190/22/45; Minutes to the record of the Simon-Hitler talks, 29 March, 1935.

4. FO 371/18732, A 3203 and A 3323/22/45; Drummond to Simon, 3 April, and Clerk to Simon, 3 and 4 April (first two in DBFP op.cit., Nos.685/6); A 3324/22/45; Minute, Vansittart to Eyres-Monsell, 3 April, 1935.

5. DBFP, Second Series, XIII: No.121, Simon to Phipps, 18 April; Simon to Phipps, 25 April. FO 371/18733, A 3894/22/45; Phipps to Simon, 26 April, 1935.

the head of the German Navy, hinted to the British Naval Attaché that a decision as to whether or not the talks should take place was still in the balance.¹ Apprehension in London increased further when the Attaché was told that Germany intended to build twelve 250-ton submarines.² To MacDonald, this meant that Germany felt that she could now openly ignore the treaties, in the confidence that no sanctions would be taken against her.³ It appeared to Craigie that Hitler was preparing to make an increased naval claim, and asked Phipps to drop hints around Berlin that the British could be more flexible if the naval exchanges started without 'any further public pronouncements'.⁴

The speech, delivered on 21 May, was a great relief to the British.⁵ Hitler declared that 'the German Navy has been limited to 35% of the British Navy and is thus still 15% below the total tonnage of the French fleet'. To the British, this was a public commitment. Hitler had apparently resolved the confusion in his mind about the size of the French fleet, and had refrained from claiming parity with it. The French should be 'thankful for small mercies'.⁶ The Cabinet decided that it was now possible for the naval exchanges to begin at once,⁷ and it was suggested that Britain should accept the 35% 'offer' officially and immediately.

1. FO 371/18733, A 3810/22/45 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.138): Phipps to Simon, 26 April, 1935.

2. FO 371/18733, C 3446/206/18 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.129): Phipps to Simon, 25 April, 1935; C 3544/206/18 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.150): Phipps to Simon, 30 April; C 3557/206/18 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.154), Phipps to Simon, 1 May, 1935.

3. CAB 23/125, Meetings of the British Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1935: Meeting No. 1, 30 April, 1935.

4. FO 371/18733, A 4438/45 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.189), letter, Craigie to Phipps, 10 May, 1935.

5. The speech is printed in DBFP, Series C, IV, pp.171-8.

6. FO 371/18733, A 4661/22/45 (DBFP, *ibid.*, No.230), Phipps to Simon, 23 May, 1935.

7. Cab. 30(34)1, 22 May, 1935.

Craigie was less enthusiastic.¹ France would hardly be likely to accept any German figure which approached her own fleet's total; she still had to provide for maritime defence on two fronts, and would be considerably weaker than an Italo-German combination. Moreover, in dealing with Japan, Britain had just abandoned the ratio principle; now she was being asked to return to it. It would be better to try to persuade Germany to accept the idea of declared building programmes, which need not preclude her achieving an eventual 35% ratio, but which might slow down the rate at which she might try to reach that level.

The Admiralty supported Craigie. It now placed the highest priority upon qualitative limitation, and badly wanted to know more details of the German ship construction effort. It was unsure of the number of capital ships Germany was building, and worried about the impact such construction would have upon the British margin over Japan. Above all, it wanted German increases to be more gradual and to avoid the quantum leaps which the straightforward concession of a 35% ratio might encourage.²

The Admiralty was also concerned to avoid any German-Japanese naval agreement. Disturbing reports reached the Director of Naval Intelligence, who warned that 'Germany and Japan may have some plan to produce, at a given moment, such a force that we should be powerless to interfere with a simultaneous aggressive action on their part at each end of the world.'³ The threat of the 'Japanese card' was to have an important role later in reconciling the Admiralty to the eventual Anglo-German agreement.

Formal Anglo-German meetings began on the morning of 4 June. Ribbentrop, the principal delegate, immediately upset the British plans by demanding, out of the blue, that they 'recognize' Germany's 'decision'

1. FO 371/18733, A 4661, (op. cit.) minute by Craigie.

2. NCM(35).49: Memorandum by the Admiralty, 3 June, 1935 (CAB 29/148)

3. FO 371/18735, A 5900/22/45; 31 May, 1935.

to build to 35% of the British fleet.¹ Simon, who had opened the meeting with a discourse on the impracticality of the ratio system, was furious. In the preliminary contacts the Germans had indicated that they would be prepared to accept all the British qualitative limitation proposals, including the reduction of battleship size, a moratorium on 8-inch cruiser construction, and even the abolition of the submarine.² Now they had come out with a demand for acceptance of a (high) ratio before they would be prepared to talk about anything else. Craigie tried to steer the Germans away from the 35% figure by urging that building programmes be discussed first, but the Germans were adamant that they must first 'safeguard' their position. Over lunch, Craigie and Admiral Little decided that there was no choice but to accept the inevitable gracefully, and recommended acceptance of the German ratio claim. The rest of the day was spent exploring the implications of the 35% level. The Cabinet the next day decided to accept the figure, despite misgivings as to the likely French reaction.³ Foremost among Ministers supporting acceptance was Eyres-Monsell. His brief, prepared by Chatfield, argued that unless the German demand was accepted, there was no possibility of obtaining qualitative limitations or of slowing down the rate of construction during the years 1937-42.⁴ If the demand were rejected, Hitler might raise the ratio claim still higher; and Germany would certainly build to 35% of the British fleet with or without British consent. At least by accepting the German claim Britain might postpone that day by negotiating moderate building programmes from Germany. Moreover, Chatfield reasoned, a 35% limit would maintain a

1. CAB 29/150: Anglo-German Meetings. NC(G)1st meeting, 4 June, 1935.

2. Record of talks between Adm. Little and Adm. K.G. Schuster, 3-4 June, 1935, dated 23 June, in ADM 116/3373.

3. Cab.32(35)2. See Middlemas and Barnes, *op.cit.*, pp.827-8.

4. NCM(35)50, Memorandum by Chatfield, 5 June, 1935; circulated to the Ministerial Committee on the Naval Conference on 6 June, and discussed at Meeting No. 11 on that day.

modified 'two-power standard' for Britain: the Japanese fleet was currently at 64% of the British level, so that with Germany held at 35% Britain would still have the capacity to fight both powers simultaneously, especially with France as her ally.

The Cabinet accepted the Admiralty's arguments for agreeing to the German claim, but it did not fully discuss three reservations which the Admiralty emphasized. For the German 35% ratio not to jeopardize British security, the existing relativity between Britain and Japan would have to be maintained. Second, '...a more rapid replacement of the British battle fleet than is visualized in the tentative British programme, may be necessary in order to ensure that in new ships the British fleet does not fall behind the capital ship strength of Japan and Germany combined.'¹ Third, the regular rate of cruiser construction, designed to give the Royal Navy seventy vessels within a decade, had to be maintained. At the Ministerial Committee on the Naval Conference, Chamberlain objected to the Admiralty's preconditions for agreement, and in particular to the idea of more rapid battleship replacement, a programme of colossal expense. The remainder of the Committee assured him that any decision on this could be taken later without prejudice, and Chamberlain went along with the acceptance of the German claim, which he believed would help him to save money.

On 6 June the Germans were informed of the British decision, to their jubilation.² Ribbentrop's only concern now was that the British would change their minds when they consulted with the French minds. Simon assured him that it was a definite decision and that the French would be informed only as a matter of courtesy. Having settled the German ratio in a matter of days, a refreshing contrast to the interminable delays in negotiating with the Japanese, the British were now eager to settle the

1. ibid.

2. CAB 29/150, NC(G)4th meeting, 6 June, 1935.

programme declarations and qualitative limitations with like efficiency.

Unfortunately, the agreement on ratios did nothing to advance the scheme for programme declarations. If anything, it impeded progress.¹ Asked to outline Germany's minimum needs, Ribbentrop replied that this was impossible. To give the 'absolute minimum' figure would automatically carry the German Navy beyond the 35% level! Craigie, taken aback, tried again. Would the Germans then discuss their actual programmes instead? The Germans were somewhat reluctant, since they feared that the British 'might be somewhat surprised at the German proposals'. The British were, in fact, appalled. In the three years from 1934 to 1936, Germany planned to lay down three capital ships (one of 35,000 tons), one aircraft carrier, 40 submarines, and three heavy cruisers. If such an extensive programme indicated a slower pace of construction after 1937, the British might still be partly satisfied. Again, though, they were sadly disabused. On 20 June the Germans announced that it was their intention to complete construction to the 35% level by 1942.² This was 'the slowest programme which the German Government was prepared to contemplate'. Ribbentrop stated that Germany would be justified if she built to the 35% level in twenty-four hours, and that he was 'convinced that their proposals would prove a pleasant surprise to the British delegation. It would, of course, be possible to build up much faster, but Germany preferred method and system in their reconstruction, and therefore their programme had been spread over a number of years, from 1934 to 1942.'

The German ratio claim had been accepted in haste and with little thought; and its acceptance had failed to reduce the projected rate of German naval rearmament. The decision to accept the claim was taken by the Admiralty and by Craigie; the Cabinet only acquiesced in a decision already made. What may have been most influential in persuading the

1. NC(G) 8th meeting, 18 June, and 9th meeting, 19 June, 1935.

2. NC(G) 10th meeting, 20 June, 1935.

Government of the need to accept the 35% ratio was the unanimity displayed between the Admiralty and Foreign Office officials. As Foreign Secretary, Simon customarily relied absolutely upon Craigie in arms control matters. The remainder of the Foreign Office hierarchy was never asked for its opinion. Eyres-Monsell similarly tended to echo the views of Chatfield from the Admiralty standpoint. With the Admiralty campaigning in favour of agreement, many sceptics must have been convinced by the sight of a service arm actually urging the Government to sanction the rearmament of a likely enemy.

The decision does appear to show an apparently high and naive level of trust in Hitler. In fact, many doubts were voiced privately. But those who voiced them, like Vansittart,¹ were not prepared to speak against the agreement, and were not formally consulted. The general attitude was that, as Craigie told the French Ambassador, 'it was a question of agreeing to something inconvenient lest the worst befall!'²

At the time the agreement was a considerable relief to the British. It appeared that at least one element of the inevitable German rearmament had been contained to a manageable level. But in retrospect, the agreement seems far less of a triumph: it compromised the broader effort to contain Germany, which was essentially a land and air problem. It ended Hitler's diplomatic isolation by breaching the Stresa Front, and relieved the pressure on Germany for a general arms settlement; and angered the French, who saw the 35% figure as indefensible and the agreement as foreshadowing a British abandonment of France.³ Most importantly, the British got nothing concrete in return. Any lingering hope that a German naval

1. FO 371/18735, A 5911/22/45; Minute by Vansittart, 12 June, 1935.

2. FO 371/18734, A 5372/22/45, letter, Craigie to Clerk, 7 June, 1935.

3. FO 371/18734, A 5328/22/45, A 5329, 5416, 5399: Clerk to Sir S. Hoare 15, 16, 17 June, and Sir S. Hoare to Sir E. Drummond (Rome), 19 June 1935 (DBFP, op.cit. Nos. 336/8/9 and 352).

threat could be killed, or controlled, by kindness, was eliminated later in the summer. In April, the Germans had announced their intention to construct twelve submarines. The first of this series was launched on 15 June and joined the fleet two weeks later. By the end of the summer, all twelve were in service.¹

The settlement with Germany had been intended as a preliminary to the negotiation of an agreement with France and Italy. In fact, it caused the French to refuse to negotiate on naval matters for some six months.² In late June, the French Ministry of Marine announced that France had drawn the 'necessary conclusions' from the Agreement, and that steps would be taken to ensure French naval superiority in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Italy was reported to be contemplating similar action.³ To France, the position was clear: Britain had broken the Versailles Treaty, the February Anglo-French accord, and the Stresa Front; and she had made it impossible for France to agree to any new European quantitative limitation agreement.

Robert Craigie realized, rather belatedly, that the agreement with Germany had reduced the chances of more general agreement in Europe. His understanding of this is evident in a paper he produced in mid-July.⁴ While 'not under-estimating the importance of quantitative limitation', he conceded that there was little hope for an agreement on building programmes.

1. FO 371/18739, A 8087/22/45, Muirhead-Gould to F.O., 5 Sept. 1935. The Naval Attaché in Berlin commented, 'It is humiliating to me to know that the German Marineleitung have so low an opinion of my intelligence and professional ability that they believe they can stuff me with such fairy stories as the building of a submarine in two months. I no longer believe anything I am told by the Marineleitung.'

2. See, e.g., DBFP, op.cit., No.363: Record of a conversation between British and French representatives, 21 June, 1935; pp.447-464 (FO 371/18734, A 5556/22/45). No.377: Record of Anglo-Italian Conversation, 24 June, 1935: pp.477-484 (FO 371/18735, A 5842/22/45).

3. FO 371/18734, A 5716/22/45, Campbell to Hoare, 26 June, 1935; FO 371/18736, A 5996/22/45, Drummond to Hoare, 8 July, 1935.

4. NCM(35).58: (draft) 18 July, 1935; DBFP, op.cit., No.415, as approved by the NCM and circulated to Cabinet, 1 Aug. 1935.

Since it was necessary to call a Conference before the end of the year, to conform with the treaties, Craigie suggested that they concentrate instead upon qualitative limitation. By starting from this basis, it might still be possible to draw the French into a discussion of quantitative limitation as well. The new priority was quickly adopted by the Committee on the Naval Conference, and made public on 22 July, along with a formal renunciation of ratios.¹

In August, a memorandum was sent to the French and the other Washington Powers explaining the new British objectives of qualitative limitation and programme announcements;² and Captain Danckwerts, the Admiralty's Director of Plans, was sent to Paris to restart the naval exchanges.³ The French were polite but noncommittal. They agreed that qualitative limitation was important, but raised many objections to the idea of programme declarations. Later, in their reply to the British memorandum, they rejected the declarations scheme in favour of 'préavis', the annual exchange of information on each year's construction programme.⁴ To signify continuing close liaison between Paris and Rome following Stresa, the Italians delivered a note shortly afterwards espousing an identical position.⁵ Moreover, despite continuing pressure from London, the French refused to send a delegation to resume the naval talks in London. Naval discussions with France and Italy did not begin again until the eve of the Conference in December, by which time the Italian invasion of Abyssinia had made any European naval agreement unlikely.

1. Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol.304, columns 153-89.

2. FO 371/18737, A 6691/22/45, 3 Aug. 1935.

3. CAB 29/149, Anglo-French Meetings, NC(F) 6th, 7th and 8th Meetings, 6 and 7 August, 1935.

4. FO 371/18738, A 7170/22/45, French Memorandum of 14 August, 1935.

5. FO 371/18739, A 7833/22/45, Memorandum from Italian Government, 4 Sept. 1935.

During the first half of 1935, there were virtually no new developments in the triangular naval relationship between the United States, Britain and Japan. Japan and America were content to wait while Britain attempted to juggle with the European balance. Yamamoto had left London in early January, taking with him the British proposal for programme declarations for discussion with his superiors. Craigie expressed optimism that Yamamoto would advocate such an agreement in Tokyo and that he would be able to secure its acceptance in Tokyo.¹ Moreover, now that the embarrassment of the denunciation of the treaties was over, the Japanese might feel able to be more reasonable.²

Yamamoto returned to Tokyo in February, and nothing further was heard for some time. On 17 May, the Vice-Minister of Marine told the British Naval Attaché that Japan would insist upon the Common Upper Limit, and that, in the meantime, she would make no further proposals.³ The Anglo-German agreement did not alter the Japanese position. The British circular note of 3 August, outlining the British wish for programme declarations to be the first priority at the Conference, met with a similar response.⁴ Japan would insist upon the Common Upper Limit as the basis for quantitative limitation; she could not consider qualitative limitation without quantitative.

These negative signals had come from the Japanese Admiralty. Craigie still hoped that the Japanese Foreign Office would be more responsive.⁵ But at the end of September, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis reached a climax, and the invasion of Abyssinia began. With the European powers near the

1. FO 371/18732, A 1478/22/45, Craigie to Clive, 5 Feb. 1935.

2. FO 371/18732, A 1947/22/45, Craigie to Clive, 28 Feb. 1935.

3. FO 371/18733, A 4499/22/45, Clive to Simon, 17 May, 1935.

4. FO 371/18739, A 7493/22/45, memorandum by the Japanese Government, 26 August, 1935.

5. FO 371/18739, A 7988/22/45, Craigie to Clive, 13 Sept. 1935.

verge of war, Japan could afford to discard her cautious silence. On 18 October, the Japanese Government officially and unequivocally rejected the British proposals for programme declarations.¹

Following the statement of British policy of 22 July, and the explanatory circular Note of 3 August, the United States Government began to worry about British motives. Although the State and Navy Departments recognized the potential value of programme declarations as a means of securing quantitative limitation, they feared that the emphasis on them might be a cover for a British desire to abandon quantitative limitation altogether in favour of qualitative limitation only. Hoare had to reassure Bingham, the US Ambassador in London, that the British were sincere in wishing to pursue genuine quantitative limitation through programme declarations. On the other hand, the British Government now felt that agreement on qualitative limits appeared to be 'of more immediate importance'.² Doubts persisted among Americans concerned with the naval negotiations. Ray Atherton, the long-serving Counsellor in the London Embassy and Chargé d'Affaires in Bingham's absence, feared that the British were trying to secure a European agreement in order to form a united front on proposals which would be unacceptable to the United States, by sanctioning large-scale naval expansion. These fears were soon calmed by the refusal of the French and Italians to participate in further talks after the Anglo-German naval agreement.

By late August, the negative Japanese response to the British memorandum, together with the lack of further progress in London, had convinced the Americans of the 'unreality' of holding anything but a 'pro forma' conference.³ Secretary of the Navy Swanson 'totally opposed'

1. NCM(35).74, Memorandum by Craigie, 18 Oct. 1935.

2. D/S 500.A15 a5/448, Bingham to Hull, 25 July, 1935; FRUS, 1935/I, pp.82-5. D/S 500.A15 a5/450, Atherton to Hull, 9 Aug. 1935; FRUS, 1935/I, pp.87-90.

3. D/S 500.A15 a%/472, Atherton to Hull, 27 Aug. 1935; FRUS, 1935/I, p.101.

participation in such an exercise, and Roosevelt agreed that the achievement of advance notification of building programmes was the American 'minimum requirement' for participating in any new treaty.¹

The lack of progress on naval matters was matched by a corresponding drift towards full-scale rearmament. In Britain the newly renamed Ministerial Committee on Defence Requirements asked the members of the old DRC in May to produce another survey of defence needs in the light of the spring crisis. This body, now renamed the Official Defence Requirements Committee, was authorised to 'work out programmes on the assumption that by the end of the financial year 1938-9, each Service should have advanced its state of readiness to the widest extent necessary in relation to the military needs of national defence...'²

During the six months that the Official DRC spent compiling its report, the Abyssinian crisis came to a head. However, its recommendations were not shaped by this confrontation. It excluded any provisions for war against Italy, and concerned itself solely with the collapse of the naval ratio system and of the European air deterrent. Nevertheless, the Committee was undoubtedly given a sense of urgency by the realization that the list of potential enemies had now grown to three, and that the Mediterranean would have to be added to the areas in which the status quo was threatened.

The 1935 DRC report took a very different approach from the 1934 report.³ Whereas the first report had attempted to frame defence policy in terms of diplomatic action, emphasizing the need to maintain a balance of forces to pursue peace through diplomacy, the second was purely concerned with increasing British security through strength, regardless of diplomatic

1. Swanson to Roosevelt, 5 Aug. 1935; Roosevelt Papers, PSF, Departmental Correspondence, Box 28, quoted in Roskill, Naval Policy, ii, p.310.

2. CP.187(35), Memorandum by Hankey, 7 Oct. 1935.

3. DRC-37, 21 Nov. 1935; circulated as CP.26(36).

developments. The report outlined its theme starkly:

Japan means to dominate the Far East, as Germany means to dominate Europe. We must, of course, employ all the resources of diplomacy to avoid ruptures anywhere, but the fact remains that we are living in a world more dangerous than it has ever been before, that we can count on no-one but ourselves unless we are strong.

The report dealt largely with the Navy. The RAF already had a major expansion programme under way; the Army's proposals, dealing largely with mechanization, were still the subject of great controversy. The Navy, it was recommended, should maintain the two-power standard over Germany and Japan. While the existing margin over those two powers was acceptable, for it to remain so considerable construction would have to be undertaken. The programme that was endorsed included the laying down of seven new battleships in 1937-9; twenty new cruisers in 1936-9, which would finally bring the Royal Navy up to seventy such ships; four new aircraft carriers, and two extra flotillas of destroyers. The construction budget would rise from the current £11 millions to £36½ millions by 1939. In addition, £25 millions were earmarked for the remedying of deficiencies over three years.

During the winter of 1935-6 this programme was reviewed by the Ministerial Committee and the Cabinet. The debate was utterly different from that on the first DRC report. No one questioned the need for rearmament; no diplomatic alternatives were proposed. The Treasury's objections were concerned not with the principle, but with the tactical questions of ordering priorities. On 3 March, this programme was published as a White Paper on Defence. It included the Navy's construction programme, sanctioned in its entirety. The Admiralty had finally won its battles of 1934.

By the time the Admiralty's programme was approved by the Cabinet, the ill-fated Second London Naval Conference had met. The Cabinet decided on 23 October to comply with the earlier treaties, and summon a conference regardless of its prospects. This was done although bilateral talks with

France and Italy had still not started, and despite the fact that League of Nations sanctions were being applied against Italy. The Cabinet accepted that no quantitative limitation was likely, but it was thought important that the blame for the breakdown be seen to lie squarely on the shoulders of Japan, Italy and France. Furthermore, they hoped that some qualitative limits might still be placed upon the new construction that was likely to take place in all naval nations after 1936.

In Washington, the General Board believed, accurately, that the British would make a further attempt to secure the 'practical continuance' of the ratio system through the advance declaration of building programmes; if so, it argued, the United States should support this but make a series of claims for increases in her tonnage to match prospective increases by Britain and Japan.¹ The Board put forward a complicated 'yardstick' formula for the calculation of increases in tonnage and the transfer of tonnage between categories: e.g. equating three tons of destroyers to one ton of submarine tonnage in defensive value. On 19 November, before Norman Davis and Admiral Standley left for London as American Principal Delegate and Naval Adviser respectively, they discussed their objectives with Roosevelt at the White House.² The President was adamant that the search for quantitative limitation should continue, but he accepted that, should the Japanese withdraw from the Conference, a qualitative agreement should be pursued as a 'second-best' option, subject to an escape clause to allow construction outside the agreed qualitative limits in case of such construction by a non-signatory. This marked the first official recognition in the US that the ratio system might have to be abandoned, and something akin to the British compromise proposals adopted instead.

1. GB. 438-1, serial 1696 of 4 Oct. 1935, see also Roskill, Naval Policy, II, pp.312-3.

2. D/S 500.A15 a5/564, Memorandum of meeting, 19 Nov. 1935: FRUS 1935/I, pp.144-9.

The Second London Naval Conference convened on 9 December, 1935, at the Foreign Office.¹ The opening was overshadowed by the Hoare-Laval Pact, which became public on the same day, causing the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare as Foreign Secretary. Each of the five Washington powers was represented, and it was understood by them that the participation of Germany and the Soviet Union would be desirable at a later stage in the Conference. The organization of the Conference followed the pattern set at London in 1930. The first plenary session established a 'First Committee' to conduct the principal business of the Conference, which in turn appointed technical sub-committees, a drafting committee and several ad hoc committees.

The first item on the agenda of the Conference was the Japanese proposal calling for the Common Upper Limit. The Japanese delegates had instructions to sign nothing without first establishing parity with the USA. Unless she was satisfied quantitatively, Japan would not even discuss qualitative limitation.

On 8 December, the day before the Conference opened, the British and American delegations had met privately to discuss the Japanese claim. They reluctantly agreed that there was no alternative but to stand firm together. Once the Japanese had given full details of their plan, including their preference for reduction in the navies of the three major maritime powers to a level somewhat below that of their own existing fleet, they found that no power was prepared to accept it, even as a basis for negotiation.

Repeated attempts were made to persuade the Japanese to abandon their demands for the Common Upper Limit.² The Japanese offered to support the

1. The proceedings are published by the US as Department of State, Conference Series, No.24, 'The London Naval Conference of 1935' (Washington, 1936). See also 'Report of the Delegates, London Naval Conference, 1935', undated but circulated on 24 April, 1936: copy in Davis Papers, Box 39.

2. Reported in letter, Davis to Roosevelt, 20 Dec. 1935: MS Roosevelt Papers, Hyde Park, PSF: Naval Conference, 1935-6. Also DBFP, op.cit., pp. 736-755; FO 371/19803/4.

idea that Britain should be allowed to exceed the Common Upper Limit because of her 'greater responsibilities', but remained immovable on parity with the United States. This attempt to drive a wedge between Britain and the United States was strongly resisted; indeed the two delegations came to work very closely together. William Phillips, the US Under-Secretary of State and a delegate at London, lauded the cooperative spirit of the British Delegation and told the President, 'the British do not make a single move without talking it over with Norman(Davis)'.¹ Davis and Craigie tried once again, as in December 1934, to explore with the Japanese the possibility of a modus vivendi for a few years 'until a more favourable atmosphere of good will and confidence' existed. But Davis stressed that the United States could not afford to sanction any material alteration in the naval balance in the Pacific. To do so would be to surrender America's ability to defend Alaska, the Philippines, and possibly Hawaii, and to make American interests in China and elsewhere in the Far East hostage to Japanese naval power.

When it became clear that neither side would change its position, the Japanese Government withdrew its delegation from the Conference.² Its departure on 15 January caused no great sorrow. The State Department at least felt that 'it will not do any harm to have (the Japanese) in the position of being the only ones who are unwilling to enter into general discussions without having their own demands granted a priori'.³ The remaining delegates turned to the prospects for qualitative limitation and the exchange of information. These were dealt with in two technical sub-committees chaired respectively by Chatfield and Craigie.

The Craigie Committee had a relatively easy time.⁴ The British backed

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1. Phillips to Roosevelt, 20 Dec. 1935: Roosevelt Papers, loc.cit.
 2. LNC(35) (UK)13, 14 Jan. 1936: DBFP op.cit., No.617, pp.771-3.
 3. Letter, James Dunn (Div. of W. European Affairs) to Norman Davis, 15 Jan. 1936: Davis Papers, Box 37.
 4. Its minutes are in FO 371/19804, A 565/4/45.

down from their advocacy of pre-notification of building schedules for several years in advance, and accepted notification on an annual basis. In this they were influenced by a realistic assessment of the likelihood of getting Germany, or later Japan, to adhere to anything more ambitious when their current behaviour amounted to duplicitous concealment of their actual building activity. The Agreement for Advance Notification and the Exchange of Information, drafted by the end of January and subsequently incorporated into the treaty, provided for the confidential exchange between parties of their annual programmes of construction within the first four months of each year, for the exchange of full details of the design of each ship within four months of its being laid down, and for notification of changes of design made during construction.

The Chatfield Committee on qualitative limitation found it harder to gain general agreement.¹ The Americans would not agree with the Europeans on the reduction of battleship size; while the Europeans feared that American proposals to halt 10,000-ton cruiser construction would place the US beyond challenge in this class. Ultimately, a 'non-construction' zone was agreed between 8,000 and 17,000 tons, aimed at preventing the evasion of cruiser limitation by the construction of 'pocket' battleships.

Another attempt was made, with little hope of success, to secure the abolition of the submarine. As expected, the French refused to contemplate it. One other measure of qualitative agreement was accepted, though; the four powers agreed to reduce the maximum size of aircraft carriers from 27,000 to 23,000 tons.

After the Japanese withdrawal the British began to consider the possibility of including Germany and the Soviet Union in the Conference in order to get the qualitative limits accepted at least throughout Europe. The original idea of bringing these powers into the Conference

1. Its minutes are in FO 371/19804, A 970/4/45.

as soon as a naval agreement was in sight was vetoed by the French, who refused to discuss any agreement which implied the acceptance of German violations of the Versailles treaty.¹

The British then suggested a compromise whereby nothing would be signed at the Conference, but a draft treaty would be submitted to all naval powers. A Protocol might, though, be initialled at the Conference committing Britain (and other signatories) to signing the Treaty at a certain date, independently of the action of other powers.

This compromise was rejected by the United States. Norman Davis wanted any treaty to be signed rapidly, before the Conference's adjournment. His argument was multi-faceted: the American delegation had to leave before the end of March; the United States Government had always acted on the assumption that a Treaty would be signed at the Conference; the Senate would never understand the subtleties of the protocol proposal; and that as Congress would be adjourning early that year, there would be no time for the Treaty's ratification under the procedure suggested by the British.

American rejection of the Protocol proposal signalled the end of hopes for a broad multilateral treaty. Nevertheless, the British decided next to ask the naval powers outside the Conference - including Japan - for their comments on the proposed qualitative limitations and the scheme for exchange of information.² Realizing that this would do little good if the Germans, in particular, remained outside any treaty framework through French obstinacy, they then adopted a bilateral approach. The Admiralty felt that the double risk involved if neither Japan nor Germany accepted

1. The question of extension of the Conference is fully covered in FO 371/19807, A 1323/4/45, Minute by Craigie: 'Points for Discussion at a Meeting in the Secretary of State's Room', 11 Feb., 1936. See also DBFP, op.cit, No. 652, Eden to Sir G. Clerk, 14 Feb. 1936 (A 1343/4/45), pp.830-4.

2. DBFP, op.cit., No.668: Record of a meeting of the UK Delegation, 22 Feb. 1936 (LNC(35)(UK)52; A 1413/4/45); pp.852-4.

the terms of the treaty was too great. Britain would therefore approach the Germans with a view to concluding an Anglo-German qualitative naval agreement, based on the terms of the embryonic four-power agreement, which 'would 'round off' the Anglo-German quantitative naval agreement.¹ When it was pointed out that another Anglo-German naval agreement would displease the Soviet Union, it was decided to offer a similar pact to the Russians.

At the end of February, as the terms of the qualitative agreement were completed, and the decision to bring Germany into a bilateral pact separate from the new London Treaty had been taken, a new problem arose. Italy had amicably co-operated with the other Western Powers at the Conference despite her continuing political isolation as a result of her actions in Abyssinia. On 27th February, however, the Italian Ambassador in London² delivered, without warning, the message that Mussolini could not sign the Treaty. As long as League of Nations sanctions were in force against Italy, Mussolini could not go against popular feeling in Italy and sign a naval treaty. 'A Dictator', Signor Grandi argued, 'was dependent upon his public opinion; indeed he had to face an election every day'. While Italy would publicly refuse to sign on technical grounds, because she was unsatisfied with the failure to reduce the size of battleships, she would have no objection to the limits at present proposed once the political situation had eased. She simply did not wish her real, political, objection to signature to be made public.³

With Italy outside the Treaty, it might be politically impossible for France to sign. Craigie and Davis were forced to consider the prospect that only Britain and America would be prepared to sign a treaty. Both

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.672: Record of a meeting in Sir W. Malkin's room, 24 Feb, 1936 (LNC(35)(UK54; A 1413/4/45); pp.860-2.

2. Signor Grandi.

3. DBFP, op.cit., No.681: Eden to Ingram (Chargé, Rome), 27 Feb.,1936; No.685, Record of a conversation between Craigie and Grandi, 28 Feb.,1936. (pp.877-8, 879-80)

men agreed that, should this be the case, it would nevertheless be worthwhile to sign some document which would demonstrate Anglo-American agreement. To avoid the appearance of an alliance, it was suggested that the two delegations might sign a memorandum setting out the terms of the treaty and committing themselves to signing it providing one other Power did so. This would make it possible for Germany to come in to the Treaty, which France could not prevent once she herself had declined to sign.¹

The possibility of a three-power, Anglo-German-American treaty, was not pursued far. Davis received instructions from an increasingly impatient State Department to stop pursuing political questions in which America had no part, and to return in the middle of March.² Fortunately, the idea of such a treaty including Germany reached French ears in time to make them overcome their fears of Italy staying outside the Treaty. Given a choice between France and Germany being the third power in a three-power treaty with Britain and America, the French would pay a lot to ensure they were the Power included. On 3 March the French agreed to sign a three-power treaty.³ On 7 March German forces occupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland.

A final plenary session of the Conference was held on 25 March, at which the Treaty was signed by the United States, France, and most of the British Empire. The Irish and South Africans excused themselves from signing, as they did not operate any naval vessels. The Italians, in publicly explaining their decision not to sign, abandoned the pretence that sanctions were not the obstacle to their agreement.

The terms of the treaty followed the provisions agreed by the Chatfield

1. DBFP, op.cit., No.686: Eden to Lindsay, 28 Feb., 1936.

2. FO 371/19809, A 1954/4/45, Memorandum by Craigie, 2 March, 1936.

3. FO 371/19809, A 1999/4/45, Memorandum by Craigie, 3 March, 1936.

and Craigie Committees. They included comprehensive 'safe-guarding' clauses against actions by non-signatory powers. Thus signatories could depart from the Treaty's provisions if this was necessary 'to meet the requirements of national security', in the event of their becoming engaged in war, or in the event of the qualitative limitations being exceeded by a non-signatory. Similarly, a contracting power could depart in any year from its declared annual programme if it considered this to be necessary due to any 'change of circumstances'.

The safeguarding clauses appeared to offer loopholes big enough to steam a battleship through. The efficacy of the treaty would largely depend, therefore, on the number of naval powers which would eventually, through separate bilateral agreements, accept its provisions. For instance, the arrangements for the notification of building programmes would mark a great improvement in existing procedures for the exchange of information as long as all naval powers accepted them; however, if one or more powers remained aloof and conducted naval building in secret, the uncertainty would necessitate use of the safeguarding clauses, and the treaty would be worthless.

The treaty was supposed to last six years, until 31 December, 1942. A protocol was signed committing the signatories to act in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty in case of a delay between the expiration of the Washington and London Treaties at the end of 1936 and the ratification of the new Treaty by its signatories. This was included at British request, because the Cabinet had decided on 18 March, in the light of the Rhineland crisis to withhold British ratification of the Treaty until a bilateral agreement had been concluded with Germany.

One other Protocol was included in 1936, to which the British attached the highest importance: this continued in force the provisions of the 1930 London Treaty prohibiting unrestricted submarine warfare against unarmed merchant ships.¹ Japan and Italy joined the other three

1. Cmd. 5302 of 1936.

1930 signatories in signing this document, and Germany and most other European naval powers ratified it later. The value of such signatures was to be demonstrated shortly.

Little difficulty was experienced in the ratification of the 1936 Treaty in Washington. The Treaty passed the Senate on 18 May, 1936, after only two hours' desultory debate. No Senator considered the Treaty significant enough to oppose; equally, none went out of his way to support it. The French and British waited for the conclusion of a bilateral pact with Germany.

The conclusion of the 1936 Treaty was followed by a considerable effort to extend its qualitative restrictions by bilateral agreements, not only to Germany and the Soviet Union, but to any other naval power which would sign.¹ Although overshadowed by the rush of more significant events in a Europe moving rapidly towards war, the British Government did have considerable success in gaining the accession of other European powers to the terms of the 1936 naval Treaty.

The decision to pursue bilateral treaties stemmed from a series of interdependent influences. For Britain, tied to Germany quantitatively by the 1935 Agreement, it was essential both to obtain German support of the qualitative restrictions and to avoid the possibility of evasion. Germany and Russia had been prevented from entering the London Conference by French and Japanese objections, necessitating separate discussions. As they were chiefly concerned with the Baltic, the Germans would not agree to additional restrictions unless the Soviets were also bound by them. Russia, however, was alarmed by Germany's renewed building and the threat from Japan; she sought, therefore, to improve her decrepit fleet, which had seen few new ships since the Revolution, in both the Baltic and

1. Survey of International Affairs, 1936, pp.110-116; Documents on International Affairs, 1936, pp.634-42; accounts of these negotiations may be found also in FRUS, 1936/i, pp.102-21; DGFP, Series C, IV, pp.1123 ff.

the Far East. Equally, the Russians were concerned about the navies of her smaller neighbours, so Britain sought to bring each of these nations under similar limitations.

At the conclusion of the formal Conference, the Foreign Office issued invitations to talks on bilateral accession to Italy, Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union, Poland, Turkey, and the four Scandinavian countries. The Japanese reaffirmed their lack of interest in qualitative limits, while protesting their anxiety to avoid a naval race, and indicating their complete satisfaction with existing types and sizes of vessels. The only advantage Japan could derive from acceding to the London Treaty would be that she would then be entitled to receive advance information regarding the construction programme of other signatories; however, the freedom from a corresponding obligation upon the Japanese to announce their own building outweighed, in Japanese eyes, this advantage. In May 1936 rumours circulated in Europe and the United States that the Japanese were designing a giant battleship. They were promptly denied by the Japanese Government. In fact, the keel for the first of the 66,000-ton Yamato class battleships had been laid nearly eighteen months before.

Poland and the Scandinavian states readily agreed in principle to the new naval system, and signed bilateral treaties in 1938. Italy finally acceded to the naval restrictions in December 1938, as a condition of the Anglo-Italian friendship pact of the same year. Only the Turks raised a large number of objections to the terms of the limitations on grounds both of principle and substance, and Anglo-Turkish talks dragged on into 1939 without result.

More intense negotiations were necessary to conclude the agreements with Germany and the Soviet Union. In February 1936 the German Government accepted the principle of the naval agreement, subject to the 'unreserved accession of the Soviet Union'. Further contacts were then suspended in March because of the Rhineland crisis and not resumed until June. The

Germans had reservations upon a number of technical points, such as a desire to reduce the age limits of capital ships to 20 years instead of the London Treaty's 26 years. In addition, the provisions of the 1935 Anglo-German Agreement were amended to permit Germany to build a total of five 10,000 ton cruisers, two more than earlier authorized.

The Soviet Government, with which negotiations began in May 1936, stipulated four conditions for its acceptance of the pact. These were, first, that Germany subscribe to the restrictions; second, that the Soviet Far Eastern fleet be exempted from its terms; third, that they be allowed to equip capital ships with 16-inch guns, i.e. larger than the 14 inches stipulated in the 1936 treaty, but equal to the maximum formerly allowed under the Washington Treaty; and fourth, that they be permitted to build nine or ten 8,000-ton cruisers with 7.1-inch guns, in spite of the proposed heavy cruiser building holiday. The latter request was the most alarming to Britain, as such an increase in Soviet cruiser construction would undoubtedly enlarge the German, and possibly the Japanese, cruiser programmes, which in turn would raise French, Italian and American building programmes.¹

Britain and Germany gave way to the bulk of the Soviet demands, after much soul-searching on the British part, where it was felt that the Soviet claims negated even the few small positive measures of limitation that the 1936 Treaty brought about. The increases in gun calibre for the Russian cruisers were accepted because Soviet arsenals could not readily retool for the lower treaty calibre of 6-inches, and such a deficiency would greatly delay Russian construction. The difficulties brought about by the proposed number of Soviet cruisers posed a more serious matter, for Germany would not accept an inferior cruiser fleet. As a compromise, the Soviet Union agreed to build not more than seven 8,000-ton vessels, compared

1. DGFP, Series C, IV, pp.1187-90; FRUS, 1936/i, pp.102-3.

to Germany's five. The exemption of the Soviet Far Eastern fleet was accepted once it became clear in June that Japan would not consider accepting qualitative limits; and the requirement of 16" guns in new capital ships was accepted as a reservation in the Soviet treaty largely because neither Britain nor Germany believed that the Soviet Union would be able to construct such vessels in the foreseeable future. The Soviet Union and Germany simultaneously signed bilateral pacts with the British in London on 17 July, 1937; and the British and French then proceeded with the ratification of the London Treaty, which went into effect on 29 July.¹

Agreement had been reached by 1938 on standards of construction and exchange of information which had achieved general acceptance throughout Europe. A price had been paid to achieve this universality: the London limits had been raised in three instances to gain Germano-Soviet agreement. Like Britain, the United States was unhappy with these departures, but chose not to register 'any formal objection or to comment', nor 'either formally or informally to acquiesce in or reject' the bilateral accords.² Unlike Britain, the United States regarded the bilateral agreements as being worthless. This was partly, no doubt, a result of America's greater concern with Japan than with European naval developments; but more importantly, it is clear that the United States felt the qualitative and information agreements to have little more than cosmetic value. The United States, in its preparation for the 1935 London Conference, was the only power which had seriously considered a further measure of quantitative reduction - Roosevelt's 20% cut proposal. She had come away the disillusioned signatory of a treaty which, in practice, accepted the end of quantitative limitation and sought

1. The German and Soviet pacts were published respectively as Cmd.5519 and 5518 of 1937. The progress of these and the other bilateral negotiations was reported each year in the statements by the First Lord on the Navy Estimates for 1937, 1938 and 1939: Cmds.5385, 5680 and 5952.

2. FRUS, 1936/i, p.143.

only to provide rules of gentlemanly conduct for the naval race that followed.

Despite the attention paid in Britain to the series of naval agreements of the mid- to late-nineteen-thirties, they had no effect on the actual behaviour of their signatories, and must therefore be counted as failures. Their failure to control the naval aspects of the global arms race that led up to the outbreak of war should have been no surprise; they were framed expressly in terms which permitted their signatories to do what they wished, and forbade them to do what they would not or could not do in any event. Moreover, it is unrealistic to assume that any treaty would have been signed at that time which would have done otherwise. Limitation by agreement first requires a desire for limitation. Such a desire was singularly lacking in most powers in 1935-6.

Before dismissing the whole effort to salvage some naval agreement as a tragic or pointless waste of time, one or two positive, if unplanned, outcomes of the negotiations might be considered. First, Anglo-American naval relations came full circle from the antagonism and hostility of the late 1920s. Thanks largely to Robert Craigie and Norman Davis, but backed fully by their respective principal naval colleagues, Admirals Chatfield and Standley, a close working relationship was established in 1934-6 between the two nations' navies which was to prove an invaluable base for later wartime cooperation.

Second, the Anglo-German Naval Agreements may, perversely, have helped Britain to win the war even though they did nothing to actually limit the growth of the Germany Navy, and although Britain almost certainly entered into them in too trusting and naïve a spirit. It is very probable that by actually setting a target size for the Germany Navy which the British knew of and did not fear, the British were prevented from pouring valuable defence resources into naval vessels which would not have contributed a great deal in 1940. Had there been no naval agreement, it is

entirely possible that part of the funds devoted to air rearmament in 1936-9 might have been put towards the construction of yet more battleships to meet an unknown or overestimated German threat. The consequences of such an order of priorities could have been disastrous.

Lastly, one might be grateful that no agreement was signed which bound the democracies to quantitative limitation of their own fleets while leaving the aggressor states unbound. An Anglo-French-American, or even a bilateral Anglo-American pact might, even with escape or escalator clauses, have interfered seriously with the freedom of the Western Powers to rearm against the dictatorships. As it was, the Western powers agreed implicitly to ignore one another's strength and build against the common enemies. In the ending thereby of Anglo-American naval rivalry lay the start of the Anglo-American alliance.

Chapter VIII

THE WASHINGTON SYSTEM IN RETROSPECT

The Washington System of naval limitation has been relegated almost to the status of a footnote to twentieth-century history, overshadowed by the momentous and dramatic events that occurred before and after its fifteen-year span, events whose significance in shaping the contemporary world are rightly recognized. The interwar attempts at arms control were, however, seen by the participating powers as central to their foreign and defence policies, and to the strategic balance between those powers. The failure in this instance of arms control as a means of preventing military rivalry and political conflict must be admitted; but to give a balanced judgement upon the interwar naval limitation it is necessary closely to examine exactly what the Washington System did and did not accomplish.

The impact of the Washington System may be examined from three viewpoints: the impact on the navies directly controlled by the treaties, including their size, efficiency, and rate of change of weapons technology; secondly, the impact on domestic politics in the several naval powers; and thirdly, deriving largely from the first two elements, the impact upon international relations and the strategic balance.

A review of the terms of the Washington and 1930 London Treaties might leave considerable doubt as to their effectiveness in controlling the forces of the five principal naval powers. A major ground for doubt as to the usefulness of the quantitative limitations might be the fact that the tonnage levels of the signatories were, in many categories of vessel for much of the period of the Treaties, well below the permissible limits. Britain and the United States failed to build up their allotted quotas in the auxiliary vessel classes until the very end of the period of the Treaties; France and Italy, remaining outside the auxiliary vessel

limits, did not utilize their permitted capital ship tonnage, again until the last months of the Treaty. Japan was something of a special case, which I shall examine later. For Britain and America, though, it may be asked whether the total tonnage limits were set so high as to be irrelevant, or whether they did actually pose a constraint on building policies and operational strengths.

In the failure of the signatory powers to build up to treaty limits may be seen a variety of motives. In the first place, until the mid-1930s there was no expectation that conflict was imminent. There were, therefore, strong arguments for deferring any new construction, and not on grounds of economy alone. It was deemed prudent to keep some tonnage in reserve, so that in the event of a deterioration in the political climate, new ships could be built for the fleet with a greater value in combat than old ships depreciated by years of peacetime service. The concept of naval power as a deterrent was imperfectly understood, even within the contemporary navies; it was easy for the ill-informed to see the peacetime Navy as a cadre existing primarily to maintain traditions and expertise which could be conferred upon an expanded Navy at a later time if the harmonious state of international relations deteriorated. Such thinking overlooked the long lead-time required for the production of ships, the need to maintain shipbuilding capacity, and the rapidity of change in international politics; but it lay behind such policies as the British 'Ten Year Rule' which sought to reduce the British armed forces to some indeterminate minimum level necessary for peacetime commitments and the maintenance of the capacity to expand. In the financial climate of the interwar period, such ideas proved highly serviceable to the many enemies of naval expenditure.

Additionally, the British and American governments in particular were

susceptible to the belief that further naval reduction was not only possible but likely. There was little point in building up to treaty limits if those limits were to be reduced at the next conference; and expectations of each impending Conference were invariably boosted, especially in Britain, by the Treasury for which they provided a further argument against expenditure on construction. Moreover cutbacks in construction could be used as a bargaining gambit or as a diplomatic gesture in pre-conference negotiations; the British cut cruiser construction, for example, in 1927 and 1929, in the expectation of reciprocal cuts or of overall reduction at the 1927 and 1930 Conference.

There was, therefore, good reason for Britain and the United States not to treat the London Treaty limits as a target for the size of the fleet. The auxiliary vessel classes limited in 1930 were maintained for the first four years of the London Treaty almost exactly at pre-Treaty levels, considerably below the Treaty maximum. In these cases, the existence of the Treaty limits did serve to prevent an increase in the number of vessels, until the political climate had changed so far - by 1934 - as to force the hand of Britain and the United States towards rearmament. In the capital ship category, on the other hand, the limit was first set, in the exceptional circumstances of Washington, at a point well below the existing force level, and was combined with a building holiday. The navies therefore sought simply to conserve their existing equipment, and the maintenance of their fleets at Treaty level did not involve further capital expenditure. Here, the Treaty limit was indeed a closely-followed determinant of actual fleet size; but the Washington Treaty was a very different agreement from the London Treaties. Washington was an agreement on arms reduction, a genuine 'disarmament' pact; the London Treaties aimed not at reduction but merely limitation. In this the London Treaty of 1930 was partly successful. Where in 1929 Britain and the United States were poised on the brink of a cruiser-building race which would

have taken their cruiser fleets well above what became the London limits, the Treaty enabled them to maintain largely unchanged force levels. Only when a new threat emerged outside the Treaty framework, in 1933-4, was the impetus for naval expansion restored.

Apart from the impact of the Washington System on the size and composition of the British and American navies, some attempt must be made to assess whether the System had other effects upon those navies' efficiency, morale, or rate of technical development. The lack of comparative data leaves any conclusions open to challenge, but one might reasonably deduce some points.

Although both British and American Admirals used the arguments of reduced naval morale and increased inefficiency against cuts in naval building, it is hard to see how these could have had a direct impact on naval operations except over a long period of time as the proportion of obsolete, hard-to-maintain vessels in the fleets rose. The reduction or limitation of fleet size did of course reduce the 'tooth-to-tail' ratios of the services, but in view of the period of preparation and rearmament both expected and received by the navies before another major conflict, it might be argued that this did not reduce efficiency, but simply facilitated the eventual rebuilding of the navies with greater ease. Morale was probably only a problem among Flag Officers, for whom seagoing commands were in short supply in a limited Navy: a glance at the relevant Navy List for any time in the period 1920 to 1935 shows up to one-third of officers of Flag Rank in the Royal Navy's Active List on half-pay without a command.

The rate of technical development between the wars cannot be compared fairly with the great advances made under the pressure of wartime conditions, but when compared to the rapid advances in naval technology in the twenty-year periods before 1914 or after 1945, the pace of change in the interwar period was extremely slow. Ship design saw few innovations, the chief areas of progress being the slow but steady evolution of the aircraft

carrier and the refinement of the heavy cruiser. Both of these were influenced by the treaty restrictions. The aircraft carrier, although rigidly limited by the Washington Treaty, was the only class of naval vessel over 10,000 tons that naval architects could try their skills upon during the battleship 'holiday', and as a class it increased in importance along with the improvements in the capabilities of aircraft. The heavy cruiser, with eight-inch guns and a displacement approaching 10,000 tons, was a design almost exclusively determined by the Washington Treaty limits, and was frequently known because of this as the 'Washington' cruiser. The object of the designers was simple: to build as powerful a ship as possible without its being subject to the rules for capital ships. The ultimate example of a treaty, or rather treaty-evading, cruiser was the German 'pocket-battleship' design, again built to a 10,000-ton displacement, but mounting ten-inch guns (allowed under the Versailles Treaty but not the Washington Treaty). Designed like the capital ship for gunnery duels, the Washington cruisers also proved of little use in a conflict which saw markedly few such engagements. Indeed, the most important developments in naval technology in this period concerned neither ships nor guns, but developments in aviation, radar and anti-submarine techniques, which fall outside the scope of this work.¹

The reduction in construction had a major impact on the shipbuilding industries in Britain and the United States. In Britain, the trickle of orders that continued through the 1920s was insufficient to maintain the large naval ship-building capacity of private firms. Some, like Cammell Laird and Thornycrofts, turned to almost exclusive reliance on merchant vessels; others closed down. Hardest hit were facilities for the production of guns and armour-plating: in the 1920s the rationalization of the naval

1. See G. Till, 'Airpower and the Battleship in the 1920s', and D. Henry, 'British Submarine Policy, 1918-1939' in B. Ranft, ed., Technical Change and British Naval Policy, 1860-1939 (London, 1977).

armaments industry reached a point whereby the Vickers-Armstrong combine became a monopoly supplier, working in close cooperation with the Admiralty to maintain the plant and skilled workforce in being on the tiny amount of work available.¹

In the United States, the shipbuilding famine was not as severe. More orders were placed during the 1920s, and rearmament began earlier - 1933 instead of 1935 - but there was, in any case, a much smaller specialist naval shipbuilding industry. The great expansion of output in wartime had been a result of converting merchant shipbuilders, and even more general engineering companies, to naval work, which they were glad to abandon. The pre-war US Navy, as with the pre-war American merchant fleet, were both considerably smaller than their post-war size, and the post-war policy of protection of the US merchant fleet in particular meant that shipbuilders were content with the relative prosperity of the times.

The Japanese interwar naval experience is rather different to those of Britain and America, the main subjects of this study. In 1930 she was the only power at or near to Treaty limits in each auxiliary vessel class, and she maintained her fleet at Treaty levels throughout the period. The 10:7 ratio for Japan in auxiliary vessels (and parity in submarines) was in large part conditioned by the fact that Japan already had more than 60% of the British or American numbers of vessels in different classes of ship, and acceptance of a 10:6 ratio would have imposed reduction upon her while failing to reduce British and American totals. Her building policy was conditioned by a number of factors. She considered that she faced greater immediate threats to her interests, both from China and the Soviet Union as well as the United States, thus necessitating larger standing armed forces. Her shipbuilding capacity was limited, making it difficult for her to expand her Navy rapidly in time of emergency. Most

1. H. Lyon, 'The British Admiralty and Private Industry' in B. Ranft, *op.cit.*

important, though, were considerations of national prestige and domestic politics.

The acceptance of an 'inferior' status by the Japanese Navy at Washington rankled greatly in naval and nationalist circles in Japan in the 1920s, a fact which made Japan the only state within the Washington System within which the naval Treaties were themselves to have a significant political impact. However, during the decade of the 1920s Japanese politics were dominated by liberals who held to the threefold policy of democratic government, civilian control over the armed forces, and co-operation with the Western powers abroad. It was not until 1929, with the onset of the depression in Japan, that these policies began to be seriously threatened by the growing challenge of the minority of extreme right-wing nationalists. The unrest and political divisions caused by the depression combined with old resentment of real or imagined Western insults to Japan to make the London Treaty the focus of a constitutional crisis.¹ The united opposition of military, naval and nationalist elements to the Treaty led, first, to the concession by the Liberal Government of increasing funding for the Navy in return for its acceptance of verification of the Treaty; secondly, to the removal of control over the Navy from the civilian government and its vesting in the Japanese Admiralty under the aegis of the Emperor; and thirdly to the removal of the Liberal Party from power and the establishment of the militarist Saito Government in 1932.

To the extent that the Japanese Navy, and after 1932 the Japanese government, resented and sought to evade the restrictions the Treaty imposed upon them, the Treaty incorporated from its conception the seeds of its own destruction. Evasion of Treaty terms predated even the London Treaty, though: the eight-inch gun cruisers of the Nachi and Atago classes, laid down in the 1920s, were declared by the Navy to be of 10,000 tons

1. Capt. M. Kennedy, The Estrangement of Britain and Japan, Ch.XIII.

displacement, in accordance with the Washington restrictions, but they reportedly displaced some 3,000 tons more.¹ The First and Second Replenishment Programmes, of 1931 and 1934, were designed to build as many ships as possible while maintaining the appearance of compliance with the Treaties, and included a large number of vessels whose completion was targeted for 1937, immediately upon the ending of the Treaty restrictions.

The Treaties therefore had very little effect upon the operational strength of the Japanese Navy, and indeed were hardly significant in limiting that service's strength once the initial capital ship reductions after Washington were completed. What the Treaties did do was to hasten the polarization of domestic politics in Japan, and to play a major rôle in determining Japan's foreign policy. The end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Four-Power Pact, and the successive attempts to place further limitations or reductions upon the Japanese Navy, each managed only to further alienate growing sections of the Japanese body politic from the West and from Western forms of government.

The 5:3 ratio established at Washington was a disastrous mistake from two standpoints. Not only did it offend Japanese sensibilities and isolate those pro-Western Japanese leaders who supported it, but it did not in fact achieve its object of giving Britain and America margins of overall superiority which would enable the three navies to meet on an equal basis in the Western Pacific. It failed in this because Japan insisted on the non-fortification clause which prevented Britain and America from developing operating bases within three thousand miles of Japan, thus assuring Japanese superiority in the waters off the China coast. Balfour had

1. S. Roskill, Naval Policy, II, p.27.

admitted in Washington that the 5:3 ratio principle was not based upon need or exact calculation of the forces necessary to achieve a balance in the Western Pacific, but as 'a practical principle of easy application.... If the basis adopted had been a precise calculation, he thought that he would have no difficulty in showing that of the three nations concerned in the agreement, the British Empire came out the worst'.¹ Certainly at such a ratio Britain was incapable of protecting her interests in China, and her ability to defend Malaya and the Pacific Dominions was greatly handicapped, given her need always to maintain naval superiority in Europe and her lack of suitable bases in the Far East. Even the presence of bases was no guarantee in itself: Singapore was completed, finally, in 1937, by which time the European situation had deteriorated so far as to prevent the fleet being sent to it. Britain was therefore dependent upon American seapower balancing Japan in the event of a political crisis in the Far East; and the United States was hardly in a better position than Britain, with her nearest base 4,000 miles from Japan at Pearl Harbour, two oceans to guard, and with a small and unbalanced auxiliary vessel fleet.

The London ratios on auxiliary vessels completed the damage begun at Washington. The 10:7 ratio, combined with parity in submarines, made Japan finally unchallengable in East Asia while fuelling her resentment at her position of 'inferiority' under the ratio system. Japan's policy of building to the Treaty limits and bending them where she could get away with it meant that for the life of the London Treaty, she had a navy actually numerically superior to that of the United States in the cruiser class, and to both Britain and America in the submarine category. The powerlessness of Britain and America was shown rapidly as Japan set about unilaterally carving out an exclusive sphere of interest in China: a project in which she had long tried to interest Britain on a reciprocal

1. CAB 30/31, quoted in C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, p.271.

basis, but for which she no longer needed British assistance and which need no longer take account of the American 'Open Door' policy. Secure behind her Treaty navy, Japan pursued her policy of aggression for a decade from 1931 without challenge.

Why were Britain and America so reluctant to resist Japanese claims and Japanese expansion? Stated at its simplest, the history of the naval conferences shows that before 1931, the Western nations were prepared to trust the Japanese as a 'law-abiding', pacifically-inclined nation, upon which they were prepared to gamble the continuation of liberal and internationalist government against granting naval impregnability. After 1931 it was too late: the Western powers found that the Treaty limits acted as restraints upon themselves, rather than on the Japanese. The treaties signified a major change in the balance of power in the Far East, the decline of British power in the area and the consolidation of Japanese, with remote America left as the principal countervailing power to Japan. The Treaties were not the beginning, nor even the principal cause of this change, but the Treaties accelerated, crystallized and stabilized this process.

In Europe, interwar naval diplomacy also had an impact upon the balance of power, although the importance of this impact was less because of the more peripheral nature of naval power in the overall strategic balance of the region. The central strategic problem of Europe was the control of Germany, largely disarmed for most of the period of the Washington System. This was a strictly military, not a naval problem; but the very lack of a German threat between 1919 and 1933 brought the naval problems of Europe closer to the centre of the political stage. The Franco-Italian naval balance was crucial to the relationship between what were, in the temporary absence of German and Russian competition, continental Europe's two most powerful states.

The French determination not to concede full equality to Italy ensured

the Mediterranean naval rivalry of the late 1920s and the 1930s. This had a number of effects. It threatened to push Italy out of the camp of the Western, status quo powers and into the 'revisionist' camp of expansionist powers; it prevented comprehensive naval limitation being extended to continental Europe; and it threatened the stability of the naval balance between the other major naval powers.

While Mediterranean naval rivalry had no effect whatsoever upon Japan or the United States, it did affect Britain, whose most important trade route, that with India and the Far East, passed through the Mediterranean. Britain could defend the exits from the Mediterranean at Gibraltar and Suez with relative ease, but to maintain her sea trade between those points in wartime required the presence in the Mediterranean of a British fleet at least equal to any threat in that sea. While in 1922 and 1930 the British were not concerned greatly with the exact balance between France and Italy, they were concerned to keep both those countries' fleets at as low a level as possible. Either an expanded French Navy, poised alongside the major British trade routes and particularly strong in submarines, or a powerful Italian Navy astride the narrow passages of the central Mediterranean and the Red Sea, would tie down a large proportion of British naval strength, and prevent Britain from concentrating her naval strength elsewhere, whether against Japan, a revitalized Germany, or even, should the need arise, against America.

Italy's tactic of proclaiming her willingness to accept any degree of disarmament as long as it was on a basis of equality with France was a brilliant political position to take, although there is no reason to doubt Italian sincerity in making the offer until after Hitler's achievement of power changed the basis of European diplomacy. It placed France in the position of the recalcitrant party, the obstacle to further achievement in arms limitation. This increased the friction between Britain and France, and served to damage France's position in the arguably more

important negotiations on land and air armaments at Geneva. But the failure to reach agreement between France and Italy damaged more than Britain's relations with France: it also weakened Britain's position vis-à-vis Japan and made her more dependent than ever upon a suspicious and unreliable America. The modified British 'Two-Power Standard' - equality with Japan plus the most powerful European Navy - was jeopardized as French and Italian strength in auxiliary vessels grew beyond the agreed 35% ratio in capital ships, and as French submarine forces exceeded British levels. The 'escalator clause' in the London Treaty, which had been provided for just such an eventuality, was not invoked for fear of destroying the fine balance between the 'High Seas' powers. Once again, then, the net effect in Europe of the Washington System was to weaken British power, not as in the Far East in the sense of enforcing British abdication of her responsibilities, but in increasing the risks Britain ran and reducing her ability to deal simultaneously with multiple threats. The increased danger to Britain that conflict in the Mediterranean posed was demonstrated in the second half of the 1930s with appalling clarity, first over Abyssinia, then in the 'non-intervention' policy over Spain.

A third change in the global balance of maritime power that occurred under the Washington System was more momentous in the long run than the theatre balances in either the Mediterranean or the Far East. In the two decades between 1916 and 1936 the United States Navy grew from a second-rank force in international terms into a navy equal to, and in many respects superior to, the Royal Navy. This was facilitated by, amongst other things, the cruiser agreement embodied in the London Treaty and Roosevelt's determination in the last years of the Washington System to build up to Treaty levels; but that is not to say that the Treaties were responsible for the change in the balance between Britain and America. The British concession of parity at Washington and London was a recognition of Britain's inability to compete with the United States should that

country seek naval superiority. The decision to share British mastery of the seas was, therefore, acceptance of a change made inevitable by the altered industrial and financial balance between the two countries. Moreover, it was the only possible course for Britain that might prevent or defer America achieving massive superiority over Britain: the establishment of parity, it was hoped, might divert the competitive instincts of American navalists and defuse the resentment of British strength that not only motivated naval building but also threatened to exacerbate political difference between the two countries on a wide range of issues. In this, the Treaties were unquestionably successful. The continuation of Anglo-American competitive building, either in capital ships after 1922 or in cruisers after 1930, would have had the inevitable result of establishing American superiority. The cost to Britain would have been enormous: not only the immediate costs of building and operating ships that she could not afford, but the political costs to Britain of alienating the greatest naval power. Britain was reliant upon America in too many ways: America was her largest trading partner, the largest location of British investment overseas, the creditor of her external debt, and the power whose industrial resources represented Britain's ultimate strategic reserve in wartime. Without American goodwill and access to American industrial resources Britain would have little chance in a major conflict. Recognition of that fact necessitated that Britain must pay whatever price was required to retain that goodwill. If the price was relinquishing command of the seas, so be it: Britain was fortunate, it seemed, to be able to maintain 'parity' with America.

Numerical parity in ships was no indicator of naval equality when comparing Britain and the United States. There was a marked asymmetry in the global commitments of the two navies and the strategic threats which they faced. Britain had to maintain lines of sea communication in order to hold together her Empire, necessitating a naval presence in all

seas. She faced potential threats to her territories or communications from every significant naval power. The United States, on the other hand, had internal lines of communication, faced no potential threat in the Western Hemisphere, and had only one area of significant commitment outside its own hemisphere, that of the maintenance of American interests in the Far East: the Philippines and the China trade. While America could concentrate on a potential Japanese threat, therefore, Britain also had to consider the likely actions of France, Italy, Germany and Soviet Russia, and had to coordinate the actions of her far-flung Dominions. Britain's colonial Empire was a continuous drain on her strength, and naval detachments were permanently stationed in the West Indies, South Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and South Pacific: all of which had to be found from within the totals allowed by Treaty to both Britain and America. Britain could therefore never fully concentrate her fleet; and that part of her fleet which could be concentrated did not have the mobility between theatres which the Panama Canal gave the United States Navy. 'Parity' between powers in such different circumstances was meaningless. Equality of fleets meant the granting of strategic superiority to the United States.

A further area in which the Washington System's effects must be examined is the relationship of the naval system to the broader search for disarmament and to the League of Nations. Disarmament was at the core of the new international order so fervently believed in by internationalists in the Western democracies. The Great War was widely if naïvely blamed upon 'the armament race', rather than upon the myriad political, social and economic tensions of pre-war Europe. The most dedicated supporters of the League of Nations had the most exaggerated hopes and the blindest faith in disarmament by conference. The World Disarmament Conference, so long in preparation, was seen as the final necessary step in the construction of the new world order, which would reduce armed forces to mere police forces for internal security, incapable

of offensive action and deprived of offensive weaponry.

The Washington Conference was acclaimed by many as a portent of the utopia to come. A conference that sank seventy Dreadnoughts, even though taking place outside the League's framework and limited to just five nations - one not even a member of the League - surely pointed the way to far greater achievements possible when the League turned its full attention to the problem. The Washington Conference took place under exceptional circumstances, though, and the naval powers were fortunate in having, in the 1920s, few contentious political disputes. Moreover, the disarmament problem was much simplified when restricted to the naval sphere. A ship could be easily measured, could be compared with other nations' ships, and was limited in the variety of characteristics it could possess. Warships could not easily be hidden, could not be produced in a hurry, could not be converted to or from other uses. The limited number of naval powers, and the relative ease of defining and measuring the weapons, made it logical to proceed with the naval disarmament effort independently of the general effort; the failure of the United States to join the League made this separation also more politically acceptable in that quarter. The Washington System, moreover, broke down partly through peculiar reasons of its own, unrelated except in a very general sense to the failure of land and air disarmament. That is not to say, though, that the Washington System was unrelated to the broader field of interwar arms control. The naval achievements did act as a spur to the general effort. The collapse of the land and air effort did contribute to the breakdown of the naval system, the débâcle at Geneva in 1932-4 making it virtually impossible to salvage the naval treaties in 1934-5. Beyond this, no European power could see naval armaments as entirely separate from other forms of armament; the climate of rearmament required increased naval defenses as much as other types. Naval limitation may indeed have contributed to the harmonious international climate of the 1920s. It could do

nothing for the problems of the 1930s.

To accept this, one must assess exactly what the Washington System failed to achieve. It clearly failed to 'freeze' or eliminate naval rivalry. Some combinations of Washington powers were more intensely rivals than others; and certainly naval competition did not universally reflect direct, reciprocating, bilateral rivalry such as that between, say, France and Italy. Nevertheless, the naval balance was so structured that a development in any one of the five powers had an impact on the strategic position of the other four: the transmission mechanism focussing upon Britain's rôle as the only power within the two distinct subsystems of the High Seas powers and the European naval powers. This overlap made Britain's position critical, the extent to which Britain responded, or failed to respond, to any quantitative or qualitative growth within either subsystem governing the stability of the system as a whole.

The failure to eliminate rivalry in numbers of ships can be attributed to two factors. The first was the failure of the London Conference and subsequent negotiations to bring French and Italian auxiliary vessels within the scope of the system, thereby making British naval security dependent in large part upon factors outside the system. Secondly it failed because of Japanese disillusionment with such limitation and deception with regard to her compliance with the Treaty requirements. The System also failed, however, to eradicate qualitative competition. This was, perhaps, inevitable. Unless a limitation system either banned all new construction or modification, or somehow prevented scientific and technical progress, it could not halt the continuous refinement of naval technology, and the corresponding pressure to upgrade the capabilities of naval vessels to keep ahead or abreast of other nations' development. At least the reduced pace of procurement, the reduced budgets available for research and development, and the treaty limitations on ship size, all combined to slow the pace of technological change during

the life of the Washington System. A capital ship, cruiser or submarine launched in 1937 was not radically different from a corresponding vessel completed fifteen years earlier. The same could not be said for any other peacetime period of comparable length in the past hundred years.

If the Washington System had only limited success in containing naval rivalry and technological change, it had no success at all in preserving the status quo of the naval balance prevailing in 1922 or 1930. The naval balance of power was radically altered both by the Treaties and in spite of them. Nor was it successful in paving the way to general disarmament. The General Disarmament Conference faced different problems, involving different countries, from those facing the naval conferences. Equally, naval limitations failed to create a general improvement in the international climate. The naval powers had few fundamental conflicts, and those that did exist were not principally naval in character: Japan's expansionary drive in China, for example, need not have brought about conflict with the Western naval powers had not the (land) war in Europe already been under way, making the East Indies a more opportune target than Siberia or further expansion in China. Naval limitation was not enough to settle or reduce political conflicts, although it might help to prevent the exacerbation of certain differences, such as those between Britain and America. It was not enough because naval questions were simply not central to the problems of interwar diplomacy. The Second World War was not fuelled by naval rivalry, as was the First. The control of naval rivalry therefore could not determine the outcome of political, economical or (in the strict sense) military rivalries.

One last 'might have been' of the Washington System needs to be considered, if only for the influence it held over visionary or romantic British statesmen such as Balfour and Churchill. The idea of a Pax Anglo-Americana, a tacit or explicit partnership of the two greatest navies, equal in size and united in purpose, seemed a splendid way to

preserve the post-Armistice status quo and build Wilson's new international order; a way to extend and improve the old nineteenth century Pax Britannica in the new circumstances of the postwar era.

An Anglo-American command of the seas was in the postwar era both technically and geographically possible. Between them, Britain and the United States dominated every 'choke point' of the world's sea routes: the Southern Capes, the interoceanic canals, the entrances and exits of every important enclosed sea: the Mediterranean, North Sea, Caribbean, Red Sea, South China Sea - each was dominated by British or American bases. The combined strength of the two navies was greater by a very considerable margin than that of all other world naval forces.

The difficulties obstructing the creation of such a Pax Anglo-Americana were formidable. It would have required fundamental changes in the outlook of the governing élites in both countries. British and American interests were indeed parallel in certain regions and on certain issues; but elsewhere they were in sharp and seemingly irreconcilable conflict. Ireland, Palestine, the 'Open Door' in China; control of Middle Eastern oil, Belligerent Rights, Imperial Preference and American Protectionism; war debts, economic rivalry in South America - the list of conflicting interests is lengthy, and such matters needed resolution before a true Anglo-American entente was possible. Whether such difficulties could have been overcome it is impossible to say, because in the brief period when such a partnership might have been created, the period between the Armistice and the Washington Conference, and in particular at the Versailles Conference, there were two conditions which prevented an attempt being made at such cooperation. One was the unwillingness of the naval leadership on both sides, with certain honourable exceptions such as Admiral Sims, to accept naval equality and the need for cooperation with the other. The other, more important, reason was the US Senate's rejection of the League of Nations, which was, in the eyes of the Wilson Administration, the raison d'être of

any Pax Anglo-Americana. With America outside the League, with her foreign policy dominated by isolationism, any attempt at cooperation with her was foredoomed. The Pax Anglo-Americana of the pan-Anglo-Saxon idealists was just as good an idea, just as incapable of fruition, as the disarmed world of the more multinational idealists of the League of Nations Union.

After considering the achievements and failures of the Washington System, it may be appropriate - at the risk of some duplication - to assess the reasons why naval limitation was instituted in the interwar period, and conversely why more was not achieved.

A combination of factors have been shown to influence the several naval conferences out of which the limitations system emerged. They might conveniently be drawn together into three broad categories: domestic, or national pressures; international pressures; and technical or organizational factors.

The first set of influences must start with the public opinions of the naval powers. In 1921-2, the five powers meeting at Washington all had democratically-elected governments. By 1930 Italy had a dictatorship, and in 1935-6 Japan and of course Germany and the Soviet Union, belatedly brought within the scope of the naval negotiations, were authoritarian or totalitarian powers. Although there is an element of truth in Mussolini's maxim that 'a Dictator faces an election every day' - the authoritarian governments reflected as much as they created the prevailing public opinion of their countries - nevertheless such states, with their controlled press and lack of parliamentary opposition, were able to negotiate with little fear of domestic consequences. Japan in 1935-6, for instance, had no internationalist or pacifist lobby to press her to continue within a system of naval limitation.

In Britain and the United States, the pressures of public opinion were perhaps greatest. Both nations had powerful and well-organized pressure-groups for disarmament and for 'peace': in the United States organized through the churches, in Britain centred around the more secular and internationalist but nevertheless moralistic League of Nations Union. Both countries' pressure-groups reflected both a revulsion at the slaughter of the First World War, whose outbreak was now simplistically attributed by many to competition in armaments; and revulsion at the cost of maintaining armed forces in peacetime at the levels prevailing in the inter-war period, when faced with so many competing claims for government expenditure or for its reduction.

These pressures reached their peak in both Britain and America in 1930 when the leading political personalities were inclined to lend a sympathetic ear to those pressing for disarmament; while at the same time, in France, Italy and Japan, those pressures were already waning. In 1930 it was no longer possible for an American President to appeal to M. Briand and overcome French national fears of the future, as in 1921; it was no longer possible for the Japanese negotiators to make concessions in their ratio in the interests of agreement, as also in 1921. Both French and Japanese public opinions would not admit the need for mutual concessions, for 'risk-taking' in the interests of agreement. The renewed national rivalries of the 1920s had become embedded in the public consciousness of those nations, thus depriving their governments of freedom of manoeuvre. The political pressures in France and Japan on the side of intransigence coincided with pressures in favour of concessions in Britain and America.

Economic influences were almost as powerful upon democratic politicians. In Britain these were particularly critical, because of the high proportion of its national product spent upon defence at a time when Britain faced both economic decline and unprecedented debts. Realization that Britain could not afford a naval building race tied British

negotiators' hands throughout the period, as they did not have the ultimate recourse open to the United States. Nevertheless the financial pressures on the United States government were very great: the Republican Administrations of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover were all dominated by the belief that economic progress could only be hindered by government. Money diverted from private hands into the government's for defence was wasted in the eyes of businessmen inside and outside the government. The pre-Keynesian financial orthodoxy that required balanced budgets was a powerful influence at both Washington in 1921, where the Western nations were pulling out of a post-war trade recession, and at London in 1930, when the onset of the depression led to a desperate search for ways to cut government expenditure. In the mid-1930s this changed, both as Franklin Roosevelt showed his willingness to spend money on public works (including naval construction), and in Britain the multiple threats to Imperial security overcame the parsimony of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The financial constraints, while still present, had been largely subsumed by other, international pressures by the time of the Second London Naval Conference.

Domestic politics, while closely intertwined with both public opinion and economics, could play a more direct rôle in naval negotiations. In 1921, for instance, President Harding used the naval initiative to restore his control over foreign policy from the Senate, and in particular from a member of his own party, Borah. Equally in 1930 MacDonalld's minority Labour Government needed a triumph in foreign policy to establish the credibility and competence of the Labour Party in a vital area of government policy outside its traditional interests in the social and economic field. The pressures of domestic politics, which might be defined as the 'public opinion' of the governing élites, were at their greatest in Japan, where the public opinion of the majority of the people and the support of the press tended then as now to be much more closely linked with and loyal to factions within the governing élites. The impact of naval

limitation on the Japanese political balance has been described, but equally, that political balance had an impact on the naval negotiations. The ability of the delegates in London in 1930 to compromise was constrained by fear of the domestic reactions; while the reaction that nevertheless followed prevented any Japanese delegates after that year from taking anything other than an intransigent stand. Domestic political factors were therefore instrumental, in different ways, in bringing about and in ending the Washington System.

For the sake of convenience it might also be appropriate to include the rôles played by purely personal factors within the scope of domestic influences on the naval system. In both Britain and America, the personal convictions of both politicians and naval officers appear to have facilitated agreement at both the Washington and first London Conference. In Washington, the personal authority and the pan-Anglo-Saxon vision of Arthur Balfour enabled the British delegates to readily accept the principle of parity with the United States. The extension of the Washington System at London was only possible through the personal relationship and trust established in 1929 between two men of great idealism and conviction, Hoover and MacDonald. Equally, on that occasion, both British and American Navies had professional heads who were prepared to accept the decisions of civilian politicians without protest. Admiral Pratt was almost unique among senior US Navy officers in the interwar period in not viewing the Royal Navy with suspicion and hostility. The Royal Navy was not helped in the presentation of its case at London by the fact that the office of First Sea Lord changed hands in the course of the Conference: but both successive incumbents, Admirals Madden and Field, appear not to have been forceful characters.¹

1. Gerald Wheeler, William Veazie Pratt (Washington, 1974). Both Admirals Beatty and Keyes (who was passed over for First Sea Lord apparently on the ground that he was too forceful) thought that Madden 'betrayed the trust that was put in him as First Sea Lord' by accepting cuts in naval building in 1927-1939; while Admiral Dudley Pound, commenting on Field's appointment

Among Japanese figures involved in naval limitation, the figure of one naval officer stands out in a way which no Anglo-Saxon naval figure does, as one prepared to work for international agreement irrespective of the narrow interests of his service. Admiral Kato Tomasoburo, the acting head of the Japanese delegation at Washington, risked a great deal in Japanese terms - the respect of his colleagues and subordinates - in order to pursue a rapprochement with the United States. Kato's belief that 'national defence could no longer remain monopolised by the military' was an exceptional view for a naval officer of the time.

In Britain and America, though, there were a handful of men who were not necessarily politicians or naval officers, but whose efforts for naval limitation - largely outside the public eye - were invaluable. The civilian disarmament 'experts' were a mixed bunch of men, including both professional diplomats and men from very different walks of life.

On the British side, two names in particular stand out throughout this history. Robert Cecil, aristocrat, pacifist and true believer in the League of Nations, was the greatest exponent of naval limitation in Britain. As a Conservative Cabinet Minister and Delegate to Geneva in 1927, as the British member of the Preparatory Commission and President of the League of Nations Union, he did much to keep the ideal of disarmament alive in Britain in the late 1920s in the face of rising Anglo-American antagonism. With his great personal prestige as President and chief propagandist of the League of Nations Union, he was an adviser on disarmament matters to the Labour and National Governments and to the

f/n.1 cont. from previous page

(March 1930) said, 'I can only suppose the Government want someone who will agree to all their reductions, etc.': Keyes Papers (ed. P.G. Halpern), ii (London, 1980), p.269 (No.214), Pound to Keyes, 4 March, 1930; pp.284-5 (Nos.231/2), Beatty to Keyes, Keyes to Madden, 1 and 6 Dec., 1930.

Disarmament Conference in the 1930s.¹

Cecil did suffer, though, from being too ardent; from believing, with the simplicity of a fanatic, that 'the way to disarm is to disarm'. A more sophisticated figure was Robert Craigie, a professional diplomat who became the Foreign Office's undisputed expert on naval affairs. Married to an American, Craigie spent fourteen years between 1923 and 1937 working upon Anglo-American relations in Whitehall. He returned from a posting in Washington in 1923 to become Robert Vansittart's deputy in the American Department, which he later ran as a Counsellor, then as an Assistant Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office. Craigie handled virtually all the day-to-day communication on arms control matters between the two governments, and his presence and experience gave continuity and coherence to successive Conferences and negotiations.

No single official in Washington achieved the undisputed authority in armaments matters that Craigie had in Whitehall. Responsibility for arms limitation conferences fell to the Western European Division of the State Department, but the responsibilities of the head of that division were so wide-ranging that he could not take personal control of all negotiations.

Responsibility for conducting the US side of the negotiations therefore fell upon a small group of men who, like Craigie, enjoyed and believed in their work and made themselves masters of the subject, but who did not hold official posts reflecting their interests and expertise. A secret report circulated in 1934 to the US Navy's General Board reported accurately, if hardly impartially, that 'For the past ten years or so limitation and reduction of armaments has been handled for the State

1. Surprisingly, no full biography of Viscount Cecil exists. He published two rambling autobiographical volumes (A Great Experiment, London, 1941, and All the Way, London, 1949), and there is a chapter devoted to him in K. Rose, The Later Cecils (London, 1975); vignettes of him are recorded in Pine's New Extinct Peerage and the Bridgeman Diaries.

Department by a closely knitted clique headed by Hugh S. Gibson and Hugh R. Wilson.¹

Hugh Gibson, a professional diplomat and delegate in 1927, 1930 and 1932, was Minister to Switzerland until 1927 and then Ambassador to Belgium; his presence in Europe and his personal friendships with European diplomats - as well as with President Hoover - made him 'Head of the armaments conference clique'.² Educated in, and spending most of his life in Europe, Gibson did have a professional detachment from the problems of limitation, seeing himself as 'Attorney for the State Department'. Hugh Wilson, Gibson's friend and successor as Minister to Switzerland, similarly attended every conference between 1927 and 1933, but played a more low-key rôle, undertaking the organizational and technical work while Gibson conducted the political negotiations.

From 1932, Gibson and Wilson were joined and then supplanted by Norman Davis, a much more partisan and flamboyant figure. A lawyer and partner in the Wall Street firm of Sullivan and Cromwell, from which he encouraged younger lawyers like the Dulles brothers to enter public life, Davis was an active Democrat who had served Woodrow Wilson as Acting Secretary of State and who was a serious contender for the Secretaryship in 1933. Instead he was given the title of Ambassador-at-Large and became a personal link between President Roosevelt and the European democracies, chairing the American delegations at Geneva from 1933 and at London in 1935. His copious papers, deposited in the Library of Congress, reveal a man who easily made lasting friendships with a wide range of distinguished Britons, and whose Anglophilia was most exceptional among prominent Americans of the time.

1. Report, 'Individuals Connected with Past Conferences' by Captain T.G. Kinkaid in G.B. study 438-1 of 1 Oct., 1934: '1935 Conference for Further Limitation of Naval Armaments.'

2. G.B. 438-1, *ibid.*

Men like Davis and Craigie gave not only invaluable service to their countries' interests and to the cause of naval limitation, but achieved a degree of understanding and sympathy for each other's societies and problems that did much to overcome the natural suspicions and rivalries of the two great powers, and laid much of the foundations of the later wartime alliance.

The interaction between 'domestic' and 'international' influences in any arms control negotiation is obviously complex. It is evident that agreements will only freely be reached between nations if it is in the interest of the several parties to do so. However, decisions as to the nature of the 'national interest' are made by fallible statesmen, subject to all the domestic pressures noted above, including public opinion, political factors, financial requirements, and their own and their advisers' personalities and predispositions. At the same time, political leaders cannot ignore hard facts about international relations. International conflicts of interest or purpose occur continually, and both serve to mould national circumstances and attitudes and are themselves shaped by them. Such conflicts of interest - whether ideological, economic, demographic, or whatever - are only partly within the control of political decision-takers, and their presence requires that favourable domestic circumstances, however necessary they may be, are not sufficient conditions for the conclusion of an arms limitation agreement. It is also necessary to examine the prevailing international climate and the actual and potential conflicts existing between nations.

Naval limitation agreements were negotiated in 1921-2 and 1930 only where there were neither significant conflicts between the signatory powers nor immediate external threats to the participants. The unsuccessful

conferences were those where there was either an external, non-participatory threat such as the resurgent Germany, or significant disputes between the Conference powers, such as between Japan and the Western powers in 1935, or the Franco-Italian disputes of 1930. Limitation could not be agreed if it made a power vulnerable to a threatening non-limited power; thus German non-participation made it impossible for France to set her naval forces with regard to Italy and Britain, Soviet non-participation added to Japan's unease about her limits, Yugoslav non-participation caused Italy to be continually looking over her shoulder at what that French ally was doing, and so on. A naval power was not always constrained by the actions of all of its neighbours, as these examples show; a small but un-limited naval force need not concern a large but restricted navy. Nevertheless the nature of the naval balance was such that through a series of interlocking bilateral relationships the smallest navy could influence the largest. The force levels of the interwar Soviet Navy, for example, were set in part with a view to countering the naval forces of its Baltic neighbours, such as Poland, Finland and Sweden. The Soviet Navy threatened the German, the German the French, the French the British, and so on. To some degree, then, every threat or potential conflict on at least the volatile continent of Europe was a danger to a limitation system. It was fortunate that at Washington the total naval forces of all non-participant nations were negligible, and therefore external threats to the system were minimal. By London in 1930 this was already less clearly so; but the non-participation of France and Italy in the final Treaty left very significant forces outside the system of comprehensive naval limitation. The power most affected by these, Britain, was therefore in an exceptional position: limited by treaty but potentially threatened by major un-limited naval forces. Britain's acceptance of such a difficult position was due to a number of reasons, but two are significant: the belief that the limitation system could later be extended to France and Italy; and the

calculation that it was more important for Britain to limit the navies of Japan and the United States. The dangers inherent in losing American friendship and in not restraining Japan was greater than the potential danger from either France or Italy, while it could be assumed that there was no danger of the two continental powers combining against Britain.

The principal international pressures upon the Washington system that I have tried to show in the narrative chapters have included Anglo-American rivalry, Japanese expansionism, Franco-Italian rivalry, and the impact of German rearmament upon the European balance. The different pressures upon different powers produced the two 'sub-systems' of the High Seas powers and the European naval powers with Britain as the power common to both. The willingness of Britain to overlook its position as a European power in order to facilitate High Seas limitation showed both Britain's strengths and weaknesses. Britain could assume that continental Europe would be divided against itself; in the event of her involvement in conflict with a European power she could assume European allies. Moreover her surface navy was the equal, in 1930, of France and Italy combined. Even so, she was unable to function fully as a High Seas power as long as a large part of her forces were tied down by the need to secure her home base and her commerce against European powers - notably the submarine threat from France, Italy or (later) Germany. Britain could not hope to challenge an extra-European power unless her European base was secured; and this she could not do under the London Treaty. The small (30%) margin she had over Japan was not enough to offset Britain's handicap of the multiple potential threats in Europe. The submarine danger from just one European power could be enough, on First World War experience, to absorb most if not all of Britain's auxiliary vessels. Britain was therefore prevented by the Treaty from challenging any extra-European power; and was restrained by Treaty, protected only by the dubious safeguard of the escalator clause, from competing in Europe against the

un-limited continental powers. Britain therefore surrendered her strategic position through the naval treaty system, surrendering her former predominance politically as well as navally. Without such a British surrender there would have been no naval limitation; but one cannot say conversely that without the treaty system there would have been no British naval decline. Naval limitation at least enabled Britain to give in gracefully, safeguarding her short-term position by limitation and her long-term position through preserving the friendly relationship with America.

The third broad category of influences upon the creation of the naval limitation system I have termed 'technical' factors. These are the products of the particular weapons types limited, their history and distribution.

Technological change was a major influence upon interwar naval negotiations, not so much because of current developments but because of the historic rate of technical change and the impact of those historic developments upon current navies. The experience of the First World War had shown those naval officers intelligent enough to appreciate it, that naval warfare had changed radically. The limitation of capital ships, for example, reflected in part the growing, if rarely enunciated, awareness either that the capital ship had had its rôle in warfare changed radically, or that it had been rendered obsolete. The concept of the capital ship as a deterrent rather than as a battle-fighting or war-winning weapon was not fully understood: yet the awareness that the capital ship fleet requirements depended solely upon the strength of the opponent's capital ship fleet opened the way to the reduction of that class of vessel. Similarly the experience of submarine warfare, and the consequent requirement for anti-submarine escorts gave impetus to the pressure for the reduction

or abolition of the submarine. Two worrisome problems were posed by these changes: the future of the battleship and the protection of trade against the submarine. Either problem had the possibility of rendering large proportions of existing fleets useless. Rather than attempt large-scale global re-equipment to meet these challenges, it was in every power's interest to try to halt the movement towards a new naval technology, by qualitative limitation and by restricting new building. It was even more desirable for those powers with a heavy capital investment in the old technology - battle fleets - if the new technology - submarines - could be banned altogether, or at least limited as much as possible.

As has been noted above in examining the record of adherence to the provisions of the naval system, definition of the weapons to be limited and verification of adherence did not appear as a difficult problem for treaty-makers, although later attempts at enforcement did pose problems. The naval negotiations were therefore at a marked advantage over the land and air limitation negotiations, with their protracted debates as to what constituted an effective, how to prevent concealment of weapons, and how to control civil aviation. Naval ships could easily be identified, were hard to conceal, and merchant vessels could not be converted readily to naval use.

Similarly, the naval problem was simplified by the relatively small number of naval powers. Although the interrelationships of the several naval nations, within and outside the Washington System, were complex, the comparable interrelationships of land and air forces were infinitely more so. Each nation possessed land armies; arms and aircraft could be procured or manufactured far more readily than could ships. The variety of weapons needing to be defined and limited was almost infinite. The number of potential alliances and conflicts was far greater than between the few naval powers. The solutions to these issues were to elude the

statesmen and diplomats of the interwar period as they have eluded men from ancient times. With naval limitation it proved at least possible to make a start.

These various influences contributing to the creation of the Washington Naval System, and acting as constraints upon that system, begin to answer some of the pertinent questions which were asked by contemporary observers of interwar naval limitation. Why did not the Washington System lead to further naval reduction, or to the abolition of naval weaponry? Why was the system not extended to include more powers, or made universal? Why did it not point the way for land and air limitation?

The Washington System could not achieve greater reduction as long as the idea of 'absolute requirements', explicit or implicit, prevailed in the governments of naval powers; as long as there were powers with a significant actual or potential naval strength outside the system; and as long as 'navalism' prevailed - the pride nations took in their navies, the idea that a fleet conferred prestige, the professional vested interest of naval advisors to politicians. Perhaps most of all, it could not achieve more as long as there was distrust between nations; and sadly that distrust was all too well justified by later events.

Distrust was also a partial cause of the failure of the Washington System to become universal. The distrust between two of the original Washington powers prevented the System's full adoption in the auxiliary vessel classes. Similarly suspicion, or fear, prevented the two potential great naval powers outside the System being brought in. Soviet Russia would only negotiate armaments on her own terms: 'complete and unconditional disarmament'. The Soviet Union feared that anything less would endanger the isolated Soviet state; its neighbours feared that complete

disarmament could only lead to the spread of communism. Germany would not come in unless she could remove the shackles of Versailles, and be treated as an equal; she was not trusted enough for this to be granted her, and only after her unilateral renunciation of Versailles was she brought, too late, into the crumbling naval system.

Besides the political barriers to the System's extension, the sheer technical problem was enormous, and akin to the problems of land disarmament. The difficulty of agreeing ratios for each coastal state can readily be imagined. Some minor states already participated in complex regional naval balances - in the Baltic or Latin America, for example; for each sub-system, with its rivalries, enmities and technical characteristics, formulae for stability would have to be worked out, just as were attempted for the larger High Seas and European naval balances with indifferent success. Only when the naval agreements were reduced to the level of irrelevance could the System be extended indefinitely, as might have happened to the bilateral agreements on the exchange of information in the late 1930s had not war intervened.

Distrust was also the principal obstacle to the extension of naval limitation into other fields of armaments. The political problems behind conflicts across land frontiers were often more complicated than those which engendered naval conflict; problems of mixed population, for example, were harder to settle than competition for maritime trade. The technical problems were equally more complicated. The variety of states, weaponry, budgetary indices, methods of concealment were all thankfully absent from naval limitation.

In summation, one may well consider another question posed by contemporaries in the bitter years of rearmament and looming war. Was it all worth while? Or had the Washington Naval System, the years of labour by brilliant and dedicated men, the hopes and trust of the British and American peoples, all been in vain? Worse still, did it actually handicap the

Allies in the Second World War?

In the first place, it might be noted that the capital ship was effectively obsolete in the interwar period. The defenders of the battleship between the wars argued that the modern battleship would be very difficult to sink when it had full anti-aircraft armament, room to manoeuvre and a proper screen of aircraft and auxiliary vessels. The experience of battleship operations in the Second World War proved this to be true: the problem was that these defensive requirements absorbed great quantities of resources, circumscribed the battleship's freedom of action, and were seldom all available. The consequent vulnerability and operational constraints made it an inefficient and inadequate instrument of sea control, giving small return for the investment made in it. Its *raison d'être*, the ship-to-ship gunnery duel, was a thing of the past, outmoded by the ability of air and submarines to sink vessels at ranges preventing opposing surface fleets ever coming to grips. The sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse by Japanese aircraft, or the Yamato-class ships by American submarines, demonstrated the sheer inefficiency of concentrating scarce naval resources in capital ships. The battleship building holiday and the reduction of the capital ship fleets achieved at Washington and extended at London, were, then, measures which were almost certainly beneficial to all the Western powers. Their Treasuries benefitted from the financial saving; their Navies gained by concentrating their resources on more cost-effective weaponry; and the diplomats benefitted from the enormous symbolic importance of the scrapping of these dinosaurs, which could still appear threatening while incapable of implementing a threat.

Although the Washington System failed to abolish the battleship entirely, it certainly hastened the process by which this class of vessel became extinct. Although the resumption of battleship building after 1936 did take up valuable British and American resources which would have been better employed on other classes of armament in short supply, the number

of such ships built was small in relation both to the overall size of Second World War fleets and to the numbers of battleships employed in the First World War.

The qualitative restrictions were certainly valuable and broadly effective in slowing the pace of technical development and therefore rivalry. The Second World War was fought by Britain and America with ships of sizes and gun armaments matching those laid down in the Treaties. Whether this gave them an advantage is hard to assess, although some points may be considered. The inability to compete in size may have increased the attention given to other developments, more advantageous to the war-time Allies but less controllable: radar and sonar, for example. The Japanese attempts to build ships outside Treaty limits that would prove superior in combat was futile if such combat did not take place: such efforts were wasted if the vessels lacked defenses against submarine or aircraft attack. Moreover quality was ultimately no substitute for quantity in surface combat where ships of broadly comparable types are considered, as shown for example in the 1939 Battle of the River Plate. Money spent on ship development would often have been better spent on construction of extra though individually weaker vessels. The impact that the Treaties had on Japanese interwar ship design, with its emphasis on combat strength, was in this respect advantageous to Britain and America.

The quantitative limitation of auxiliary vessels had mixed effects. No power was genuinely constrained by those limits before the end of 1936, in the case of Japan because she evaded them where necessary, in the case of Britain and America because employment of the Escalator Clauses enabled them to surpass the limits once it became desirable to do so. Thus the Treaty limits did not actually prevent any measures of naval rearmament in the 1930s, although the absence of a Treaty might have meant that the British or American navies would have started from a higher base level when it became necessary to build against Japan and Germany. Such a

hypothesis would, however, depend upon the existence of a stable status quo ante the 1930s rearmament, which in the absence of a naval limitation system must be open to question.

The naval negotiations did indeed cause the cancellation of a number of auxiliary vessels, mostly by Britain. The total real savings cannot be measured, as it is not now possible to estimate, for example, what the Royal Navy would have sought to build, or what British Governments would have allowed them to build in the event of unrestricted naval competition with either Japan or the United States. Given broadly tolerant and mildly pacifist governments in Britain and America such as those of Hoover and MacDonald, it may have been that irrespective of the accomplishment of limitation by treaty, their respective navies might have been held to levels not greatly above those they did in fact maintain between 1930 and 1934. On the other hand, the effects on naval rivalry and construction of a failure to achieve limitation by negotiation, such as after the 1927 Conference, show the unpredictability and instability of naval relations, and the difficulties which faced those who sought to restrain the claims of navies and navalists for construction in an atmosphere of international tension.

The precarious balance of Anglo-American relations that the recriminations after 1927 demonstrated, was indeed perhaps the most fundamental reason for both sides to seek a naval agreement. The Washington System, the product of this desire to control Anglo-American rivalry, did provide in practice the means for a peaceful and largely amicable transfer of naval superiority from one power that was declining, to another power that was rising. With that naval superiority went the political dominance and authority accorded to the globe's greatest military power. Although it was to take another world war to complete that transfer and to leave American predominance temporarily unchallenged, the crucial change from massive British naval superiority to an effective American combat

superiority came about during the period of the Washington System and was facilitated by that system.

In managing the transfer of military superiority from Britain to America, the Washington System eliminated the possibility of conflict between these two 'super-powers' of the interwar period: a conflict that was certainly envisaged from time to time by naval officers and planners on both sides of the Atlantic. Instead, the Washington System provided the means for Britain to surrender gracefully the naval superiority that in 1914 she had gone to war, at inestimable cost, to preserve. By 1936, three centuries of British maritime supremacy had come to an end.

APPENDIX (Part One)

1. INTERNATIONAL TREATY FOR THE
LIMITATION AND REDUCTION OF NAVAL ARMAMENT

London, 22 April, 1930 (Extracts)

PART I

Article 1

The High Contracting Parties agree not to exercise their rights to lay down the keels of capital ship replacement tonnage during the years 1931-1936 inclusive as provided in Chapter II, Part 3 of the Treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armament signed between them at Washington on the 6th February, 1922, and referred to in the present Treaty as the Washington Treaty.

This provision is without prejudice to the disposition relating to the replacement of ships accidentally lost or destroyed contained in Chapter II, Part 3, Section I, paragraph (c) of the said Treaty.

France and Italy may, however, build the replacement tonnage which they were entitled to lay down in 1927 and 1929 in accordance with the provisions of the said Treaty.

Article 2

1. The United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Japan shall dispose of the following capital ships as provided in this Article:

United States

"Florida"
"Utah"
"Arkansas" or "Wyoming"

United Kingdom

"Benbow"
"Iron Duke"
"Marlborough"
"Emperor of India"
"Tiger"

Japan

"Hiyei"

Article 3

1. For the purposes of the Washington Treaty, the definition of an aircraft carrier given in Chapter II, Part 4 of the said Treaty is hereby replaced by the following definition:

The expression "aircraft carrier" includes any surface vessel of war, whatever its displacement, designed for the specific and exclusive purpose of carrying aircraft and so constructed that aircraft can be launched therefrom and landed thereon.

Article 4

1. No aircraft carrier of 10,000 tons (10,160 metric tons) or less standard displacement mounting a gun above 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre shall be acquired by or constructed by or for any of the High Contracting Parties.

Article 5

An aircraft carrier must not be designed and constructed for carrying a more powerful armament than that authorised by Article IX or Article X of the Washington Treaty, or by Article 4 of the present Treaty, as the case may be.

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Article 7

1. No submarine the standard displacement of which exceeds 2,000 tons (2,032 metric tons) or with a gun above 5.1-inch (130 mm.) calibre shall be acquired by or constructed by or for any of the High Contracting Parties.

2. Each of the High Contracting Parties may, however, retain, build or acquire a maximum number of three submarines of a standard displacement not exceeding 2,800 tons (2,845 metric tons); these submarines may carry guns not above 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre, of 2,880 tons (2,926 metric tons), with guns the calibre of which is 8 inches (203 mm.).

3. The High Contracting Parties may retain the submarines which they possessed on the 1st April, 1939, having a standard displacement not in excess of 2,000 tons (2,032 metric tons) and armed with guns above 5.1-inch (130 mm.) calibre.

4. As from the coming into force of the present Treaty in respect of all the High Contracting Parties, no submarine the standard displacement of which exceeds 2,000 tons (2,032 metric tons) or with a gun above 5.1-inch (130 mm.) calibre shall be constructed within the jurisdiction of any of these High Contracting Parties, except as provided in paragraph 2 of this Article.

Article 8

Subject to any special agreements which may submit them to limitation, the following vessels are exempt from limitation:

(a) naval surface combatant vessels of 600 tons (610 metric tons) standard displacement and under;

(b) naval surface combatant vessels exceeding 600 tons (610 metric tons), but not exceeding 2,000 tons (2,032 metric tons) standard displacement, provided they have none of the following characteristics:

- (1) mount a gun above 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre;
- (2) mount more than four guns above 3-inch (76 mm.) calibre;
- (3) are designed or fitted to launch torpedoes;
- (4) are designed for a speed greater than twenty knots.

(c) naval surface vessels not specifically built as fighting ships which are employed on fleet duties or as troop transports.

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Article 10

Within one month after the date of laying down and the date of completion respectively of each vessel of war, other than capital ships, aircraft carriers and the vessels exempt from limitation under Article 8, laid down or completed by or for them after the coming into force of the present Treaty, the High Contracting Parties shall communicate to each of the other High Contracting Parties the information detailed below:

(a) the date of laying the keel and the following particulars:

classification of the vessel;
standard displacement in tons and metric tons;
principal dimensions, namely: length at water-line, extreme beam
at or below water-line;
mean draft at standard displacement;
calibre of the largest gun.

(b) the date of completion together with the foregoing particulars relating to the vessel at that date.

The information to be given in the case of capital ships and aircraft carriers is governed by the Washington Treaty.

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(ANNEX I. Rules for replacement.)

(ANNEX II. Rules for disposal of Vessels of War.)

(ANNEX III. Special vessels.)

PART III

The President of the United States of America, His Majesty the King of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, have agreed as between themselves to the provisions of this Part III:

Article 14

The naval combatant vessels of the United States, the British Commonwealth of Nations and Japan, other than capital ships, aircraft carriers and all vessels exempt from limitation under Article 8, shall be limited during the term of the present Treaty as provided in this Part III, and, in the case of special vessels, as provided in Article 12.

Article 15

For the purposes of this Part III the definition of the cruiser and destroyer categories shall be as follows:

Cruisers

Surface vessels of war, other than capital ships or aircraft carriers, the standard displacement of which exceeds 1,850 tons (1,880 metric tons), or with a gun above 5.1-inch (130 mm.) calibre.

The cruiser category is divided into two sub-categories, as follows:

- (a) cruisers carrying a gun above 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre;
- (b) cruisers carrying a gun not above 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre.

Destroyers

Surface vessels of war the standard displacement of which does not exceed 1,850 tons (1,880 metric tons), and with a gun not above 5.1-inch (130 mm.) calibre.

Article 16

1. The completed tonnage in the cruiser, destroyer and submarine categories which is not to be exceeded on the 31st December, 1936, is given in the following table:

Categories	United States	British Commonwealth of Nations	Japan
Cruisers:			
(a) with guns of more than 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre	180,000 tons (182,880 metric tons)	146,800 tons (149,149 metric tons)	108,400 tons (110,134 metric tons)
(b) with guns of 6.1-inch (155 mm.) calibre or less	143,500 tons (145,796 metric tons)	192,200 tons (195,275 metric tons)	100,450 tons (102,057 metric tons)
Destroyers	150,000 tons (152,400 metric tons)	150,000 tons (152,400 metric tons)	105,500 tons (107,188 metric tons)
Submarines	52,700 tons (53,543 metric tons)	52,700 tons (53,543 metric tons)	52,700 tons (53,543 metric tons)

2. Vessels which cause the total tonnage in any category to exceed the figures given in the foregoing table shall be disposed of gradually during the period ending on the 31st December, 1936.

3. The maximum number of cruisers of sub-category (a) shall be as follows: for the United States, eighteen; for the British Commonwealth of Nations, fifteen; for Japan, twelve.

4. In the destroyer category not more than sixteen per cent. of the allowed total tonnage shall be employed in vessels of over 1,500 tons (1,524 metric tons) standard displacement. Destroyers completed or under construction on the 1st April, 1930, in excess of this percentage may be retained, but no other destroyers exceeding 1,500 tons (1,524 metric tons) standard displacement shall be constructed or acquired until a reduction to such sixteen per cent. has been effected.

5. Not more than twenty-five per cent. of the allowed total tonnage in the cruiser category may be fitted with a landing-on platform or deck for aircraft.

6. It is understood that the submarines referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 7 will be counted as part of the total submarine tonnage of the High Contracting Party concerned.

7. The tonnage of any vessels retained under Article 13 or disposed of in accordance with Annex II to Part II of the present Treaty shall not be included in the tonnage subject to limitation.

Article 17

A transfer not exceeding ten per cent. of the allowed total tonnage of the category or sub-category into which the transfer is to be made shall be permitted between cruisers of sub-category (b) and destroyers.

Article 18

The United States contemplates the completion by 1935 of fifteen cruisers of sub-category (a) of an aggregate tonnage of 150,000 tons (152,400 metric tons). For each of the three remaining cruisers of sub-category (a) which it is entitled to construct the United States may elect to substitute 15,166 tons (15,409 metric tons) of cruisers of sub-category (b). In case the United States shall construct one or more of such three remaining cruisers of sub-category (a), the sixteenth unit will not be laid down before 1933 and will not be completed before 1936; the seventeenth will not be laid down before 1934 and will not be completed before 1937; the eighteenth will not be laid down before 1935 and will not be completed before 1938.

Article 19

Except as provided in Article 20, the tonnage laid down in any category subject to limitation in accordance with Article 16 shall not exceed the amount necessary to reach the maximum allowed tonnage of the category, or to replace vessels that become "over-age" before the 31st December, 1936. Nevertheless, replacement tonnage may be laid down for cruisers and submarines that become "over-age" in 1937, 1938 and 1939, and for destroyers than become "over-age" in 1937 and 1938.

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Article 21

If, during the term of the present Treaty, the requirements of the national security of any High Contracting Party in respect of vessels of war limited by Part III of the present Treaty are in the opinion of that Party materially affected by new construction of any Power other than those who have joined in Part III of this Treaty, that High Contracting Party will notify the other Parties to Part III as to the increase required to be made in its own tonnages within one or more of the categories of such vessels of war, specifying particularly the proposed increases and the reasons therefor, and shall be entitled to make such increase. Thereupon the other Parties

to Part III of this Treaty shall be entitled to make a proportionate increase in the category or categories specified; and the said other Parties shall promptly advise with each other through diplomatic channels as to the situation thus presented.

PART IV

Article 22

The following are accepted as established rules of International Law:

- (1) In their action with regard to merchant ships, submarines must conform to the rules of International Law to which surface vessels are subjected.
- (2) In particular, except in the case of persistent refusal to stop on being duly summoned, or of active resistance to visit or search, a warship, whether surface vessel or submarine, may not sink or render incapable of navigation a merchant vessel without having first placed passengers, crew and ship's papers in a place of safety. For this purpose the ship's boats are not regarded as a place of safety unless the safety of the passengers and crew is assured, in the existing sea and weather conditions, by the proximity of land, or the presence of another vessel which is in a position to take them on board.

The High Contracting Parties invite all other Powers to express their assent to the above rules.

PART V

Article 23

The present Treaty shall remain in force until the 31st December, 1936, subject to the following exceptions:

- (1) Part IV shall remain in force without limit of time;
- (2) The provisions of Articles 3, 4 and 5, and of Article 11 and Annex II to Part II so far as they relate to aircraft carriers, shall remain in force for the same period as the Washington Treaty.

Unless the High Contracting Parties should agree otherwise by reason of a more general agreement limiting naval armaments, to which they all become parties, they shall meet in conference in 1935 to frame a new treaty to replace and to carry out the purposes of the present Treaty, it being understood that none of the provisions of the present Treaty shall prejudice the attitude of any of the High Contracting powers at the conference agreed to.

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Done at London, the twenty-second day of April, nineteen hundred and thirty.

APPENDIX (Part two)

TREATY

for the

LIMITATION OF NAVAL ARMAMENT

London, March 25, 1936 (Excerpts)

PART I

DEFINITIONS

PART II

LIMITATION

Article 2

After the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty, no vessel exceeding the limitations as to displacement or armament prescribed by this Part of the present Treaty shall be acquired by any High Contracting Party or constructed by, for or within the jurisdiction of any High Contracting Party.

Article 3

No vessel which at the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty carries guns with a calibre exceeding the limits prescribed by this Part of the present Treaty shall, if reconstructed or modernised, be rearmed with guns of a greater calibre than those previously carried by her.

Article 4

(1) No capital ship shall exceed 35,000 tons (35,560 metric tons) standard displacement.

(2) No capital ship shall carry a gun with a calibre exceeding 14 in. (356 mm.); provided however that if any of the Parties to the Treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armament signed at Washington on the 6th February, 1922, should fail to enter into an agreement to conform to this provision prior to the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty, but in any case not later than the 1st April, 1937, the maximum calibre of gun carried by capital ships shall be 16 in. (406 mm.).

(3) No capital ship of sub-category (a), the standard displacement of which is less than 17,500 tons (17,780 metric tons), shall be laid down or acquired prior to the 1st January, 1943.

(4) No capital ship, the main armament of which consists of guns of less than 10 in. (254 mm.) calibre, shall be laid down or acquired prior to the 1st January, 1943.

Article 5

(1) No aircraft carrier shall exceed 23,000 tons (23,368 metric tons) standard displacement or carry a gun with a calibre exceeding 6.1 in. (155 mm.).

(2) If the armament of any aircraft carrier includes guns exceeding 5.25 in. (134 mm.) in calibre, the total number of guns carried which exceed that calibre shall not be more than ten.

Article 6

(1) No light surface vessel of sub-category (b) exceeding 8,000 tons (8,128 metric tons) standard displacement, and no light surface vessel of sub-category (a) shall be laid down or acquired prior to the 1st January, 1943.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) above, if the requirements of the national security of any High Contracting Party are, in His opinion, materially affected by the actual or authorised amount of construction by any Power of light surface vessels of sub-category (b), or of light surface vessels not conforming to the restrictions of paragraph (1) above, such High Contracting Party shall, upon notifying the other High Contracting Parties of His intentions and the reasons therefor, have the right to lay down or acquire light surface vessels of sub-categories (a) and (b) of any standard displacement up to 10,000 tons (10,610 metric tons) subject to the observance of the provisions of Part III of the present Treaty. Each of the other High Contracting Parties shall thereupon be entitled to exercise the same right.

(3) It is understood that the provisions of paragraph (1) above constitute no undertaking expressed or implied to continue the restrictions therein prescribed after the year 1942.

Article 7

No submarine shall exceed 2,000 tons (2,032 metric tons) standard displacement or carry a gun exceeding 5.1 in. (130 mm.) in calibre.

Article 8

Every vessel shall be rated at its standard displacement, as defined in Article 1A of the present Treaty.

Article 9

No preparations shall be made in merchant ships in time of peace for the installation of warlike armaments for the purpose of converting such ships into vessels of war, other than the necessary stiffening of decks for the mounting of guns not exceeding 6.1 in. (155 mm.) in calibre.

Article 10

Vessels which were laid down before the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty, the standard displacement or armament of which exceeds the limitations or restrictions prescribed in this Part of the present Treaty for their category or sub-category, or vessels which before that date were converted to target use exclusively or retained exclusively for experimental or training purposes under the provisions of previous treaties, shall retain the category or designation which applied to them before the said date.

PART III

ADVANCE NOTIFICATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Article 11

(1) Each of the High Contracting Parties shall communicate every year to each of the other High Contracting Parties information, as hereinafter provided, regarding His annual programme for the construction and acquisition of all vessels of the categories and sub-categories mentioned in Article 12 (a), whether or not the vessels concerned are constructed within His own jurisdiction, and periodical information giving details of such vessels and of any alterations to vessels of the said categories or sub-categories already completed.

(2) For the purposes of this and the succeeding Parts of the present Treaty, information shall be deemed to have reached a High Contracting Party on the date upon which such information is communicated to His Diplomatic Representatives accredited to the High Contracting Party by whom the information is given.

(3) This information shall be treated as confidential until published by the High Contracting Party supplying it.

Article 12

(Information to be furnished)

(a) Within the first four months of each calendar year, the Annual Programme of construction of all vessels of the following categories and sub-categories, stating the number of vessels of each category or sub-category and, for each vessel, the calibre of the largest gun. The categories and sub-categories in question are:-

Capital Ships -

sub-category (a)
sub-category (b)

Aircraft-Carriers -

sub-category (a)
sub-category (b)

Light Surface Vessels -

sub-category (a)
sub-category (b)
sub-category (c)

Submarines.

(b) Not less than four months before the date of the laying of the keel, the following particulars in respect of each such vessel:-

Name or designation;
Category and sub-category;
Standard displacement in tons and metric tons;
Length at waterline at standard displacement;
Extreme length at or below waterline at standard displacement;
Mean draught at standard displacement;
Designed horse-power;
Designed speed;
Type of machinery;
Type of fuel;
Number and calibre of all guns of 3 in. (76 mm.) calibre and above;
Approximate number of guns of less than 3 in. (76 mm.) calibre;
Number of torpedo tubes;
Whether designed to lay mines;
Approximate number of aircraft for which provision is to be made.

(c) As soon as possible after the laying down of the keel of each such vessel, the date on which it was laid.

Article 13

No vessel shall be laid down by any High Contracting Party until after the expiration of a period of four months both from the date on which the Annual Programme in which the vessel is included, and from the date on which the particulars in respect of that vessel have reached all the other High Contracting Parties.

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PART IV

GENERAL AND SAFEGUARDING CLAUSES

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Article 24

(1) If any High Contracting Party should become engaged in war, such High Contracting Party may, if He considers the naval requirements of His defence are materially affected, suspend, in so far as He is concerned, any or all of the obligations of the present Treaty, provided that He shall promptly notify the other High Contracting Parties that the circumstances require such suspension, and shall specify the obligations it is considered necessary to suspend.

(2) The other High Contracting Parties shall in such case promptly consult together, and shall examine the situation thus presented with a view to agreeing as to the obligations of the present Treaty, if any, which each of the said High Contracting Parties may suspend. Should such consultation not produce agreement, any of the said High Contracting Parties may suspend, in so far as He is concerned, any or all of the obligations of the present Treaty, provided that He shall promptly give

notice to the other High Contracting Parties of the obligations which it is considered necessary to suspend.

Article 25

(1) In the event of any vessel not in conformity with the limitations and restrictions as to standard displacement and armament prescribed by Articles 4, 5 and 7 of the present Treaty being authorised, constructed or acquired by a Power not a party to the present Treaty, each High Contracting Party reserves the right to depart if, and to the extent to which, He considers such departures necessary in order to meet the requirements of His national security

Article 26

(1) If the requirements of the national security of any High Contracting Party should, in His opinion, be materially affected by any change of circumstances, other than those provided for in Articles 6 (2), 24 and 25 of the present Treaty, such High Contracting Party shall have the right to depart for the current year from His Annual Programmes of construction and declarations of acquisition. The amount of construction by any Party to the Treaty, within the limitations and restrictions thereof, shall not, however, constitute a change of circumstances for the purposes of the present Article.

PART V

FINAL CLAUSES

Article 27

The present Treaty shall remain in force until the 31st December, 1942.

Article 28

(1) His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will, during the last quarter of 1940, initiate through the diplomatic channel a consultation between the Governments of the Parties to the present Treaty with a view to holding a conference in order to frame a new treaty for the reduction and limitation of naval armament. This conference shall take place in 1941 unless the preliminary consultations should have shown that the holding of such a conference at that time would not be desirable or practicable.

Article 29

None of the provisions of the present Treaty shall constitute a precedent for any future treaty.

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Article 31

(1) The present Treaty shall, at any time after this day's date, be open to accession on behalf of any country for which the Treaty for the Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armament was signed in London on the 22nd April, 1930, but for which the present Treaty has not been signed.

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Done in London the 25th day of March, nineteen hundred and thirty-six.

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