

Anglo-American Relations and Naval Policy,

1919 - 1930

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## ABSTRACT

The conclusion of World War I opened a new chapter in Anglo-American relations. Uneasy alliance gave way to renewed commercial competition between the two English-speaking powers. The role of the navy in the protection of commerce made naval power and comparative naval strength critical issues in the relations between the United States and Great Britain during the 1920's. Commercial rivalry in China and differing relationships with Japan tied British and American Far Eastern policy closely to naval policy.

The four international conferences between 1919 and 1930 involving naval disarmament issues form a framework for examining the evolving relationship between Great Britain and the United States. Policy debates within the two governments and differing constitutional structures complicated the search for mutual understanding and a new form of power sharing in the post-war world for the two closely related and "friendly" states, each with its own commercial and political objectives.

## ABREGE

La fin de la première guerre mondiale entama un nouveau chapitre des relations anglo-américaines. Une alliance difficile fit place à une concurrence commerciale renouvelée entre les deux puissances anglophones. Le rôle de la marine dans la protection du commerce fit du pouvoir naval et de la force navale relative des éléments essentiels dans les relations entre les États-Unis et la Grande-Bretagne dans les années 20. Leur rivalité commerciale en Chine et leurs relations différentes avec le Japon lièrent de près la politique des Anglais et des Américains en extrême-Orient à la politique navale.

Les quatre conférences internationales qui traitèrent de problèmes de désarmement entre 1919 et 1930 forment la base sur laquelle examiner les relations changeantes entre les U.S.A. et la Grande-Bretagne. Des débats de politique à l'intérieur des deux gouvernements et les différences de structures constitutionnelles compliquèrent la recherche d'une entente mutuelle et d'une nouvelle forme de partage des pouvoirs dans le monde de l'après-guerre pour ces deux pays proches et "amis", chacun avec ses propres objectifs commerciaux et politiques.

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### Abbreviations Frequently Used in Notes

ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Record Office, London
CAB	Cabinet Papers, Public Record Office, London
DBFP	Woodward, E.L. and Rohan Butler (eds.). <u>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939</u> . Series II. 2 vols. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1946. _____. Series IA. 6 vols. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1966-77.
FO	Foreign Office Papers, Public Record Office, London.
FRUS	<u>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918-1930</u> . Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930-1945.
NA	National Archives, Washington, D.C.
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RG	Record Group, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

## PREFACE

The sixty years between the decades of the 1920's and the 1980's have seen more profound changes affecting human history than had the previous millennium. The power of nations and the capacity of their governments both to do good and to work destruction have enormously expanded. Certain fundamental principles governing the relations between nations have not changed. Balance of power, deterrence, the concept of parity--these are ideas which super-power negotiators of the 1980's still have in mind when they meet to discuss their relationships. In the interest of reducing tension and the likelihood of war, of paring defense budgets and reallocating national resources they compare their arsenals of missiles, intercontinental, medium range, field atomic weapons. What percentage can be scrapped and still preserve security and balance?

The world between 1919 and 1930 was not so very different. The membership of the Club of Superpowers of the time was partially different, but the issues much the same. The super-weapons were naval vessels and their capacity to destroy, not the human race, but one another. The diplomats and technical experts of the 1930's were as concerned as their descendants of the 1980's with issues such as national economic power, the problem of overcoming generations of mutual suspicion, security guarantees and inspection systems, public relations issues and the effect of their decisions on

other governments and on domestic politics. They wanted to reduce tension and promote peace while maintaining strength and security.

The decade of the 1920's is one that merits close attention from contemporary students of history and of international relations. It is an often misunderstood and neglected period dismissed as a kind of void between the two world wars. Americans have traditionally seen the 1920's as the time of isolation and non-involvement with the world. British and European writers have generally looked at the period principally in a European readjustment context, as a period without significant "great power" problems.

My objective in this work is to look at the period between 1919, the close of the Paris Conference, and 1930 with the London Naval Conference from the point of view of the great power conflict between the United States and Great Britain which was most intense during that time. Using the structure provided by issues of naval relations, the naval rivalry of the 1920's, and the disarmament conferences held between 1919 and 1930 I propose to examine the relations between a declining and rising power. Although numerous studies and monographs have looked at this period they have for the most part been by intent narrow studies of particular conferences or treaties, technical studies of ship development and naval history, or political studies of one or another of the two nations, the United States and Great

Britain. I have tried to review much of the same material as earlier writers in terms of public records and government documents but with the goal of providing a unified look at how the two nations viewed one another, the "personality" issues involved, both collective and individual, and of the power issues and decision-making processes which were at work in Washington and London during this critically important period of readjustment for the two nations. It is hoped in this way to contribute both to a better understanding of Anglo-American relations and of the larger context of power relationships between competing states.

I wish to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the guidance and assistance provided to me by Dr. Stephen Randall, formerly of the McGill University faculty and now Texaco Professor of American Studies of the University of Calgary. His help in formulating the topic and focus for the dissertation, his encouragement and patient guidance over the long period of its research and writing, and his scholarly advice have been invaluable. More important has been his friendship over these years. I also wish to thank Dr. Martin Petter of McGill for his advice on British questions.

The staffs at the Public Record Office, the British Library and the House of Lords Libraries in London, at the National Archives, the Naval Archives, and the Library of Congress in Washington were of great assistance.

I wish also to acknowledge the financial support for this

undertaking provided by graduate research assistantships at McGill and Concordia Universities, and to a grant from the Canada Council making the overseas research possible. I also thank my superiors at the Benedictine monastery of St. Anselm's in Washington for their permission and support in pursuing this project. My fellow administrators at St. Anselm's Abbey school have been indulgent about my need for periodic "absences" to engage in scholarly pursuits.

Most of all I want to thank sincerely Mrs. Linda Bloomfield, administrative assistant at St. Anselm's Abbey School, for her tremendous work in typing the entire text twice--once before and once after computerization! Without her above all there would be no dissertation.

## INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Anglo-American relations. Relationships exist between states on many levels and can be approached from many angles, but perhaps no international relationship is so delicate and complex as that which exists between the United States of America and Great Britain. Power is at the root of every relationship between states. In the final analysis the whole structure of international diplomacy is a matter of maintaining or altering the power of nations relative to one another. The struggle to gain or to retain power sufficient to assure security and freedom to develop is the moving force of every nation's foreign policy. Alliances and wars are both used in the pursuit of at least equality and at best superiority over other nations. Rivalry between nations is one of the assumptions of international politics. The ability to deal with a rival and potential enemy, to know what to expect and what not to expect from it is both an art and a science which diplomats practice. Different nations like different families are expected to seek their own good and to have their own goals.

Relations between an imperial power and a former dependency present unique problems. Close ties of culture and especially of language, common traditions and accepted standards, on the surface should be a positive bonding force giving a different shape to the relationship of two such states. But by analogy with human family relations we see

that this is not always the case. Parents may accept with grace the independence of a child, but often find it hard to accept it when the child develops differing standards and goals in conflict with their own. The most bitter and irresolvable conflicts often develop within the bonds of one family, where expected behavior has failed to persist. Likewise few conflicts can be as bitter as those which exist between rival sects within a common religion.

Anglo-American relations must be viewed in this context. Two states with the strongest historical and cultural ties have had to examine relationships and mutual expectations. The political separation effected by the revolution was replaced by strong economic ties and cultural bonds. The increasing economic power of the United States produced new sources of commercial conflict in the early 19th century. The strained mutual tolerance during most of the century still rested on a fundamental sense on both sides that there was between them a common approach to the rest of the world. The turn of the century saw greatly increased political and economic power on the part of the United States to be carefully watched and utilized if possible by Great Britain but not feared.<sup>1</sup> World War I and its aftermath brought military and naval power along with economic power to the United States. Great Britain's role in the world had changed as well. The United States could no longer be scorned, merely tolerated, used, or condescended to. Would the United

States succeed Spain, France, Germany in the line of foreign nemeses, or could the common bonds be used to create a new kind of "commonwealth" of power sharing?

The decade of the 1920's is a critical transitional period in Anglo-American relations. The elements in the struggle of the two powers to come to grips with a new world and their new relationship within that world are especially evident. The older prejudices and the emotional baggage of an earlier era mixed with the political and cultural affinities and the realities of power as both states viewed the future. The Paris Conference ending World War I also marked the end of a chapter in the relations between Great Britain and the United States. The London Naval Conference of 1930 in effect began a new chapter of that story in which realities were faced and new roles accepted. The eleven years between these conferences are the subject of this dissertation because the themes which emerged and were only partially understood at the time shed much light on the larger story of the relations between these two nations.

In this dissertation I concentrate mainly on relations in naval policy between the British Empire and the United States. Naval power was the crux of the friction between the two nations during the period defined for this study. The foreign policy issues and the commercial / economic issues which form part of the story are inextricably bound up with naval policy. World War I had proven conclusively that war



and power would henceforth be primarily a matter of economic dominance. The role of the navy in national power would be just as great in the post-war world as it had been in the theories of Admiral Mahan in his analysis of the past.<sup>2</sup> The future role of the navy would be less the aggressive pursuit of territories and the defeat of other navies than it would be the guaranteeing of free access to the world's markets and the protection of merchant shipping.

For more than a century neutral trading rights in time of war had bedeviled relations between Great Britain and the United States. It had been a major factor in the War of 1812-14 and came perilously close to involving the U.S. in war against Great Britain in the 1914-17 period.<sup>3</sup> In the post War world commercial expansion by the United States would inevitably cause the issue to surface again. National security more than ever would rest on a nation's ability to impose a blockade on its opponents or to break such a blockade effort by an enemy.

Naval policy was closely tied to American interest in the Pacific. American commercial interest in the potential market of China as well as the protection of its possessions in the Philippines naturally led to concerns about the threat from Japan. Great Britain's close ties to Japan as well as its own interests in China produced a fear of the combined naval potential of both powers in a region where the U.S. traditionally claimed special interests and had aspirations

to a form of hegemony. The four conferences on naval policy between 1919 and 1930 provide the skeleton for this dissertation. The Paris Conference of 1919, though technically not a naval conference, did involve itself in naval issues and set the stage for new Anglo-American tensions in the field. The Washington Conference of 1921-22 attempted to resolve issues in naval policy left over from Paris and to create a new atmosphere of cooperation. The Geneva Conference of 1927 revealed how profound the difference on naval policy had become and the extent to which general diplomatic relations between the British and Americans were bound up with naval issues. Finally the London Conference of 1930 reflected a new realism on both sides and a determination to create a new relationship.

Anglo-American relations during the 1920's have not been the subject of intensive scholarly study. Earlier and later periods in the relationship of the two powers have attracted more historical interest. Partly this flows from the tendency to see the period only as an addendum to World War I, rather than as a defined period of international relations during which significant processes of adjustment were going on. General histories treat the period in passing. Numerous monographs deal in detail with small portions of the period, particularly with the individual disarmament conferences. A full picture requires delving into a variety of sub-topics in order to develop a balanced view of the development of Anglo-

American relations as a "great power" struggle during the 1920's.

Harry Cranbrooke Allen in his broad work The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783 (1959) treats the inter-war period in one chapter, but by the nature of the work cannot do more than discuss the results of the naval conferences. The same is largely true of the more recent work by H.G. Nicholas The United States and Britain (1975).

The development of American policy and attitudes is best studied through the literature on the significant policy-makers of the era. Arthur Link in his works Wilson and the Struggle for Neutrality (1960) and Wilson the Diplomatist (1963) deals with the tensions between Wilson and British before, during, and after the war. Much of the same ground is covered by later writers such as Daniel M. Smith in Aftermath of War: Bainbridge Colby and Wilsonian Diplomacy, 1920-21 (1970), and Jeffrey J. Safford in Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921 (1978). In all of these works the critical role of freedom of the seas as an unresolved issue between the United States and Great Britain is presented. Republican policy is treated in biographical studies such as Merlo J. Pusey's Charles Evans Hughes (1951) and more recently by Betty Glad in her book Charles Evans Hughes and the Illusions of Innocence (1966). Changes in the latter part of the decade and the movement toward a "detente" with Great Britain are dealt with by Lewis Ellis in Frank B.

Kellogg and American Foreign Relations, 1925-1929 (1961), by Robert H. Ferrell in American Diplomacy in the Great Depression, 1929-1933, and by Elting E. Morison in his biography of Secretary of State Stimson entitled Turmoil and Tradition (1960). The Hoover-MacDonald Conference is well treated by William Starr Myers in his book The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933 (1940).

British studies of relations with the United States are more rare. General studies of British foreign policy such as W. N. Medlicott's British Foreign Policy since Versailles (1963) and F.S. Northredge in The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (1966) treat relations with the United States as a minor theme in a larger picture. The latter part of the decade is very usefully and clearly treated in B.J.C. McKercher's The Second Baldwin Government and the United States, 1924-1929 (1984). McKercher's book covers the latter part of the time span dealt with in this dissertation, but it is the most recent and most thorough analysis of Anglo-American relations of the period. Its scope is broader than naval policy and covers a wide range of diplomatic issues. However, McKercher does bring forward strongly the issue of belligerent rights as the sticking point in Anglo-American relations even at the end of the decade. Another recent work written from the British perspective is Christopher Hall's Britain, America, and Arms Control, 1921-37 (1987). This work is broad in scope and

deals with land as well as naval armament questions but skillfully analyzes the significance of naval issues in Anglo-U.S. relations.

A number of studies of naval policy have dealt with aspects of the story of conflicting British and American goals. Most useful are S. W. Roskill's The Strategy of Sea Power (1962) and Naval Policy Between the Wars (1968). Three early works which are still useful for a view of American naval policy as part of national goals are Harold and Margaret Sprout's Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922 (1943 and 1969), George T. Davis A Navy Second to None (1940), and Forrest Davis The Atlantic System (1941 & 1973). More recently Kenneth Hagan has edited a useful collection of studies of American naval history and policy through the 1960's in In Peace & War (1978) which treats it as a minor theme.

David F. Trask has given a detailed treatment of the tensions of World War I, the relations of political and naval professionals, and the "naval battle of Paris" in Captains and Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918 (1972). Gerald Wheeler in Prelude to Pearl Harbor: the U.S. Navy and the Far East, 1921-1931 (1963) puts the various naval conferences in the context of a developing Far Eastern policy.

Works which help to elucidate the role of other states particularly Japan in the relationship between Great Britain

and the United States would have to include William Roger Louis, British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939 (1971), and the works of Ian Nish, particularly his Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-1923 (1972). The role of Canada and the other Dominions in effecting changes in British imperial policy regarding the United States is clearly presented in Michael G. Fry's book Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918-1922 (1972).

Most of the monographic literature on the naval conferences themselves has emerged from American historians. Among these would be Thomas H. Buckley's The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-22 (1970) and Raymond G. O'Connor's Perilous Equilibrium: The United States and the London Naval Conference of 1930 (1962). These together with Gerald Wheeler's book Prelude to Pearl Harbor, already referred to, are the basic factual treatments for any study of the three conferences, Washington, Geneva, and London. On the British side mention should be made of the articles of David Carlton on naval disarmament and the conferences which have appeared since the 1960's as well as his study of the American aspect of the MacDonald foreign policy in his MacDonald vs. Henderson, the Foreign Policy of the Second Labor Government (1970).

Another piece of the puzzle of Anglo-American relations in the 1920's which cannot be ignored is the commercial

rivalry and its effect on policy, especially naval policy. American writers again have been in the forefront in examining this aspect. Mention should be made of Joan Hoff Wilson's American Business and Foreign Policy, 1921-1933 (1971) which looks at American economic expansion in general as a deciding factor in attitudes toward Great Britain. Roberta Dayer's Bankers and Diplomats in China 1917-1925 specifically deals with the Chinese market, an area of interest to both powers and the role of businessmen in forming diplomatic policy. Michael Hogan in Informal Entente (1977) and Carl P. Parrini in Heir to Empire: U.S. Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923, both examine the special relationship between Great Britain and the U.S. in the competition for markets and investment around the world.

Doctoral research touching on Anglo-American relations during the 1920's has focussed on certain portions of the decade, specific conferences, or on individual events. James Mannock in his dissertation entitled Anglo-American Relations, 1921-1928 (Princeton, 1962) covers a broad period but uses only American documents and, therefore, presents mainly the American perspective on a wide range of issues during those years. George Vincent Fagan in Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1920-1937 (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1954) does concentrate on naval rivalry, including post-London conference developments, but again relies only on American documentary sources. His main interest is in the role of

President Hoover's associate W. Price Bell as intermediary in discussions with the British. More recently M.J. Brode in Anglo-American Relations and the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 (University of Alberta, 1972) covers much of the same ground as Fagan but his emphasis is on the technical aspects of the Geneva conference. Christina Newton in Anglo-American Relations and Bureaucratic Tensions 1927-1930 (University of Illinois, 1975) likewise begins with Geneva and carries the story through the London conference. A special interest of her work is the role of the Chinese revolution as catalyst for heightened tensions between the Washington and London governments. She does use documentary sources on both sides.

The goal of my dissertation is to provide a unified analysis of the evolution of Anglo-American naval relations during the decade. The aim is to present this evolution in the context of the larger diplomatic relations between the two powers and their attitudes about each other. No effort is made to re-examine the conferences in all their details. The chief interest here is to look at the various factors which produced the conferences, the resulting ramifications of each, and the relationship between them. The conferences themselves are relatively static moments in the developing theme of the search for a new international relationship.

This dissertation is primarily a study of policy formation in and between two nations, Great Britain and the United States. I have tried to make it a genuinely



comparative study by looking equally at the policy formation process in both Washington and London throughout the time period under consideration. An effort has been made to look at each nation's perceptions of the goals and intentions of the other. As a study of policy formation I have relied almost exclusively on official government papers of the period and on the private papers of principal figures involved in the policy process. Public perspectives as these might have been reflected in the press and popular writing are not a major concern of this paper. Nor is this meant to be a study of naval history as such. The technical aspects of ship design and fire power are not a principal focus. Sizes and comparative strength of ship types obviously were issues at naval disarmament conferences. Often the debate over these matters obscured the larger political issues which lay behind them. I hope to avoid the same problem in this dissertation.

By focussing on the question of formation of naval policy during a significant and relatively confined period of time in Anglo-American relations I hope to show how this issue was intertwined with larger questions of diplomacy and power. A major theme hopefully elucidated by this study is the contrast between the British and American constitutional systems as these affect the development and formulation of policy and the mutual misunderstanding between the two governments. Similarly the study reveals the sharply

contrasting diplomatic styles of Great Britain and the United States. In their approach to the process of negotiation itself differences complicated issues. The human element in the diplomatic process and the often over-looked role of personalities of diplomats is a theme which also emerges in these pages, at times more significant than the technical details of the issues themselves. Finally I have concentrated considerable attention on the internal debates within the two governments over naval related policy, debates which were often as intense as the official conflict between the two governments. Differences between departments, State and Navy in the United States, Foreign Office and Admiralty in Great Britain, often created a quadrilateral argument and complicated efforts at resolution. These problems flowed from differing objectives and attitudes to policy making.

1. Bradford Perkins, The Great Rapprochement (N.Y., Athenaeum, 1968) Chapter 6.
2. Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future (London, Sampson Low and Marston, 1898).  
Also The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660-1783 (N.Y., Hill & Wang, 1960).
3. H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States (London, Archon Books, 1969) pp. 313-325, pp. 657-672.

Abbreviations Frequently Used in Notes

ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Record Office, London
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DBFP	Woodward, E.L. and Rohan Butler (eds.). <u>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939</u> . Series II. 2 vols. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1946. _____. Series IA. 6 vols. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1966-77.
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PRO	Public Record Office, London
RG	Record Group, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

## CHAPTER ONE

"ASSOCIATED" POWERS: WORLD WAR I AND ANGLO-AMERICAN  
RELATIONS, 1917-1919

The "great rapprochement"<sup>1</sup> between Great Britain and the United States which began at the end of the 1890's was real enough as far as it went as recognition by Great Britain of the potential power of the United States. Along with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 (which would ironically be such a thorn in the side of Anglo-American relations after 1919) the new friendship with the U.S. defused two potential sources of trouble for Britain while her attention increasingly needed to be focussed on the German threat. For both British and Americans there persisted a real ambivalence. American progressives of a practical imperialist stamp such as Theodore Roosevelt looked on Britain with respect and admiration and basked in the glow of the new-found friendship. Liberal social reformers on both sides of the Atlantic shared ideas and claimed influence on one another.<sup>2</sup> But traditional suspicions (if not exactly fear) of Britain persisted in the U.S. and popular antagonisms died hard. The Irish vote in the Eastern cities and the German vote in the rural mid-West made "twisting the Lion's tail" almost as sure a vote-getter as "waving the bloody shirt" had been a generation earlier. Progressive idealists continued to view Britain as the epitome of the "old order" in terms of international economy and politics.<sup>3</sup>

On the British side in spite of liberal affection for things American (and especially for American heiresses) there persisted a kind of condescension and amusement at American diplomatic naivete and gaucherie. A problem which would be the foundation for much of the Anglo-U.S. friction during the whole of the post-war decade was the fact that British political leaders did not quite see the United States as a foreign power, and thus never fully understood or accepted the fact that American interests and policies could validly diverge from those of Great Britain and be handled accordingly.

The potential power of the United States in world affairs had been recognized by British diplomatists for a long while, certainly since the decade of the 1890's. This recognition had led in part to a settlement of most difficulties and to generally smooth relations between Great Britain and the United States. There was even a feeling in Great Britain that a new era of Anglo-Saxon unity might lead to a kind of joint imperial association with the United States.<sup>4</sup> The United States would perhaps be a "junior partner" in this relationship which would rest on a still superior Royal Navy, but nevertheless the U.S. would have its recognized sphere of activity and areas of essentially exclusive control. Great Britain prior to 1914 did not so much need the United States as want to maintain it in an amicable "separate but inferior" status. The war changed

this delicate relationship for both sides. For Britain there was now a very definite matter of need of American aid. The "hands across the sea" mythology of Anglo-Saxon unity and common culture had to be transformed into a matter of practical international politics built on the principle of "quid pro quo". American politicians and navalists realized this early and saw the opportunity for the vigorous and growing junior partner to replace the ailing and never much loved senior partner, to take the leadership of the firm and turn it in new and progressive directions. The British politicians and diplomats realized their danger but hoped by promoting the "mythology" as long and fully as possible to hold off the evil day when the "quid" would have to be rendered for the "quo". The German threat was of the present; the American threat was of the future. British foreign policy always trusted to the belief that somehow the future might take care of itself!<sup>5</sup>

#### THE WILSON ADMINISTRATION'S WAR POLICY AND INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT BRITAIN

World War I produced new tensions within the Anglo-American "friendship." The fact that the United States government insisted on participation in the war against the Central Powers as an "associated power" rather than as an "ally" of Great Britain and France reveals more than the

traditional American abhorrence of foreign alliances, which after all might have been overlooked by a Congress which had overwhelmingly supported entering into the war. President Wilson was a man who believed in symbols and appreciated that ideals needed to be dressed in words, even though the common man might at first miss their significance. He was well aware that the defeat of Germany was necessary for U.S. interests and that to join forces with the Allied Powers was the best means toward that end. He had no illusions about Great Britain and even fewer about France. He was prepared to "associate" the U.S. with the military action of the Allies toward the common objective of defeating Germany, but he was not prepared to merge American idealism and international purity with old world power politics and national self-interest which a true "alliance" would have appeared to entail with its implications of a deeper commitment to shared diplomatic goals.<sup>6</sup>

Wilson's Fourteen Points for the future world peace constituted a proclamation of the independent goals of the U.S. war effort. The naval building program proposal of 1918 was the practical expression of the Wilson administration's willingness to back up its ideals with muscle in the face of less idealistic "associates" in the war. The message of both "statements" was as much for the benefit of Great Britain and France as for Germany, and the message was duly received. The United States intended to be a force in the world to come

after the immediate problem of Germany was eliminated.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of the future of the United States President Wilson realized the key role of Great Britain. America's freedom of trade was still the main contentious issue between the two countries as it had been since the 1790's and really since colonial times. With the German menace gone there was every likelihood that the United States would move into the former position of Germany in relation to British land and mercantile power. The other major powers of 1914 including France were gone for practical purposes by 1918, and the British Empire and the United States were left, eyeing each other warily and wondering just how far official friendship and cultural bonds would go in the competition of a post-war world. Long before the Paris Conference brought any Anglo-U.S. problems to a head both sides knew that the U.S. could not and would not be "patronized" any longer.<sup>8</sup>

Within the Wilson administration there was a division of opinion and attitude toward Great Britain between the anglophiles represented by Col. Edward M. House who emphasized the common heritage and fundamental community of interest between the U.S. and Great Britain and the anglophobe groups represented by Joseph P. Tumulty who reflected the more traditional American suspicions of Britain derived in part from the heavily Irish constituency of the Democratic Party. Wilson himself seems to have fully heeded neither group. While himself a great admirer of the British



system of government and certainly not an enthusiastic Sein Feiner, he was highly suspicious of British motives and not easily deceived by "hands across the sea" pieties. The anglophile group (and their British counterparts, the pro-American group in the Foreign Office) tended to believe that Anglo-U.S. frictions were superficial and could be easily overcome if the two peoples could only get to know one another better. Just a few weeks before U.S. entry into the War, Ambassador Walter Hines Page was writing from London to Col. House enthusiastically endorsing a proposal by a group of American businessmen for a "Discover America" program of press propaganda in Britain to help make the U.S. better understood and appreciated in Britain.<sup>9</sup> Col. House, always anxious to smooth the way of Anglo-American cooperation, had joined the British government in advocating the dispatch of a special envoy to the U.S. as soon as the U.S. had entered the war to coordinate policy and build good public relations. Arthur Balfour, "America's favorite Englishman", was touted for this position. Wilson's responses to the suggestion revealed his own hesitations about any pro-British euphoria in April 1917:

...we shall be glad to receive such a commission and to see Mr. Balfour at the head of it. The plan has manifest dangers. I do not think that all of the country will understand or relish it. A great many will look upon the mission as an attempt to in some degree take charge of us as an assistant to Great Britain....<sup>10</sup>

Even before American entry into the war there were a few

prophetic voices within the British ranks who warned that this development might be a mixed blessing. They saw that U.S. involvement in the war against Germany would necessarily lead to an increase in American naval power, which would enable the United States later to challenge Britain's use of the blockade weapon and even British naval hegemony. Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the British Cabinet, was consistently suspicious of American naval power and sensitive to any threat to the British dominance of the high seas. As early as May 1916 he was warning Prime Minister Asquith:

... that which President Wilson aims at is freedom of the seas in time of war. If this were adopted the American peace would be more dangerous to the British Empire than the German war. . . we should not allow America, under any circumstances, in peace or war, to whittle down the value of sea power once war has begun.<sup>11</sup>

In the last months before U.S. entry into the war against Germany, British observers of the American political scene were advising the government in London about the most prudent ways of dealing with the United States. It would be very difficult to change the American common man's image of Great Britain, an image very often shared by American politicians and reflected in their attitudes and policies. Robert Willert, American correspondent for the Manchester Guardian and a shrewd observer of American affairs, wrote to his editor two months before the American declaration of war on the great need to develop structures of communication on which genuine Anglo-American cooperation could be built. He

believed the Wilson administration would be open to the idea of exchanging special "war ambassadors" to elevate the new relationship above normal levels of diplomacy. He also advocated the exchange of British and American naval commissions and the dispatch to Washington as soon as possible of an Allied financial commission. Willert warned that Wilson's attitudes on the post war settlement were likely to cause problems to the British government. Wilson's concept of a League of Nations, he predicted prophetically, would probably not be supported by Congress and the American people.<sup>12</sup>

Anglo-American relations in the 1917-1919 war period were tense from the American point of view with the United States very much aware of its contribution to the war effort, protective of its national dignity, and acutely sensitive to any sign of condescension on the part of the British. From the British point of view it was a time of great anxiety. Great Britain realized it could not afford to offend its touchy partner. At times the British government seemed to have two wars to fight--the struggle against Germany and the almost equally complex effort to retain American goodwill.

Both the U.S. and Great Britain moved tentatively toward a method of effecting their new association after American entry into the war. The British government veered between reliance on regular diplomatic channels and its ambassador in Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, and the dispatch of

various special missions headed by special envoys. Arthur Willert also commented on this chaotic situation and called for the appointment of a single strong ambassador with all special missions subordinated to him. He felt that complaints emanating from various departments of the U.S. government (notably Navy) about lack of information from the British were justifiable in part and much more real reciprocity was called for. Now was the time to build a solid foundation for good post-war relations. He warned that the French, Italians, and Japanese, while officially Allies of Britain, were all in their own ways anxious to discredit Britain in American eyes with an eye to the post-war settlement.<sup>13</sup>

Dealing with the American government of Woodrow Wilson was never easy for any of the Allies. His ambivalent approach to relations with fellow members of the coalition against Germany tended to give that association a uniquely tenuous quality. Wilson saw the U.S. association as "open-ended" and of limited commitment. The Allies, therefore, had to be constantly on their guard against offending the American President lest he be given an excuse to make a separate peace with Germany. The British had to be particularly alert to possible offense in view of Wilson's often expressed views about British ambitions being as offensive as Germany's and his public skepticism about unity of war aims between Great Britain and the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Newspaper reports and magazine articles in both the United States and Britain continued into the autumn of 1917 to talk about the problems of Anglo-U.S. communication and the unhappiness of the government in Washington with British lack of openness with their new American allies. Sources of these stories were always hard to trace, but the British government was increasingly sensitive to the allegations of non-cooperation. A series of exchanges took place in October 1917 between U.S. Ambassador Thomas N. Page and Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour in London and from them to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels, and Admiral William S. Benson in Washington. Ambassador Page was called to a meeting at the Foreign Office and asked to lay out the specific American charges, if they were real, of British non-cooperation. From Washington Lansing and Daniels, and from London Admirals William S. Sims and Henry T. Mayo, U.S. Navy representatives, were clear that they had no dissatisfaction about relations with their British counterparts and no charges to make.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Admiral Benson did not join in this absolution of the British leads some to suspect that his staff at least were behind some of the anti-British agitation. The whole incident proved to be something of a "tempest in a teapot", but it did reveal the anxiety of the British government to be or at least appear to be, completely open and cooperative with the American authorities and to create a unified war effort.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S SEARCH FOR THE "RIGHT MAN" AS  
REPRESENTATIVE IN WASHINGTON

Meanwhile London continued to struggle with its search for the right structure and the right personalities to cement its slippery relationship with Washington. Ambassador Spring-Rice, though a capable diplomat for a more peaceful time, was certainly not much loved nor particularly trusted either by his superiors in the Lloyd George government in London nor by Wilson and the State Department. Lloyd George did not regard him as one of "his own men." Spring-Rice's close and friendly contacts with Theodore Roosevelt and Republican leaders did not endear him to the Wilson administration, especially in view of his tendency to use these Republican contacts as a way of putting pressure on the administration in various ways. Soon after the U.S. declaration of war Lloyd George dispatched a special mission to Washington headed by Arthur Balfour, former Prime Minister and now Foreign Secretary in the war time coalition government. Balfour was exactly the man for the job, and in spite of Wilson's expressed apprehensions about the mission and its effects on U.S. public opinion<sup>16</sup> the visit was a great success on the public relations level. The smooth urbanity of the polished yet relaxed "English gentleman" seems to have charmed the State Department and even slightly warmed the President. Frank Polk, Counsellor of The State Department, wrote glowingly to Ambassador Page in London

following the Balfour mission:

...you probably know what a wonderful success the British mission has been, but I do not think you can realize what a deep impression they have made on all of us. Mr. Balfour really won the affection of us all... I think we all felt we were dealing with a sympathetic friend....<sup>17</sup>

Whether the "personal diplomacy" of Balfour could be translated into something enduring remained a big question. His mission was followed by the appointment of Lord Northcliffe, the British newspaper magnate, as head of the special British War Mission in the United States. Spring-Rice remained in Washington as Ambassador handling normal diplomatic contact. Northcliffe, a Lloyd George confidante, established his headquarters in New York to handle commercial and financial relations connected with the war effort. Such an arrangement led inevitably to confusion and blurred responsibility, making for worse rather than better Anglo-U.S. communication. In the summer of 1917 as British credit in the United States seemed on the verge of collapse, Balfour wrote to Col. House about the financial panic which could follow. House replied:

The crisis has largely been brought about by the lack of some directing mind here that would inspire general confidence. No such situation could have arisen while you were in this country. Wiseman seems to be in sympathetic touch with everyone. . . (but) he lacks authority.<sup>18</sup>

This is one of the first notices given to the ever-present and ever-helpful William Wiseman.

The role of William Wiseman in the critical war-time

period of Anglo-U.S. relations has been fully chronicled and analyzed in the work of W.D. Fowler.<sup>19</sup> Wiseman's principal contribution was to utilize his own role as a British Intelligence contact with the entourage of Col. House to become a major channel for Anglo-American relations. Wiseman prepared a memo in early 1917 for use by the Imperial Conference to be held in London that year on the problems of Anglo-American relations. Wiseman was confident that most intelligent Americans were supportive of the Allied cause, but he was very clear about the obstacles to real friendship.<sup>20</sup>

With American entry into the war and the greater prospects for Allied victory which that brought, thought was now being given within the British governmental establishment about the shape of the post-war world. Among the various scenarios proposed was that of the "Atlanticists" who saw sustained and complete cooperation between the British Empire and the United States as a panacea for the world's ills. As Michael Fry has pointed out in his work on North Atlantic diplomacy after World War I there were varying degrees of commitment to the Atlantic concept ranging from strong support through a more skeptical approach.<sup>21</sup> Among those most firmly dedicated to it were men such as Lord Grey, Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Balfour, Lord Lee of Fareham, and Philip Kerr (future Lord Lothian) who were closely linked to the war-time coalition government of Lloyd George. It is felt



that King George V himself can be considered a strong Atlanticist. The Prime Minister himself and at least two of his close associates who became ambassadors in Washington (Lord Reading and Sir Auckland Geddes) were sympathetic but more doubtful of real possibilities for Anglo-American cooperation. Dominions leaders, members of the Imperial War Cabinet such as Sir Robert Borden and Arthur Meighen of Canada and General Smuts of South Africa strongly pushed the British policy in an Atlantic direction. A number of younger men in the diplomatic service such as Robert Craigie and Geoffrey Thompson who served in Washington in the war and immediate post-war years (a large number acquiring American wives) became convinced Atlanticists. In later chapters we will see that they rose to positions in the Foreign Office during the 1920's and became the nucleus of an "Americanist" group in the policy making process.

The "Atlanticists" in the British government strove to search for the best way of establishing good relations, even to the point of seeking American advice on the personnel of British missions. Cecil wrote to Col. House in August of 1917 asking for his "frank evaluation" of the staff of the British embassy and special mission in the United States and his advice on how to straighten it all out. Cecil discussed the proposed dispatch of Lord Chief Justice Reading to Washington as head of a special financial mission. Cecil was concerned about making matters still more complicated when

the goal was a complete understanding between Great Britain and the United States, an understanding which he viewed as vital to both countries and to the world. Specifically Cecil inquired as to whether Col. House felt that Ambassador Spring-Rice was adequate for his post and whether Lord Northcliffe should be recalled as head of the British War Mission. House replied in a remarkably detailed letter. He recommended the recall of Ambassador Spring-Rice and his reward by a peerage or significant honors. Barclay should be left in Washington as Chargé. Lord Reading should be sent as Ambassador with full power over financial affairs. Lord Northcliffe could stay but be limited to handling commercial matters. When Northcliffe decided to leave, then Lord Grey should be sent to head the War Mission, unless (preferably) Cecil was willing to come over himself to take the job. House emphasized the great need for someone to compose matters and (above all) someone who would have the full confidence of President Wilson.<sup>22</sup>

The suggestion of Col. House that Lord Grey would be a good choice for Ambassador or head of the British War Mission was repeated by House to Grey himself. The latter's reputation as progressive Liberal, perhaps stronger in the United States than in Britain itself, caused him to be much admired by American liberals. Clearly Col. House saw him as a man after President Wilson's own heart. Grey replied to House concerning the possibility of his coming to America by

stating that he had no desire to reenter political life and to accept a diplomatic assignment of the importance of Washington would necessarily involve him in politics once again. He went on, however, to stress the critical importance of Anglo-American relations and of the great role the United States would have to play in planning the post-war world. Grey expressed his great admiration for President Wilson and his international goals. When the moment arrived to begin talks about the future peace Grey said he would then be willing to come to the U.S.A. as a special envoy to discuss policy with Wilson, if the British government wanted him to do so.<sup>23</sup>

In January 1918 notice was given to Washington of Ambassador Spring Rice's recall and of his replacement by the Marquess of Reading, the close collaborator of Lloyd George and, as has been mentioned, the candidate recommended by Col. House and Sir William Wiseman. Reading was still Lord Chief Justice which added to his prestige in American eyes and exalted the nature of his mission in American opinion probably as much as did his marquissate. A self-made man who rose from humble origins through a highly successful business career into political influence, Lord Reading had everything to appeal to the aristocratic liberalism of the Wilson administration. He had already served a successful tour as head of a special war-time purchasing mission in the U.S. Clearly the Lloyd George government was doing all it could to

put a trusted man in Washington to whom the Americans could relate. The appointment can be seen as a great success for William Wiseman in finally getting the London government to see the value of a direct link to Wilson and of following a policy of open frankness. Wiseman expected Reading to be in full agreement with this approach. Wiseman had long been urging his superiors to abandon the method of "ballyhoo" and of consorting with the administration's political enemies followed by Spring-Rice as well as of the propaganda approach of Northcliffe.<sup>24</sup>

Wiseman at least was very satisfied in the months that followed that the Reading ambassadorship was working very well. In the summer of 1918 while the ambassador was in Britain for consultation and there was some question of whether in view of his position as Lord Chief Justice he should not remain there, Wiseman sent a memo to the Foreign Office praising the role of Lord Reading in America. Reading had succeeded in cementing good relations between Great Britain and the United States and getting a full American commitment to the war effort. Wiseman urged that he should be allowed to return to Washington and not be "chained" to the position of Chief Justice.<sup>25</sup> To Lord Reading himself after his return to Washington in the fall of 1918 Wiseman sent a letter which is in fact a kind of "homily" on the proper approach to continue with the Americans. In looking at past and present Anglo-U.S. tensions Wiseman judged that

these rarely flowed from real policy differences between the governments but were more practical and personal. He did not feel that President Wilson was anti-British, a charge mostly attributable to his Republican opponents. The two governments were essentially at one. Wiseman noted that in the future the problem would be with trade issues, and on these neither government was likely to give way. The only approach to take was the way of frankness and patience. Above all there should be no deception by the London government nor any appeal over the President's head to pressure groups and political opposition in the United States. It would be necessary for the ambassador to give clear explanations of British commercial goals in the post-war world. It was essential not to overdo the appeal to superficial friendships and also to avoid creation of new resentments, but to rely on fundamental common traditions.<sup>26</sup>

THE ISSUES OF TRADING RIGHTS AND FUTURE BALANCE OF NAVAL  
POWER

As the end of the war came in sight the immediate and practical issue of trade and trading rights in the post-war world loomed large as the issue potentially dividing Great Britain and the United States, seen as a "new Germany" emerged from the haze of war-time friendship. Col. House was able to report to the President in July 1918 from London:

Almost as soon as I arrived in England I sensed an antagonism to the United States. The English are

quite as cordial and hospitable to the individual American as ever, but they dislike us collectively. . . . relations between the two countries are beginning to assume the same character as that of England and Germany before the war . . . . Will it be Great Britain or the United States who will next commit a colossal blunder. If we are farsighted we will conduct ourselves so as to merit the friendship of all nations, for it is to me conceivable that there may come a time when we will need it....<sup>27</sup>

A hint of a possible Anglo-U.S. war? The word was never on official lips during the pre-1919 years but clearly it was a shadow which crossed official minds in both Britain and the U.S. even while the war against Germany was still in progress. Col. House went on in the same letter to detail discussions he had held with Lord Grey, former British Foreign Secretary. Grey deplored any rivalry in naval building between Britain and the U.S. and asserted that Great Britain would never build against the U.S. He thought "war between the two nations was inconceivable." House commented, however, that Grey's views were reflective of "the liberal point of view and not the conservative or the one held in naval circles." House urged Wilson to alter his views on blockade. Wilson at this point felt that blockade would cease to be an issue in future wars. House did not agree and felt that a new international maritime code was needed.

This question of the freedom of the seas is the one thing above all others that brought us into the war, and it is no nearer solution today than it was before Germany collapsed.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the President was partly following this counsel of Col. House when he expressed his concerns to Sir William

Wiseman in October of 1918. Wilson stated clearly in an interview with Wiseman that in the future the nations of the world would not accept the pre-war situation whereby their trade depended on the sufferance of the Royal Navy. The United States admitted, Wilson said, that Britain had perhaps not abused its power but that very maritime power was a major cause of the current war because of German jealousy of it. Wilson was looking for an alternative and saw the linkage of British naval power to a League of Nations structure as the only way of doing this.<sup>29</sup>

Freedom of the seas had always been a bone of contention between Great Britain and the U.S., but the Wilson administration was becoming ever more aware that the issue was bound to dominate relations after the conclusion of hostilities, because of the positive effect the war was having on the growth of American trade and the size of the U.S. mercantile fleet. Britain was anxious to recover its pre-war position of trade supremacy. Great Britain had for some centuries seen the Royal Navy as the key to its survival as a nation and empire. The size of its navy compared to those of real or potential rivals was a major factor in determining defense and fiscal policy. Throughout most of the 19th century Great Britain had been satisfied with a navy 1/3 larger than France. In the early 1890's as Germany became a factor in policy formation the Admiralty enunciated the "two power standard," viz. that the Royal Navy should be

equal in strength to the combined force of its two nearest rivals. Both Tory and Liberal governments accepted this policy into the 20th century. The standard applied mainly to battle-ships, though in practice it extended to larger cruisers as well. The smaller cruiser was useful apart from formal battle formations as an individual "policeman" to protect trade routes and to be available for colonial patrols and necessary interventions. Great Britain always maintained that she needed more cruisers than other nations because of her greatly extended commitments as an imperial and commercial power. She could not be held to mathematical comparisons to other states in cruisers. The shift from the traditional two-power standard to a one-power standard and the related issue of cruisers were matters forced on Britain after World War I by economic realities. This will be a major theme in subsequent chapters.<sup>30</sup>

British policy had its American defenders on this point, including Admiral William S. Sims, the U.S. Navy's liaison officer in London attached to the Admiralty during the war, and Edward Price Bell who wrote a series of articles in the fall of 1918 in the Chicago Daily News about the unwarranted American suspicions of Britain's alleged ambitions for sea power. Bell maintained that Britain was entitled to its dominant naval power in view of its extended sea communications.

An enlightening response to this position was offered by



the U.S. Commercial Attaché in London, Philip Kennedy, in a report entitled "British Trade Attitudes towards the United States" submitted to Irwin Laughlin, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in London on 22 November 1918. This report made its way back to the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the Commerce Department in Washington. Kennedy commented on the pro-British stance of men like Sims and Bell. He agreed that there was still a lot of goodwill toward the U.S.A. in Britain, but he urged a realistic attitude about just how far this goodwill would extend in the face of economic competition. He noted:

America may soon possess a merchant tonnage equivalent to that of Great Britain and have a foreign trade of greater relative importance to our natural prosperity and of a more serious competitive character as concerns Great Britain. We may, therefore, have a greater interest in sea routes and be brought into a more serious competition with Great Britain, and our interests instead of being largely supplementary as formerly may be to an extent opposed to one another.<sup>31</sup>

Kennedy warned that Great Britain needed profits from its export trade and overseas investment and did not want to see the U.S. as a financial competitor. She was very sensitive to the already emerging U.S. claims to certain "exclusive" trade routes and trading areas, such as Latin America. Kennedy did not think the U.S. government should try to use the war for its own financial gain but neither should it allow its allies a "head start" on economic advancement. He concluded with advice about realistic economic bargaining as the basis of international amity:

It is not necessary to be suspicious because our allies are going to be rather determined to get what they want. It is certainly unwise to ignore these economic issues and trust blindly to goodwill. We must be prepared for commercial bargaining. If we are steady and true to our national interests, as well as to the great principles of international policy, we will gain respect which is the best basis for any permanent goodwill.<sup>32</sup>

But a position of respect in international affairs rests on a position of strength. If the political and commercial advisors of the Wilson administration were becoming more aware of the problems ahead, the leaders of the U.S. Navy were already very much aware of their future role as guarantors of American commercial freedom and were actively determined not to resume a role of subservience to Great Britain.

Nearly two years before American entry into the war the General Board of the U.S. Navy had called for parity with the Royal Navy within ten years:

The navy of the United States should ultimately be equal to the most powerful maintained by any other nation of the world. It should be gradually increased to this point by such a rate of development, year by year, as may be permitted by the facilities of the country, but the limit above defined should be attained not later than 1925.<sup>33</sup>

The official cooperation with Great Britain in the war against the Central Powers after April 1917 did little to lessen the suspicion of American naval authorities concerning their British counterparts. The political superiors of the U.S. Navy Department were anxious to promote Anglo-American harmony and concerned about the anti-British sentiments of

the American professional navy men. Two weeks prior to the U.S. declaration of war Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt made secret contacts with the British Admiralty seeking advice on recommendations for common Anglo-American naval activity in the war. Roosevelt, probably acting without any higher authorization from within the administration, was clearly anxious to influence the General Board of the U.S. Navy on policy and not to leave decisions strictly to the professionals. Roosevelt's British contact, Captain Guy Gaunt, naval secretary to the Admiralty, noted in his report to his superiors that once the U.S. Navy General Board made a decision "there is a danger that it would be difficult to make them change their minds without exciting jealousy and anti-British sentiment, which pervades the U.S. Navy."<sup>34</sup> Both the British Foreign Office and the Admiralty felt that it would be unpolitic for the British government to make any such suggestions to Roosevelt at that point, but they authorized Gaunt to handle the matter "privately" with the Assistant Navy Secretary if the subject was raised again.

Naval men on both sides while officially and superficially friendly during the war years were less than totally open with one another, both having one eye on the naval situation of a post-war world. British authorities were naturally concerned about the growth of U.S. shipping during the war. Admiral Sims reported from London to his superiors in Washington that this concern was "founded upon

a certain measure of distrust as to the intentions of the various countries . . . (as they had) a direct bearing upon the probable condition of their overseas trade after the war."<sup>35</sup> Admiral William S. Benson, Chief of U.S. Naval Operations during the war years, in a report to the Secretary of the Navy maintained that U.S. naval construction programs should look as much to post-war as to immediate war needs. The U.S., he felt, should have sufficient sea power

...to dispute the freedom of the seas with potential enemies.... We may expect the future to give us more potential enemies than potential friends, so that our safety must lie in our resources.<sup>36</sup>

In June 1917 the British Admiralty requested permission from the U.S. Government to negotiate contracts for construction in the United States of a large number of ships for the Royal Navy (20 sloops, 20 convoy sloops, 50 destroyers, and 200 trawlers). The Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair replied to an enquiry from the chief of Naval Operations about this project that facilities were available for the handling of this British order in the U.S. and agreed that the ships were needed for the war effort, but they raised the question as to the advisability of permitting the British order to go through. Would it not be better for these ships to be built by and for the U.S. Navy for war use rather than assisting the growth of the British Navy? <sup>37</sup> At about the same time the British government was becoming concerned about U.S. construction of large capital ships

which would be a threat to the Royal Navy's position of superiority in the post-war world. Lord Balfour was suggesting to the U.S. government as part of a possible Anglo-U.S. naval agreement that the U.S. should divert its construction program from capital ships to lighter craft, of more immediate war use and less of an offensive threat.<sup>38</sup>

This letter of Balfour to Col. House regarding naval matters raised a point which was in fact of great significance as far as the American navy men were concerned. In it Balfour raised for probably the first time the idea of a tripartite Pacific agreement between Great Britain, the United States and Japan. He saw such an agreement as the best way out of a difficulty for Britain. While the British government was anxious for a naval entente with the U.S. for efficient prosecution of the war against Germany, her existing alliance relationship with Japan made this difficult. Japan would have to be kept informed of any new naval arrangements with the U.S. Balfour suggested to House that the tripartite pact for a consultative relationship in the Pacific extending for four years after the end of the war be proposed to President Wilson.<sup>39</sup>

The critical question of Britain's alliance with Japan and its effect on Anglo-American relations will be dealt with later in this dissertation. It became a major theme of the period after the Paris Conference, but as early as the beginning of the war it was already a sticky issue. The U.S.

Navy had for a long while presumed that its next major activity would be a Pacific war with Japan, and its strategic planning had been directed along those lines. U.S. Navy planning strategists were reluctant to enter into close relations with their British counterparts even in the war effort against Germany for fear that American naval information would come into Japanese hands through their British allies. Knowledge of U.S. weaponry and Pacific strength was not information the U.S. Navy wanted Japan to have. Thus the U.S. suspicion of Japan had a spill-over effect onto relations with Great Britain even during the war period.<sup>40</sup> As the war proceeded American naval authorities' concern about Japan lessened. Admiral Benson and his associates in the General Board felt that the U.S. had demonstrated its war-making capacity sufficiently to cool any Japanese ambitions for war on its own against the U.S. Americans had little fear of the Japanese Navy in 1918, but naval strategists knew that a British-Japanese combination in the Pacific would pose a real danger to American interests. Thus the British navy was the real threat as far as most U.S. Navy men were concerned.<sup>41</sup> In spite of British protests to the contrary the U.S. Navy viewed the continuing Anglo-Japanese alliance as a potentially anti-American combination and a dangerous one.

Within the American naval establishment throughout the war there continued to be a struggle (though hardly an equal

one) between two forces. The "anglophiles" represented by Admiral Sims and supported by the civilian political leadership, especially Assistant Secretary Franklin D. Roosevelt, advocated close cooperation with the British Admiralty and the policy of American naval units working within an over-all "allied" naval strategy under British leadership. The "anglophobes" represented by Admirals Benson and Pratt tended to see the war with Germany as a passing phase leading into a new naval future in which the U.S. would be in competition with Great Britain. They opposed any policy whereby the U.S. Navy would be subservient to British leadership. They stressed the need to demonstrate now U.S. independent naval power as the best way of assuring that there would be international respect for American policies in the future.<sup>42</sup>

As the end of the war approached, American naval men grew more suspicious of Britain and more determined to resist British efforts to recover their pre-war naval dominance. The future disposition of captured German and Austrian naval vessels became a test issue. The U.S. Navy's London Planning Section became greatly alarmed at the plans of the European allies for distribution of these ships and the effect of distribution on naval balance. The London Planning Section had been established in 1917 at the insistence of Admiral Sims as part of his program of coordination of American and British naval policy. Admiral Benson fearing possible "pro-

British" activity and recommendations of such a unit had resisted its creation for a long while, but he had finally given way on condition that "the officers detailed for this duty should come (to London) fully imbued with our national and naval policy and ideas."<sup>43</sup> This group of very talented officers who were greatly devoted to Sims generally did exactly what Sims desired and certainly did much to facilitate Anglo-American joint efforts at critical stages of the war.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless by the time of the Armistice even this supposedly "pro-British" group was expressing grave concerns. In its Memorandum #65 for the Navy Department in Washington, dated 4 November 1918 the group outlined the probable distribution of captured enemy ships as currently planned by the Allies without U.S. participation and noted the results. As a result of the proposed distribution Great Britain would possess 51 capital ships to the U.S. 17, and Japan would possess 16. Great Britain alone possessed a 3 to 1 superiority over the United States. The alliance between Great Britain and Japan would produce a possible 4 to 1 naval preponderance over the United States. The memorandum goes on to declare:

With these facts in view we may be sure that if Great Britain demands. . . a distribution of surrendered and interned vessels that she has solely in view her future relations with the United States. A prominent British subject recently said to an American in Sweden, 'if you want freedom of the seas you jolly well will have to fight for it'....The distribution of German and Austrian submarines would be a special menace to all the merchant ships of the world.... Prominent



officers in the British Admiralty have justified on military grounds the German use of submarines in unrestricted warfare.

The officers of the London Planning Section were looking ahead to a new naval world situation and anticipating Great Britain's old arguments about her need to have the largest navy when they concluded this memorandum by stating:

Unless we leave in Europe some restraining influence on British naval power Great Britain will be able to exert throughout the world an influence unknown to her in time of peace in the recent past. It may be right and proper that she shall have a greater navy than any other European power.... It is not, however, in the interest of humanity that she shall occupy so commanding a naval position that she may regulate the high seas through the world in accordance with her will.<sup>45</sup>

Just a few weeks later the London Planning Section in a memorandum on future U.S. naval construction programs, dated Nov. 21, 1918, stated very frankly that the American building policy had to be formulated with Great Britain in mind primarily. Although war between the U.S. and Britain was not probable still it had to be regarded as a possibility due to the numerous areas of friction such as trade rivalry, the dispute over freedom of the seas, attempts to limit U.S. trade, and general international instability.<sup>46</sup>

As the end of the war approached both Great Britain and the United States were increasingly concerned about the relative positions of their two navies and the effect of their naval power on post-war relations. This concern produced a final "special mission" from Great Britain to the United States, this time in search of agreement in naval

construction in particular and naval policy in general. The naval mission of Sir Eric Geddes, 1st Lord of the Admiralty, to the United States in October 1918 has been most recently analyzed by David Trask in his work on war-time Anglo-U.S. naval relations.<sup>47</sup> For our purposes here it is sufficient to note that this mission also grew out of the belief that following the "Wiseman line" personal diplomacy and frank exchange of views would eliminate friction and lead to a unification of policy. It began out of British concern over U.S. concentration on building up a merchant fleet while Britain was still building war ships. Assistant Navy Secretary Franklin Roosevelt had visited Britain in the summer of 1918 and had expressed his willingness to dovetail the British and American naval construction programs. The British soon discovered, however, that the Anglophile Roosevelt was not so easily able to convince the Anglophobes in the U.S., viz. Secretary Daniels and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Benson of the wisdom of such a program. Sir Eric Geddes succeeded in convincing the Cabinet that he should make the effort to allay suspicions and to ease growing naval tensions by talking directly to Wilson and his naval advisers. On the surface the meetings between Geddes and American officials remained cordial; in fact there was a great deal of American suspicion below the surface about the whole nature of the mission. By these final weeks of the war the question of the post-war settlement and new arrangements

of power were looming large in the consciousness of both British and Americans. The reality of Anglo-American rivalry as a factor in the coming world was more obvious than before. Any British mission was bound to be suspect and especially one dealing with the critical and highly symbolic naval issue. Sir Eric's goals were numerous but inter-related. He wanted to get the U.S. to postpone its proposed program of capital ship construction and to concentrate on submarine building until Great Britain was able to catch up with its replacements of lost merchant vessels. He wanted compensation for Britain in the form of destroyers for British ships lost in the service of the United States while ferrying American troops etc. The American officials saw these objectives as another British attempt to keep the United States in a subordinate naval and mercantile position. There was a thinly disguised resentment and no American concessions.<sup>48</sup>

The meetings at best were a stalemate, and yet such were the times that even a merely stalemated Anglo-U.S. meeting was seen as a success, and congratulations were offered on both sides. Col. House wrote effusively to Balfour after the departure of Geddes:

I would like to congratulate your government on the success of Sir Eric Geddes' mission to this country. No mission has produced a more favorable impression both on members of the Administration and the people generally . . . (it) has helped us all to understand and appreciate the great work of the British Navy during the war . . . .<sup>49</sup>

But understanding the great work of the British Navy was hardly the point of the mission! Geddes himself admitted to Lloyd George that his mission had only been "partially successful" but it did have unexpected results of a positive nature.<sup>50</sup> For one thing Geddes discovered that the American ship building program was not well organized and was far behind schedule. In fact the United States could not supply the destroyers requested by the British. This was bad for the moment, but it did suggest that perhaps Great Britain had less to fear than heretofore expected about the American naval construction capacity. Also of significance were Geddes' talks with President Wilson where freedom of the seas came up. Geddes discovered that Wilson's views were "quite unformed" and more flexible than he had expected. Geddes felt that the British would be able to accept much of the President's position on this issue and should do so. For this view the First Lord received poor marks from Lloyd George whose position on freedom of the seas was adamant. He accused Geddes of falling under Wilson's spell and becoming a "convert" to American policies.<sup>51</sup>

THE PARIS CONFERENCE: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN "NAVAL BATTLE"  
AND ITS AFTERMATH

The period from the autumn of 1918 through 1919

centering on the period of the Paris Conference itself was a tense time for Anglo-American relations. For the British government it was a time of awakening to the importance of maintaining cordial post-war relations and to a sharp realization of how shallow the Anglo-American war-time "entente" had been weighed against the depth of American anti-British feeling, both popular and official. British observers and analysts of the American scene gave warnings to their superiors in London of the problems ahead. William Wiseman wrote in October 1918 regarding the coming peace conference:

...It is important that they (U.S. people) should not come to believe that the British Empire is the chief obstacle to world peace. They have been taught . . . to regard the British as a nation of imperialists who want to boss the world....90% of the American people regard our treatment of Ireland with disapproval....Freer contact between the two people, owing to the war has done much to offset this feeling....<sup>52</sup>

On this latter point Arthur Willert reported to his editor in the same month:

...we must not think that because the U.S. and the Empire have fought side by side that they are hence going to understand each other automatically, especially regarding peace-making and reconstruction. There is no particular reason why a linking of hands on the battlefield should produce more lasting sentiments than the clinking of glasses at a Pilgrim's dinner.<sup>53</sup>

In the winter of 1918-1919 as the naval antagonism increased, British leaders became acutely aware of the danger of new naval rivalry and of a premature break with the United States before the completion of a peace settlement. Aware of

the growing anti-British sentiment in the United States, the government in London began to consider a new departure in British diplomacy, the use of propaganda in peace time, to improve the British image in the United States.

Lord Grey, especially sensitive to the possibility of rivalry with the United States, sounded a warning in a campaign speech in December of 1918 during the post-Armistice "khaki election" in Britain. He raised the point of talk about an American naval build-up, which he hoped was not to be the official policy of the Wilson administration. Naval rivalry between Great Britain and the United States would be fatal. Grey maintained that the British only desired security and not maritime dominance. The Royal Navy was now larger than needed and real reductions as part of a naval agreement with the United States could be negotiated. Later difficulties, if they arose, could be referred to an international naval conference.<sup>54</sup> Even British naval authorities realized the significance of revived anti-British sentiment in the U.S. and knew the dangers inherent in a new naval race. Walter Long, successor to Sir Eric Geddes as First Lord of the Admiralty, pointed out to the Prime Minister the dangers for Britain in a new naval race and its inconsistency with the League of Nations ideal.<sup>55</sup>

At the Paris Conference of January to June 1919 naval issues between Great Britain and the United States proved nearly as difficult to settle as relations between the

victorious and defeated powers. Nearly four years of developing suspicion and rivalry between the British and American naval establishments came to a head in the discussions between the civilian and professional naval leaders of both sides in what has come to be called the "Naval Battle of Paris." This "battle" has been extensively treated elsewhere and need not be detailed here.<sup>56</sup> The naval issue became in effect the focus for the conflict between two world views, British and American. Great Britain's leaders viewed the end of the war as a return to the "status quo ante", to the situation before the rise of a German naval threat, a recovery of international normality in which the British navy was dominant and British mercantile supremacy was unchallenged. They were grateful for American help in recovering that state of normality, but they expected the United States to return also to its position of amicable (if testy) inferiority. Not all Americans were in agreement with Woodrow Wilson's idealistic internationalism. There were even some few representatives of the older school of "Anglo-Saxon unity" who were ready to accept Britain's claim to special naval status. For the most part, however, Wilson was expressing a genuine American feeling in his insistence that the end of the war was the beginning of a new world order in which (with or without a League) the United States was no longer to play a subordinate role, one in which American mercantile power was to be free to expand and

subject to no nation's dictated limitations in war or peace.

Even before the Armistice Wilson was making it clear to the Allies that he wanted all of his 14 Points to be incorporated into the peace plan, including his call for freedom of the seas. When Col. House went to Europe in October 1918 he told the allied Prime Ministers that continued U.S. "association" was closely tied to acceptance of U.S. war aims and that failure to accept these could lead to a huge American naval build-up to protect U.S. maritime rights.<sup>57</sup> This threat was followed by the Wilson administration's proposal to Congress for authorization of significant naval construction increases, far above the still uncompleted 1915 plans. This possible building program became the American "sword" in the naval battle at Paris in the spring of 1919.

Basically the United States delegation at Paris wanted the establishment of the League with its covenant with an "exemption" for the Monroe Doctrine involving recognition of American special interests in the area covered by that doctrine, and a guarantee of freedom of the seas. The British government cared little for the League idea, saw no reason if the League was to be created to include an exception for the sake of the Monroe Doctrine, refused to make concessions on freedom of the seas or to accept the U.S.



naval build-up which would reduce Britain to equality with the U.S.A. or less. Here the lines were drawn. The British, especially represented by the position of the Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill were determined to hold to a hard line and never to surrender British naval superiority and the power to control the seas. Lord Robert Cecil and Sir Arthur Balfour of the Empire delegation were more open to compromise with the Americans realizing that Britain could not compete with American building capacity and financial power. Admiral Benson led the American counter-attack at Paris, with Col. House as the chief American proponent of compromise and Navy Secretary Daniels caught between, anxious to avoid a break with Britain but equally anxious to preserve an appearance of "no compromise" by the Wilson administration for the sake of domestic politics.

Admiral Benson was outspoken in his criticism of the British and their apparent determination to preserve the old order of dominance of the seas by the Royal Navy. In referring to his experience at Paris Benson commented later:

....The outstanding fact throughout all these negotiations (was ) the determination of Great Britain to maintain a position of dominance in world affairs and a determination to so manipulate the interests of the minor powers to secure the sympathy of sufficient nations to out-vote and block the U.S. in any efforts which might in any way interfere with British domination....<sup>58</sup>

One high point of the tension came in a heated meeting at the Hotel Crillon, headquarters of the American delegation in

Paris in April 1919 between Secretary Daniels, Admiral Benson and British First Lord of the Admiralty Walter Long and First Sea Lord Admiral Wester Wemyss. At this meeting these naval representatives, freed from the supervision of their diplomatic political superiors, seem to have dropped all masks and "spoken their minds" to each other. Long specifically raised objections to the proposed American naval building program demanding to know why the U.S. needed so large a navy and describing it as a threat to Great Britain. Benson replied that no war with Britain was contemplated, but that if the British attempted to suppress American trade or limit U.S. mercantile growth war between the two powers was inevitable.<sup>59</sup> Essentially a stalemate was reached; decisions had to be left to the political superiors. Not all of Benson's memos to the American delegation were acted on or passed on to President Wilson. Secretary Lansing and Col. House were anxious not to upset the over-all political settlement.<sup>60</sup>

Wilson himself and Lloyd George were equally unable to reach agreement on naval building programs of their two countries. In addition Lloyd George was unwilling to agree to an amendment to article 10 of the League Covenant safeguarding the position of the Monroe Doctrine which he felt localized the League as a European thing as well as giving "special treatment" to U.S. policy.<sup>61</sup> Lord Robert Cecil and Sir Arthur Balfour were not opposed to this

amendment and it was left to them and Col. House to work out the compromise which was eventually reached. The British agreed to accept the League of Nations and its Covenant with the Monroe Doctrine amendment. In return the United States agreed to postpone its 1916 naval building program until after the peace conference was ended, to abandon the 1918 program altogether once the League was in operation, and then to work through the League for a new arrangement based on relative strengths of the two fleets. The issue of freedom of the seas was simply deferred in the hope that with the League in existence it might simply go away.<sup>62</sup>

One outgrowth of the American experience at the Paris Conference and the complex issues surrounding the "naval battle" was a clearer realization of the role of the U.S. Navy in future foreign policy decisions and a need to create a greater unity between diplomatic and naval personnel in order to minimize friction and develop a stronger American foreign policy voice. Prior to the end of World War I there was virtually no interdepartmental planning within the U.S. government structure. Assistant Navy Secretary Franklin D. Roosevelt was as anxious for this kind of internal U.S. unity as he was concerned for Anglo-U.S. unity of policy. In a letter to Secretary Lansing in May 1919 Roosevelt emphasized the lessons of Paris on the need for interdepartmental cooperation and the close link between foreign policy and naval planning. He cited the immediate post-war problem of

Pacific policy. He lamented the fact that the U.S. fleet could not in its present state be maintained beyond Hawaii. Did U.S. policy as envisioned by the State Department warrant development by the Navy Department of plans for a war in the western Pacific? Roosevelt proposed a plan (later adopted) for a Joint Planning Board made up of officials from the State, War, and Navy Departments.<sup>63</sup> The very tentative and cautious Anglo-American relationship of the war years had culminated in the frictions of the Paris Peace Conference.

#### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS CONCEPT AND ITS EFFECT ON ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

One of the main results of that conference of course was the creation of the structure and covenant of the League of Nations. Although the United States by its failure to ratify the Paris treaties did not join the League, that organization remained in a strange way a ghost which haunted the relationship of the two countries throughout the next decade. There are many ironies connected with the Anglo-American origins of the League and to treat these and the whole League question in detail lies far beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to see how even at the beginning of the period with which this paper is concerned the League was a thread in the intricate web of Anglo-American relations. It is ironic that the League concept, which became such a symbolic issue representing all the idealism with which the Allies professed to enter the post-war world, was initially

avored by neither the American or the British governments. It was a grass-roots popular idea which grew out of the late 19th century peace movements and the pre-war arbitration movements which practical politicians of both nations smiled at but hardly took seriously. President Wilson's conversion to the idea came fairly late though he thereafter pursued it with the zeal of the convert. Lloyd George and the leaders of the British war government were (with a few exceptions such as Lord Robert Cecil) never very enthusiastic about the idea and only accepted it as part of a total package of concessions. Ironical it is, therefore, that Wilson and the U.S. government ultimately stayed outside the League partly as a result of American critics who attacked the whole concept as a vast British trick, one of many the "Little Magician" had pulled on Wilson at Paris.

The more profound irony concerning the League concept at the Paris conference is the degree to which this plan to create a guarantor of peace was used by both the Americans and the British as a pawn in their own struggle for naval supremacy in the post-war world. To some degree this has been mentioned in the earlier section on the "naval battle of Paris." Realizing by the time of the opening of the Paris talks that President Wilson was now irrevocably fixed in his pursuit of the creation of a League, American naval representatives had to direct their own naval goals within that channel. The planned American naval building program

was used as a two-edged sword. It could be used as Wilson preferred as a weapon to threaten Great Britain and gain British adherence to the League promising naval reductions as an outgrowth of the League. The building program could also be used as a bogey by U.S. navalists to frighten Wilson himself, using the argument that a big American navy was essential for the success of the League. "Parity" (a magic word for navalists) was necessary to prevent the League from degenerating into an instrument of British policy.

Early in the Paris proceedings in 1919 Admiral Benson wrote to the American delegation putting forcefully his fundamental contention that the stability of the future League of Nations would depend on including within it at least two naval powers of equal strength. Since many if not most League actions against any aggressor states would involve naval activity the existence of only one powerful navy able to contribute League forces would give that nation far too great a control over League policy. A balance of power within the League, and thus a program to bring the United States Navy up to parity with the Royal Navy as soon as possible was essential. Benson requested that his letter be transmitted to President Wilson, but Lansing and the other U.S. delegates preferred not to stir up the naval issue too early in the conference and decided not to send the Benson letter to Wilson.<sup>64</sup> Eventually after the heat of the "naval battle of Paris" had been faced by American and British naval

delegates Benson was able to get through directly to Wilson by letter reemphasizing his basic point:

In order to stabilize the League of Nations and have it develop into what we intended it to be, the United States must increase her naval strength to such a force as will be able to prevent Great Britain from dominating and dictating to the other powers within the League.<sup>65</sup>

Wilson was not as obsessed as Benson with the idea of numerical parity with Britain. For the latter saw that numerical parity constituted actual superiority in naval power, a realization always shared by British navalists in their approach to the parity issue. However, the President was more than willing to use the threat of naval build-up to bring about a greater interest in the League on the part of the British.<sup>66</sup> Secretary Daniels in writing to Lloyd George stated the issue of parity in the context of establishment of the League prior to negotiation of mutual naval reductions:

We do not wish to have superiority over any other nation. We cannot accept inferiority in power and size to any.<sup>67</sup>

The position of the League in the power struggle at Paris particularly over naval issues was viewed very differently by British and American delegations. Americans as we have seen used a "big navy" as a threat to induce Britain to cooperate in a League. The position of Lloyd George and his delegates was the reverse--to insist on prior U.S. naval reductions as a sine qua non of British acceptance of a League. The British too were willing to hold the future League hostage to induce changes in United States policy both

on naval size and special rights of the Monroe Doctrine. Lord Robert Cecil, perhaps the British delegate most sympathetic to the League concept, wrote to Col. House in April 1919 expressing his worry over the insistence of U.S. Navy people on expansion of American naval power. He pointed out that even he would be forced to support his own government in a program of British naval expansion if the U.S. pushed its own construction efforts. Cecil emphasized Britain's unique position and need to be able to prevent a blockade. He felt that all this talk of naval rivalry was inconsistent with the "League of Nations spirit" and the absolute need for Anglo-American cooperation. Couldn't the U.S. rely on this spirit and give positive assurance that after the League was started accord would be reached to prevent future naval competition? Col. House replied in a similar vein and assured Cecil that it was President Wilson's desire to maintain friendship. The establishment of the League would most certainly lead to reductions in the American naval building program.<sup>68</sup>

On the same day, House was writing to Lloyd George regarding the latter's refusal to accept a Monroe Doctrine amendment to the League Covenant unless naval reductions were forthcoming from the U.S.A., holding that there should be no connection between the two issues. The establishment of the League of Nations would make a naval building program unnecessary, but the U.S. Senate would never accept a League



Treaty at all without the Monroe Doctrine amendment.<sup>69</sup>

Placing so much hope on the League and its effect on future strategic policy naturally led the British government to be anxious for the ratification of the Treaty by the United States. The British government, however, had to exercise great caution in expressing its support for the League concept too strongly for fear of causing a reaction in the United States against the League as a British idea. As Lord Grey wrote to Col. House even before the Paris Conference about this danger:

We are afraid that for us to force the pace here might contribute to that result. It has happened before that treaties have been opposed or even wrecked in the Senate, when it was supposed that they were inspired by England....<sup>70</sup>

Grey assured House that British leaders for this reason were cautious about public endorsement of the League idea, but he wanted to reassure the President that he need have no fear of British support for his League ideas at the Paris talks.

It would be inappropriate and unnecessary in this paper to re-tell the whole story of domestic American political opposition to the League of Nations. Volumes have been written on this subject.<sup>71</sup> For our purposes it is important to note the link that was made by opponents of the League in the United States with the well-spring of anti-British sentiment. At the start of the national debate over the League Sir William Wiseman wrote to an associate in Britain about this matter as follows:

... This opposition would not be of so much importance to us were it not that it is accompanied by anti-British agitation. The Republicans, knowing that the anti-British cry is most easily raised here, have not hesitated to qualify Great Britain as the evil genius of the Peace conference though in reality they know this to be untrue....<sup>72</sup>

Opponents to the League within the United States were able to take their cue from Senator William E. Borah who was able to summon up visions of reversing the outcome of the American Revolution. In his words the League was a "conspiracy to barter the independence of the American republic" and "a league to guarantee the integrity of the British empire".<sup>73</sup> Much was made of "England's five votes" in the League to America's one, a reference to the separate membership to be accorded in the League to the four self-governing Dominions of the British Empire, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. This arrangement was offered as proof to the American public, always essentially ignorant of the political systems of other countries, that the League was a British creation and an intended instrument for British world dominance. The failure of the Senate to ratify the Treaty and the consequent withdrawal of the United States from association with the League concept and of non-participation in the actual League of Nations which the Treaty brought into existence was the result of many complex factors, but certainly Senatorial suspicions of Great Britain reflective of popular anti-British sentiment and of the tensions of the war-time alliance was one of the strains of influence.

President Wilson, so frequently described by his opponents as a dupe for British interests, became a lightning rod for anti-British sentiment within the United States. Relations with Great Britain became inextricably bound up with domestic American politics. Arthur Willert in a dispatch to the Manchester Guardian's editor in the fall of 1919 lamented this problem and noted that "twisting the lion's tail" was bound to be part of both Republican and Democratic campaigns in 1920. He noted that even Wilson was having to make pro-Irish statements to placate the ethnic elements in his party, and he added that Wilson was being more and more portrayed as one who sold out at Paris to British and Japanese imperial interests. Indeed anti-Japanese sentiment was harnessed to opposition to the Treaty and League also. The pro-Chinese lobby in the United States, stung by the apparently favorable deal given to Japan in settling the Shantung issue, was able to put blame on Great Britain, Japan's ally, for forcing Wilson to agree to this. This topic and its relation to the Anglo-Japanese alliance will be treated in Chapter II, but here it is sufficient to note the effectiveness with which Wilson's opponents were able to link the two "imperial bogeys" together in the public mind. Willert pointed out that Col. House's fall from grace in Washington after Paris was a hard blow for British interests within the Wilson government.<sup>74</sup>

The British Embassy in Washington during this same

period was keeping the Foreign Office abreast of the growth of anti-British feeling. The British Chargé d'Affaires, Barclay, wrote to Balfour and Lloyd George in March 1919 about the strong anti-British element in the Anti-League of Nations agitation in the United States. The Irish in America were making great noises about the Empire's five votes in the League and maintaining that Wilson in his ambition to be first president of the League had accepted whatever Britain wanted.<sup>75</sup> Two months later in a review of the U.S. press prepared for the Foreign Office Barclay noted new charges that the British were using money from American loans to buy up oil lands in the United States. The press was strongly supportive of Navy Secretary Daniels in his "strong Navy" stance at Paris and in his London speeches. Opponents of the League in the U.S. were heartened that the Wilson administration's "big navy" policy showed that they had come to the realization that armaments were the best preservatives of peace.<sup>76</sup> Ronald Lindsay, Chargé in Washington after Barclay, wrote to Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon in June 1919 about the widespread (if somewhat shallow) anti-British propaganda in the United States, much of which was the work of Irish agitators. He felt that even more of it stemmed from anti-Wilson feeling, since many saw the President as a pawn of Great Britain. Wilson's fight with the leadership of the G.O.P. over the Treaty and the League only exacerbated the problem. Lindsay felt that the British government had

better keep a low profile and do nothing about all this just yet. His hope was that after Wilson's return from Paris the situation would improve."<sup>77</sup>

While these reports on the growth of anti-British agitation were being written the British Foreign Office and its diplomatic representatives were taking some steps to counteract it by developing their own propaganda, at first acting through intermediary relationships with private groups of British residents and individual British subjects in America. The Foreign Office's special United States files for these months of 1919 contain considerable correspondence between the Embassy in Washington and consuls in different U.S. cities (but especially Chicago) concerning their efforts to organize groups to oppose the anti-British propaganda and to present the British "story" in a favorable light making use of British born U.S. citizens. The Embassy endorsed these activities privately and encouraged these programs but carefully refrained from official action."<sup>78</sup> Wiseman advocated a non-government and non-political program of exchange emphasizing the cultural and intellectual bonds between Great Britain and the United States. He wanted to have the British government free itself from its traditional "anglophile" contacts in the United States whom he described as "men...regarded as reactionaries and (who) have little influence in their own country" and hoped to see younger British intellectuals particularly those of a liberal stamp,

professors and authors, come over for tours arranged in America to help break the conservative imperialist stereotype view which so many Americans had of the British.<sup>79</sup> The English Speaking Union of Great Britain and the United States had been formed in 1918 to promote Anglo-American exchange and understanding. In early 1919 it moved to identify itself more closely with American ideals by affiliating with an American umbrella organization, the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, U.S.A. The Union president explained to Lord Robert Cecil that bad propaganda in the United States needed to be answered with "good propaganda."<sup>80</sup> Active efforts conducted with the unofficial blessing of the British government were made to define the naval antagonism by explaining the contribution to the war effort of the Royal Navy to American audiences. Captain Carpenter of the Royal Navy toured the U.S. and Canada speaking on this topic at gatherings arranged by Anglo-American groups and British consulates. He reported to the Foreign Office on the results of his tour and recommended the establishment of a regular propaganda office in the United States. He advised that if the future peace-keeping role of the Royal Navy could be better explained in the United States much of the "big navy" agitation could be defused.<sup>81</sup>

Still another British visitor in 1919, F.W. Wile, a member of the Seven Seas Society for the promotion of world peace and order, following a speaking tour in the U.S.A.,

advised a more total and positive approach to future Anglo-American cooperation particularly in trade and commerce. He noted the power of Irish and anti-League propagandists but felt their activity could be combatted with intelligent handling and abandonment of the old "hands across the sea twaddle." British and American businessmen should engage in joint efforts, linking American financial power with British foreign trade experience to promote projects in the interest of world peace.<sup>82</sup> The ultimate official endorsement of a discrete policy of British propaganda came in an official circular from Lord Curzon to all diplomatic posts in May 1919. The Foreign Secretary explained:

...British interests would be ill served by a blatant publicity of the kind associated with German agents ... before and during the war. On the other hand a complete and contemptuous silence, however gratifying to our self-respect, is no longer a profitable policy in time when advertisement--whether of past achievements or future aims--is perhaps unfortunately, almost a universal practice of nations as of individuals....<sup>83</sup>

The American rejection of the Paris settlement and of the League of Nations definitively concluded an important chapter in Anglo-American relations. The period from 1917 to 1919 included within it most of the major themes which recur over the next decade or more in the dealings of the two great English-speaking powers. Far from being a bond between the two nations the fact of common language and traditions may well have been an obstacle to effective diplomatic relations between the two. The fact is that neither Great Britain nor

the United States really looked on the other as a foreign country and thus their expectations concerning the behavior of the other tended to be higher than would have been expected from another power. Unity of policy, a natural deference one to the other, was somehow expected. When differences occurred, as they always had since the political separation of the two, the bitterness and suspicion tended to exceed the causes. Association of Britain and America in the war against German militarism seemed the natural and correct thing. That there should also have been suspicion, jockeying for position in the post-war world, a sensitivity to the role of superior and inferior partner, a sense of "disappointment" that the ideas and ideals of one nation were not those of the other seemed unnatural for two nations who seemed to be so close on the surface. The strain, therefore, seemed greater because of the ambivalence of the relationship. What was expected in relations with genuine foreign powers was not supposed to happen, but did happen in the mutual relations of Great Britain and the United States. The following chapters will look at aspects of their understanding of and reaction to the new positions which the war and its aftermath had brought into the relationship of these two powers.



## NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. Cf. Bradford Perkins, The Great Rapprochement (N.Y., Atheneum, 1968).
2. H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States, p. 556-569.
3. Perkins, p. 91-93, also p. 3-4
4. Allen, p. 569, 579
5. David F. Trask, Captains & Cabinets, Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918 (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1972).
6. Allen, p. 672-704  
Arthur Link, Wilson the Diplomatist (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1963) passim.
7. Harold & Margaret Sprout, Toward a New Order of Sea Power, N.Y. (Greenwood Press, 1943) pp. 59-72.
8. Allen, pp. 700-705
9. Page to House, undated 1917 (but before April), House Papers, Yale Univ. Library, New Haven, Ct.
10. Wilson to House, 6 April 1917  
House Papers, series I, box 121, folder 4274.
11. Letter - 29 May 1915, Hankey to Asquith: Hankey Papers, CAB 63/44/2.  
Michael G. Fry, Lloyd George and Foreign Policy (Montreal, McGill-Queens Univ. Press, 1977), p. 223.
12. Letter - 23 Feb. 1917, Willert to Robinson: Willert Correspondence, 1917-1918, Wiseman Papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, Ct.
13. Ibid.
14. William B. Fowler, British-American Relations, 1917-1918: the role of Sir William Wiseman (Princeton, N.J., Princeton Univ. Press, 1969).
15. Letters - Oct. 1917: N.A., R.G. 80, Navy B, C-20-15a.

16. See note (2) and its reference in text.
17. Letter - 25 May 1917, Polk to Page: Polk Papers, series I, box 11, folder 380.
18. Letter - 29 June 17, House to Balfour: House Papers, series I, box 10, folder 286.
19. Fowler, British-American Relations.
20. Unsigned and undated memo (early 1917 from external evidence), from William Wiseman: Wiseman Papers, series I, box 4, folder 109.
21. Michael G. Fry, Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918-1922 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1972).
22. Letter - 25 August 1917, Cecil to House; Letter - 26 August 1917, House to Cecil: House Papers.
23. Letter - 15 November 1917, Grey to House: House Papers, series I, box 53, folder 1669.
24. Fowler, British-American Relations, pp. 67-69.
25. Unsigned memo - July 1918: Wiseman Papers, series I, box 3, folder 75.
26. Letter - 5 September 1918, Wiseman to Reading: Wiseman Papers, series I, box 3, folder 78.  
Also in Reading Papers, F.O. 800, book 225.  
See also letter - 2 December 1918, Frederick Cunliffe-Owen to Wiseman: Wiseman Papers, series I, box 1, folder 6.
27. Letter - 30 July 1918, House to Wilson: F.R.U.S., Vol. IX, p. 620.
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## CHAPTER TWO

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW RELATIONSHIP: ASIAN POLICY AND  
ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1919-1921

The Paris Conference of 1919 marked the end of one kind of relationship between Great Britain and the United States. The war-time strains which culminated in the occasionally dramatic clashes of ideals and interests at the Paris Conference showed that neither the mythology of a common culture and "hands across the sea" nor the forced comradeship of war-time alliance based on grudging recognition of mutual needs would provide the basis for a lasting peace-time association. The specific problems had all appeared by 1919, and none had been laid to rest at Paris. The two years that followed the Paris Conference were a time in which the governments of the two English-speaking powers struggled in the face of increasingly divisive issues to maintain the officially friendly association and to find a way into a new kind of relationship. If humility is a virtue hard to achieve and often misunderstood in the life of individual human beings, it is not even recognized as a virtue in the life of nations. Yet the 1919-1921 period is really about "humility" in Anglo-American relations. A painful struggle within the British government between past power and practical present realities led to acceptance of a new and no longer supreme role in world affairs. Generations of

American suspicions made it difficult for the U.S. government to believe that Great Britain could ever change its stance. A kind of adolescent arrogance in diplomatic style on the part of the United States made a smooth transition to a relationship of equality and cooperation very difficult.

Within the British Government in 1919 there were still those who felt that a kind of "generous condescension" of approach combined with a strong dose of British "education" would help the Americans to see things the British way, eliminate American fears, and reduce criticism of so-called imperialism. Leopold Amery was a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet secretariat and a member of the staff at Paris Conference and in 1919 became undersecretary of state for the colonies. He was one of the Atlanticists within the foreign policy establishment and as a disciple of Lord Milner, a strong advocate of imperial unity. In December 1918 Amery wrote to Sir Arthur Balfour:

To place Anglo-American relations on a permanent footing of mutual understanding and cooperation is the most important external object that the British Empire can aim at as the outcome of the war.<sup>1</sup>

Amery went on in his letter to strongly propose that the U.S. be involved in the League of Nations mandate system. Through sharing in the activity of Great Britain the United States would come to understand and to sympathize with the "imperial" functions of education and development of backward areas. Amery felt that if the United States were to assume mandate responsibility for Constantinople while Britain



controlled Gibraltar there would be no reason for competitive naval rivalry between the two countries. He proposed responsibilities for the U.S. in West Africa, where American humanitarian interests would find abundant opportunity. If Britain were to turn over its own holdings in Guiana and Honduras to the U.S. as league mandates there would be multiple benefits in terms of easing tensions and educating the American government in the exercise of imperial responsibilities.

BRITISH DIPLOMACY AND WASHINGTON: NEW POLICY AND NEW PERSONNEL

Any immediately practical effect on favorable Anglo-American relations in the post-Paris world would be the choice of a British ambassador in Washington who could soothe American feelings while presenting British policies in a favorable light. We have seen in the first chapter how difficult it was for the London government to find the right man or combination of men for Washington during the war years. The ambassadorship of the Marquess of Reading had proven very successful, but by the spring of 1919 a successor had to be found because Reading, still Lord Chief Justice, could no longer be spared from his domestic judicial post. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, by the end of the Paris Conference period was leaning toward a "hard line" approach to American relations and favored sending someone close to

himself politically. The Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, something of an "expert" on American relations, still preferred a smoother approach to U.S. sensibilities and favored a non-professional but also a "non-political" appointment. He wanted someone with political skills and experience but not overtly partisan in reputation and background.

During the Paris Conference Balfour wrote to the Prime Minister to urge him to reach a decision on the question of Lord Reading's successor in Washington. He noted that the reasons which had led to the choice in the past of an ambassador from outside the regular diplomatic service for the American post probably still held good, but that this made the choice all the more difficult. Balfour listed a number of possible candidates: The Speaker of the House of Commons, James Lowther; Lord Richard Cavendish, Lord Haldane, Lord Gladstone, Lord Erle, or the former Canadian Premier Sir Robert Borden. Balfour withheld any comment about the relative merits of these proposed candidates, noting that such things were best done orally and not set down on paper!<sup>2</sup> The preference of Col. House and probably also of Secretary of State Lansing for the position of His Majesty's ambassador in Washington was well-known in Downing Street. In September 1919 these American wishes were granted and at least partly influenced the appointment of the former Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey (formerly Sir Edward Grey), as special ambassador

to the United States in succession to Lord Reading. Grey had all along expressed his reluctance to be drawn back into political life, an inevitable result of accepting the posting to Washington, but his own concern for good post-war relations between Great Britain and the United States was also well known. His sympathy for the League of Nations ideal and yet his non-involvement in the negotiations at Paris made him a particularly appropriate appointee at a critical juncture, a fact which Grey himself realized. President Wilson himself had a long memory. He had never quite forgiven Grey's role in the British rejection of his mediation offer in 1916 and of British refusal to go along with the negotiated peace idea. Wilson's experiences with the British at Paris had not endeared them to him at all. He was certainly not so enthusiastic about the Grey appointment as Col. House. The Foreign Office had not yet perceived the decline in influence after Paris of both House and Lansing.<sup>3</sup> Balfour's successor as Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, in a briefing letter sent to Grey on his appointment, listed for the new ambassador the areas he should be particularly attentive to in Washington: the League of Nations, naval armaments, and Ireland.

Curzon urged Grey to assure the government in Washington that Great Britain was strongly behind the League of Nations. Grey was to strive to remove American suspicions that somehow Great Britain intended to use the League for its own devious

purposes. He was to work discreetly to help bring the United States toward participation in the League. The Foreign Secretary instructed the ambassador to make clear to the United States government that Great Britain would continue to follow its "traditional" policy regarding the United States, viz. that it would take no account of the U.S.A. as a possible rival or enemy and would not build naval armaments against those of the U.S. Great Britain intended to reduce its naval expenditures for 1920/21 and hoped the U.S. government would join her in this laudable action for those years and beyond. On the Irish question, a domestic British political issue at root but one that the British government clearly recognized as seriously affecting its relations with the United States, Lord Curzon instructed Lord Grey to assure Washington that the British Government definitely was looking toward self-government for Ireland in a system which reserved only foreign relations and defense to the imperial government at London and which allowed the exclusion of Northern Ireland from the new Irish government as long as the people here desired that course. Grey was to emphasize the "home rule" aspect of the proposed Irish plan in his dealings with the U.S. government.<sup>4</sup>

The promise for easier Anglo-American relations flowing out of the appointment of Lord Grey as special ambassador was cut short by the physical incapacity of President Wilson for several months in the fall and winter of 1919-1920. Since no

one other than Mrs. Wilson and the President's physicians had direct access to the President during those critical months, any possibility of "personal diplomacy" was ended. Already within weeks of his arrival in Washington Grey was writing to Lloyd George recommending his own recall, since it was impossible to talk to Wilson and also because Col. House had, since Paris, fallen out of presidential favor and was no longer influential in the administration. Grey advocated the promotion of stronger intellectual ties between the United States and Great Britain and the forging of links between the younger intellectual communities of the two countries, a policy promoted for some time by Sir William Wiseman. The next ambassador should be a man who could readily represent the intellectual element of both countries. Grey recommended Herbert Fisher as the ideal appointment.<sup>5</sup> Herbert Albert Fisher was a preeminent historian and academic, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University, who had joined the Lloyd George government in 1916 as president of the Board of Education. An expert in international affairs and world politics and a man of great openness to foreigners and great personal charm, he would have certainly been an excellent choice for the Washington post. His espousal of the League of Nations idea had endeared him to President Wilson.

Smooth diplomatic relations were not improved significantly by the partial recovery of the President in late 1920. The requested resignation of Secretary of State

Lansing followed almost immediately and his replacement by Bainbridge Colby, a man with virtually no diplomatic experience. The State Department was demoralized and in disarray. Ronald Lindsay, again British Charge in Washington following Grey's departure, reported on the practical impossibility of carrying on business at the State Department. Colby he regarded as a hopeless figurehead. Lindsay later had to reverse himself in his initial negative appraisal of Secretary Colby. The British government had been fearful of the Colby appointment because Colby had been an associate of William Randolph Hearst, and they assumed he shared the Hearst Anglophobia. But in office Colby became a convert to Anglo-American cooperation to the happy surprise of the British.<sup>6</sup>

Frank Polk, closely linked to Lansing, was expected to resign soon as Counsellor of the Department. Assistant Secretary William Phillips was to leave soon to become Minister in The Hague. Breckenridge Long, 2nd Assistant Secretary, was rumored to be leaving to run for the U.S. Senate. Alonzo Adee, the 3rd Assistant Secretary, was old and so deaf it was only possible to communicate with him in writing. Thus virtually the whole top administrative staff of the State Department was or would soon be new men.<sup>7</sup> The former ambassador, Lord Grey, writing to his friend Col. House following his return to London, lamented the virtual nonexistence of any effective U.S. government and the

disappearance of any dependable friends of Anglo-U.S. accord in Washington with both Lansing and House gone from the administration. Grey still believed that good relations between the United States and Great Britain were critical for world peace. He himself could no longer assist the process and felt that the Lloyd George government was not doing all it could to improve relations.<sup>6</sup>

Grey's comment that the Lloyd George government was not making Anglo-American relations easier in the early part of 1920 is certainly borne out by the decision on the appointment of a successor to Grey as ambassador in Washington. In February 1920 London announced the appointment of Sir Auckland Geddes as His Majesty's Ambassador to the United States. The appointment was greeted with dismay by the Wilson administration. Auckland Geddes was an outspoken and controversial figure, the type of self-made man much admired by Lloyd George. He was a trained physician and professor of anatomy, yet successful in the world of business as well. He was a personal friend and close political associate of the Prime Minister. His designation was a signal that Lloyd George would be taking a direct and a typically "tough" approach to the United States in the future rather than the softer and more submissive approach of the Foreign Office. Auckland Geddes was the brother of Sir Eric Geddes, once First Lord of the Admiralty, and a war-time visitor to Washington, where he won generally favorable

reviews from the Wilson administration. Auckland Geddes was associated with a policy of aggressive British trade expansion, a program he pushed vigorously during his Cabinet tenure as President of the Board of Trade. In that capacity he had been an advocate within the Cabinet for reaching an agreement with Washington over payment of British war debts during 1920. Knowledgeable about American business and with contacts within the business community and the Republican Party he felt that a better deal for British economy could be reached while Wilson was still in office and before the business-minded Republicans took over. In the following years he tended to back the hard-liners in the Cabinet such as Churchill concerning the debt to the Americans against the moderate compromisers such as Chamberlain who favored accepting the American position on repayment.<sup>9</sup> The appointment of the highly opinionated and frequently verbally imprudent Geddes, a well-known spokesman for British industry and commerce, was regarded by many in Washington as practically a declaration of economic war. Normal procedures for appointment had been badly bungled on both sides. The appointment had been announced to the press in London before the U.S. government had been able to express an opinion on acceptability of the nominee. President Wilson was prepared to protest and even to insist on a withdrawal of the appointment. He wrote to Frank Polk at the State Department:

It is evident...we are on the eve of a commercial war of the severest sort, and I am afraid that



Great Britain will prove capable of as great commercial savagery as Germany...in her competitive methods.

The President went on to say that it might be best to suggest to the British government that an ambassador be sent to Washington who represented "political policies" rather than the "commercial policies" of Great Britain! Polk replied to Wilson on the following day that while the Geddes appointment was unfortunate it was too late to prevent it. The press announcement had been made and to insist on withdrawal would provoke a deeper crisis. Geddes had already obtained release from a job he had been scheduled to assume soon, the principalship at McGill University in Montreal.<sup>10</sup>

Political and press comment was generally unfavorable to the Geddes appointment, and the fact that Lady Geddes was an American did not seem to help very much! In March 1920 Arthur Willert summarized American press and public reaction in his report to the editor of the Manchester Guardian:

The Geddes appointment has not gone down very well. It was all right till they realized, first that it was not Eric, second that the Ambassadors comes from Staten Island, third that Geddes was being kicked upstairs. Somebody from the service would have been better....<sup>11</sup>

There is no hard evidence in fact that Geddes was being "kicked upstairs" as Willert asserts in the quote above. In fact he had the strong support of the Prime Minister. However, there is no doubt that Geddes had become unpopular with many members of the war-time coalition, Tories, Laborites, and Asquithian Liberals alike. Neville

Chamberlain had not forgotten that Geddes had been appointed by Lloyd George as Director of National Service in 1917 after his own resignation and then received the support from the Prime Minister that Chamberlain had been denied. As minister for labor resources in 1917 he had been instrumental in proposing wage freezes for railway workers which had produced a strike. Again in 1919 as president of the Board of Trade he had been involved in wage reductions for railwaymen which had caused a strike. The Labor Party had no love for Geddes. Even some Liberals such as H.A.L. Fisher opposed the economies proposed by Geddes as president of the local government board in 1918 and viewed him as incompetent. Lloyd George used Geddes as a lightning rod or hatchet man and rewarded his loyalty. He wanted to make him Chancellor of the Exchequer following the 1918 election, but Geddes' illness prevented that. He brought him back into the Cabinet in May 1919. The strains within the weakening coalition government, however, made it useful for Lloyd George to move Geddes to Washington in March 1920.

As British Ambassador in Washington from 1920 to 1924 Sir Auckland Geddes was an important player in the story of Anglo-American relations and will appear frequently in the pages that follow. It is appropriate to briefly consider something of his personality and attitudes at this point of his entry into the story to better understand his role as it develops. Geddes' official letters to Lord Curzon and his

successors as Foreign Secretary over the years give his views on policy in a generally moderate "diplomatic" tone. His private and confidential letters to Lloyd George reveal much more of the man behind the official mask who may be influencing the official reports. The Auckland Geddes file in the Lloyd George Papers is full of these "private and confidential" reports to the Prime Minister on American affairs. His letters are full of the kind of unfavorable comments about American political and governmental leaders which might be expected in a candid personal report of a diplomat to his chief. However, they also reveal a virulent element of racism and anti-Semitism which affected his whole approach to American politics. Clearly Auckland Geddes returned in kind to American leaders the distaste they felt for him. He shows little sympathy or appreciation of the country or of its political system.<sup>12</sup>

In an extraordinary letter from Washington in early 1921 to Philip Kerr (future Lord Lothian, to become ambassador in Washington himself in 1939) then parliamentary private secretary to Lloyd George, Geddes frankly described what he regarded as the ambitions of the "realist school of American politicians," a group he did not name but did not seem to confine to either the outgoing Wilson administration or incoming Harding administration. Their aim was to win for the United States the position of leader of the English speaking world and leading nation of the world. To do this

they meant to have the largest merchant fleet in the world, protected by the strongest navy in the world. The Americans, Geddes felt, intended to try to keep Great Britain in a state of indebted vassalage to the United States by adopting tariff policies which aimed at keeping out British goods and thus preventing Britain from paying off its debt to the United States. Some American politicians hoped to secure Britain's Caribbean islands as payment for the debt, and in any case they intended that the Panama Canal would become ultimately the southern boundary of the United States. Geddes commented to Kerr that the State Department was already agitated about the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and was raising the "Japanese bogey" in the hope of uniting the British Dominions of the Pacific into an "English-speaking Pacific bund." The foundations of the Pan-Pacific Union and other American-sponsored activities were all meant to encourage the secession of those Dominions from the British Empire. American political support for Ireland was part of a policy to weaken the British Empire, an over-all goal of this policy was to slowly but surely transfer the center of English speaking power to North America and hopefully to Washington. What should the response of His Majesty's government be to all of this? Geddes advised that Great Britain would have to "grin and bear it" for a time but that meanwhile a concerted policy of building up the population of the Empire should be pursued. As to the possibility of an Anglo-American war he

noted:

I do not at present picture a coming Anglo-American war whatever the future may hold, but I do picture a deadly struggle disguised as peace, in which we shall find the leadership of the English speakers slipping away from Britain unless we consciously set ourselves to meet the danger ....

The saving of the situation in Geddes' opinion was that the United States lacked sticking power, and its leaders were notoriously incapable of carrying through on any long-term policy. He warned also that the Americans who were seen and heard by the government in London were not much concerned about the British people as such, but they were out for the main chance and saw an opportunity to "steal the baton" from a crippled Great Britain.<sup>13</sup>

A short time after this letter was written Geddes was on a visit to London for consultation and created a flurry of press comment on his alleged statements about the "drift toward war" between the two countries. Secretary of State Colby wired the American Embassy in London for clarification. Ambassador John W. Davis replied that it all stemmed from a press conference which Geddes had called at the Foreign Office. He had spoken to the journalists about the great amount of ignorance and misunderstanding which existed on both sides of the ocean about Anglo-U.S. relations and told them it was their duty to help clarify matters. Davis noted that it was not at all certain whether in fact Geddes himself had spoken of a "drift toward war" between the two countries, though a report, later denied, mentioned this idea as having

flowed out of the comments of Geddes at the conference.<sup>14</sup>

The Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, who was himself certainly no intense pro-American, was having serious doubts about the Geddes ambassadorship. In March 1921 Geddes sent a "private and most confidential" account to Curzon of an interview he had had with Charles Evans Hughes, the newly installed American Secretary of State. The letter ran for 14 typed pages and revolved chiefly about the controversy over the Japanese mandate over the island of Yap and America's prior claims there. The issue became secondary in Geddes' account to his own appraisal of Secretary Hughes, whom he described as mentally unbalanced, and gave a detailed account of the Secretary's alleged tirade against Great Britain, and of his wild and uncontrolled behavior during the interview. Curzon forwarded the Geddes letter to the Prime Minister as Geddes had specifically requested, but the Foreign Secretary's accompanying comments to Lloyd George indicate that he felt the letter to be more of a comment on Geddes than on Hughes. Curzon wondered whether Sir Auckland himself was not mentally unbalanced and whether it was wise to leave him in Washington.<sup>15</sup> In spite of any Foreign Office hesitations about his capacity for the job Sir Auckland Geddes remained on in Washington for another three years. His personal relations with the members of the Harding administration were hardly warm, and his views of them were only slightly above contemptuous; but relations were at least

less chilly than with the Wilson administration. Geddes developed genuinely warm and friendly relations over the years with members of the more "progressive" business and financial leadership of the country, such as Thomas W. Lamont, whose support was naturally essential to any Republican administration. Geddes worked closely with them for Anglo-U.S. unity on the economic level as a necessary prelude to political accord.<sup>16</sup>

AMERICAN INTERESTS IN CHINA: THE NEW CHINESE FINANCIAL  
CONSORTIUM

The complexities of the relationship between the United States and Great Britain in the decade after 1919 were especially evident in policies toward China. Commercial rivalry, differing views on how to promote progressive development in the world, the contrasting attitudes toward Japan and how to deal with Japanese power--all of these strands of tension between the two powers came together in China. Even naval policy would be shaped by diplomatic and commercial developments there. China became a major focus in the 1920's for the "diplomatic dance" between the two nominal allies, Great Britain and the United States.

The special interest of Great Britain in China both politically and commercially was more than half a century old. Its position in Hong Kong gave Britain a major, even a dominant, role in the commercial life of China and was a key

factor in British naval presence in the Western Pacific. British industrial firms and banking houses had long been active in the process of bringing the "awakening giant" of China into the modern industrialized world. The arrival of competition in the Chinese market and of rivals for political power there contributed to the British acceptance and even tacit co-sponsorship of the United States policy of the "Open Door" at the beginning of the 20th century. The British preferred the concept of free trade throughout China to the economic exploitation and political control of more narrowly defined areas of influence. On the surface there appeared to be unanimity between Great Britain and the United States on policy regarding China in the early years of the 20th century, at least prior to the Chinese revolution and the emergence of Japan as a factor in Chinese affairs.

American commercial interest in China dated from the late 18th century, but serious interest in the economic potential of China on the part of Americans began in the last decade of the 19th century as industrialists began to give major consideration to the developing need for overseas markets of American industry as well as for sources of raw materials. China was considered in industrial export circles to be potentially the greatest market in the world. Business journals of the 1895-1900 period contain numerous references to the unlimited future of the Chinese market.<sup>17</sup>

Jerry Israel in his book Progressivism and the Open



Door: American and China, 1905-1921 has shown convincingly that while commerce first attracted the United States to an interest in China it was not the only one nor even the most compelling force which sustained that interest.<sup>18</sup> The progressive impulse which changed the direction of American domestic politics after 1900 also played a role in foreign policy and influenced attitudes toward foreign lands. American missionaries had been active in China for a long time, and in the early years of the 20th century they continued to promote not only Protestant Christianity there but with almost equal fervor promoted the "American way of life." America as model of the "kingdom of God on earth" was seen as a living example for the Chinese. The new progressive thinkers and socio-political leaders in the United States saw in China a laboratory model in which it could be demonstrated what modern efficiency and humanitarianism could do for a depressed and backward people. China was virgin territory in which a new society could be built. It had not been colonized in the strict sense, neither had it been malignantly "westernized" along corrupt European lines as Japan had been. American reformers with a secular missionary zeal felt that China could be "cleaned up" as easily as Chicago! It was a "tabula rasa" for progressive American action.<sup>19</sup>

The role of education in the future of China had been perceived very early by Americans. The financial indemnity

to which the United States had been entitled as recompense from the Imperial Chinese government arising from the Boxer Rebellion had been used by the United States government to establish a scholarship fund for the education of Chinese students in American colleges and professional schools. The establishment of American-style schools inside China by missionaries and secular groups and even of full-scale American universities there further assisted in the Americanization of a generation of post-Revolutionary Chinese political leaders. In Chinese minds the United States was fixed as a symbol of modernization and the chief friend of China.<sup>20</sup>

Quite naturally this new progressive and idealistic American concern for China had very practical effects on attitudes toward foreign policy. Japan became after 1905 a very immediate threat to American goals. Americans inside China developed a new hostility to Japanese activity there. They felt that a new and aggressively independent role by the United States was needed to counter Japan in China. The Open Door policy had to be pursued; but for a truly "new China" to emerge a "new America" had to become an active presence not just inside China but effectively throughout the Far East.<sup>21</sup> In Congress and the State Department a pro-China lobby had developed. The members of this group in the World War I years and after constantly tried to create a picture of a new China emerging into the light, needing the nurturing

protection of the United States. This new China would be modern and democratic along American lines, unlike Japan. It would be loyal to its western benefactor, again unlike Japan. It would be westernized but pro-western.<sup>22</sup> The strong opposition expressed by the United States government to Japan's war-time activities in China (the "21 Demands of 1915," etc.) strengthened Chinese opinion that the United States would defend China against Japanese aggression and efforts at expansion. The U.S. came to be seen (as the U.S. fully intended) as China's only true friend. Wilson's administration, in spite of its ties with a particular political regime in China, was looked to for moral leadership. Even the apparent "betrayals" of the Lansing-Ishii agreement in 1917 and the concessions to Japan at Paris in 1919 did not completely destroy this Chinese faith in America.<sup>23</sup>

Japan of course was not the only threat to America's creation of a "new China." Great Britain too presented a possible obstacle and not only because of its alliance with Japan. The heavy financial and commercial involvement of the British in China gave them an effective hold on the Chinese leadership. To the formulators of American policy toward China Britain represented the moral decadence of the old world, colonial dominance of Asian peoples, commercial exploitation, the "old way" of doing things--far too successfully for the United States. The question of how to

deal with the competition of Japan and Great Britain in China was a broad issue. It was more than an economic issue, but its social and political dimensions could only be dealt with once economic superiority by the United States had been achieved. Two schools of thought emerged in the United States within the government and the diplomatic establishment on how the U.S. could best serve its own interests (and China's) in China. The "consortium school" favored international cooperation in Chinese development in a structure which would embrace even Japan. This view tended to be favored by the higher echelons of the State Department under Wilson and the Republican administrations of the 1920's and by progressive financial leaders perhaps best represented by Thomas E. Lamont, a partner in the J.P. Morgan Co. Lamont was one of the most influential leaders of the international banking community, advisor to both Wilson and Harding administrations and to a number of foreign governments. The activist school favored an independent U.S. policy in China, excluding Japan by design. In effect this group paid lip service to, but actually ignored the Open Door principle. Their goal was clear American dominance in China, but if at all possible achieving the goal in a kind of harmonious relationship with Britain. American business men and missionaries inside China, the Far Eastern specialists at the State Department, the Commerce Department in general, and American industrialists tended to support this school of

thought.<sup>24</sup>

It is not surprising that the commercial value of China to the United States had begun to emerge in State Department documents in the months just before and after the end of the war. The progressive philosophical and socio-political interest in the possibilities of a new China rested solidly on economic expectations. The close connection between commercial possibilities in China and American relations with Great Britain is clear to any student of the Open Door Policy. At the close of World War I American business felt it was on the verge of another great leap forward in development of the unlimited Chinese market.

Analysis of the importance and extent of the Chinese market for the American economy (or the British) is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. In recent years a number of analysts have shown the extent to which American hopes for the China market as a new "economic frontier" for the United States failed to be borne out.<sup>25</sup> Here it is sufficient to note that the China market did indeed prove to be a "myth." It is true that during World War I the U.S. moved ahead of Great Britain in its share of imports into China. Between 1916 and 1920 U.S. accounted for 13.5% of Chinese imports compared to 11.6 for Great Britain, but both were far behind Japan's 34.6%. The U.S. kept ahead of Great Britain during all of the 1920's but always behind Japan. However, it should be noted that all of America's foreign

trade accounted for only 5.3% of American G.N.P. in 1920, and China for only 2.4% of all American foreign trade. China never became more than a very minor trading partner for either the United States or Great Britain. For both of them Japan was a much more significant trading partner, a fact realized by the British but not fully appreciated by the United States. The United States also ran a poor third in the amount of capital invested in China in 1920. Approximately 5% of foreign investment was American, well behind Great Britain (around 37% of foreign investment) and Japan (around 20%).<sup>26</sup>

The Department of Commerce had become less of a watchdog of American business and more of an official spokesman for business within the government in Washington. The Commerce Department through its Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce had definite ideas on foreign policy, which did not always directly coincide with those of the State Department in substance and style. Commerce Department representatives on the spot in China were enthusiastic promoters of American investment and industrial development in China and bombarded the head office in Washington with promotion schemes.

The "pep rally" approach of these commercial attachés did not always sit well with the State Department, concerned as it was with broader issues involving relations with other states who had interests in China also. Paul P. Witham, U.S.

trade commissioner in China in 1918 and 1919, sent a report to the Secretary of Commerce in December of 1918 on consolidation and neutralization of transportation in China. He urged in his report that U.S. business make even greater efforts to get in on the Chinese market. The report was full of business rhetoric of the advertising poster variety ("personal contact will assure success," "It is the day of American opportunity in China and the Far East"). The State Department after seeing the report requested the Secretary of Commerce to withhold its publication and keep it in abeyance until further notice. The request was honored.<sup>27</sup> Witham continued to be active in urging American businessmen to more planned efforts in China. Writing to the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai in December 1918 he outlined a 12 point program to be undertaken by American businessmen in cooperation with the U.S. government for development of commercial facilitators and American markets in China. A few weeks later he sent off an ebullient letter to the editor of The Nation's Business in the United States urging the business community to wake up and move in China. There was a new continent to be conquered!<sup>28</sup>

While the pro-China group within the State Department was lamenting the treatment of China at the Paris Conference, particularly on the matter of Shantung, they received strong seconding from commercial attachés in China who greatly feared Japanese economic power in China. Julean Arnold, U.S.

commercial attaché, wrote in June 1919 to Commerce Secretary Redfield a strongly worded indictment of U.S. treatment of China at Paris by its agreeing to the transfer of German economic rights in Shantung to Japan. He recommended the use of a new banking consortium to put pressure on Japan to relinquish its claims there. Such interference in sensitive diplomatic affairs met with strong objections at the State Department. A few weeks after his letter reached Washington Arnold was notified by his superior, the Acting Secretary of commerce, that he was being recalled to Washington at the specific request of the State Department which objected to Arnold's political activities and his expressed opposition to the Shantung settlement.<sup>29</sup> Paul Witham also had to be severely cautioned by his superiors in Washington to keep clear of political issues and to concentrate on economic matters of concern to the Commerce Department. His reports had become far too political in tone. In fact, Witham was ordered to leave China in August 1919 and proceed to the Philippines in order "to gain a new perspective in an American community."<sup>30</sup> In spite of these administrative rebukes both Witham and Arnold, as representatives of American business thinking about China and its possibilities, continued to be active promoters of a new role. Witham in 1920 was calling on a new Director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce to seize the "opportunity to assume the leadership of a general trade staff...that may cooperate



with the businessmen's general staff...the Bureau's accomplishments of the past are but stepping stones to a much larger field of constructive activities...." Arnold was urging that the office of the U.S. commercial attaché be removed from Shanghai to the capitol at Peking. The Commerce department, deferring to the known wishes of State Department, opposed this suggestion noting that this move would involve the Commerce Department in matters of a political nature which were the province of State. U.S. trade interests were still centered at Shanghai where the U.S. commercial representative should remain.<sup>31</sup>

Official American governmental attitudes toward commercial competition in China had changed as a result of the war and the altered financial position of the old competitors. The Open Door Policy remained official dogma, but its objectives had changed at least in degree. The United States had opposed the idea of areas of exclusive economic control in China by foreign nations in order that a growing American industrial power might have an equal opportunity to get a share of the Chinese market. This was a policy that the British could go along with as long as their industrial and financial superiority and commercial expertise guaranteed that British interests would win the "lion's share" of the Chinese market in open competition. The "spheres of influence" approach actually protected stagnant and weakening economic powers. At the end of the war the

United States was the strongest industrial and financial power, the creditor of all the world. Great Britain and France had no money to lend to any Chinese government. French and British capitalists had no money to invest in Chinese projects. British and French industry was seriously disrupted as were the commercial fleets of the two allies. Japan alone was in a position potentially to challenge the United States for economic dominance in China. The Open Door Policy, vigorously defended as a principle, could now in effect guarantee not just equality for American economic interests in China but actual superiority of control. American capital would inevitably supplant all other foreign capital throughout the whole of China, given the dependence of Britain and France on American loans. A method needed to be found of isolating Japan and neutralizing any Japanese threat to American economic interests in China.

An international financial consortium to regulate foreign investment in China was the principal method proposed to achieve American economic dominance in China in the post-war world. The change in attitude of the Wilson administration to the consortium idea reflected the changed situation of the United States in international finance at the end of the war. Wilson had refused to allow a group of American bankers to participate in the first Chinese financial consortium formed in 1913. He viewed the goals of the consortium as reprehensible and an invasion of Chinese

freedom. He wanted the United States government to follow an independent and morally pure line in order to assist the Chinese republican regime. The Open Door idea seemed threatened by the consortium plan in the pre-war days. By 1916 Wilson's ideas were changing as the financial position of Great Britain and France was slipping. Tacit encouragement was given for the American banking group chaired by Thomas Lamont to resume negotiations with the Chinese banking consortium.<sup>32</sup> Secretary Lansing's letter to Wilson in June 1918 seeking formal permission for the American banking group to join in negotiation for forming a new Chinese consortium made it very clear that the happy result of this development would be the blocking of dangerous Japanese steps toward more exclusive financial dominance in China. The new consortium would also foster American replacement of British capital in major industrial and transportation projects there. The President agreed provided that the freedom of the Chinese government always be respected.<sup>33</sup> Reluctance of the Japanese to accept American definitions of the goals and methods of the proposed new Chinese consortium postponed its actual formation until mid-1921.<sup>34</sup>

Most of the previous work on the second Chinese Consortium has viewed it from the perspective of American economic and business interests. Its relationship to the nominal maintenance of the "traditional" American policy of

the Open Door in China has been analyzed.<sup>35</sup> From the point of view of this study of Anglo-American relations, the point needs to be made that the State Department viewed the consortium less as a profitable American business enterprise than as a way of binding together American and British interests in the area and of either eliminating Japan's role in China or at least of merging the Japanese interests with those of Great Britain and the United States and keeping Japan under watchful control. Negotiations were supervised directly by the State Department, not by Commerce. The Anglo-American relationship in China was certainly influenced by the new consortium. United States entry added a new factor to the complicated web of commercial suspicions between the two powers in China, with Japan as an uncertain but ever-present factor in the plans and policies of both. The period of negotiation over the consortium from 1918 to 1921 was also a time of testing out cooperation vs. competition in China between American and British interests. Business representatives in both countries were indeed anxious about the activities of their counterparts in the post-war China market. Julean Arnold, United States commercial attaché in Shanghai, had written with concern to his superiors in the U.S. Commerce Department in the final months of the war warning that the British government and the British chambers of commerce in China were becoming very active in a campaign to extend British trade into the Chinese interior. He

reported that the British hoped to beat out the Japanese in capturing the former German markets. They were busy setting up language schools to teach Chinese to British commercial agents and setting up cooperative business ventures among British merchants. Arnold lamented the slowness of American businessmen in following suit and proposed to take a hand in energizing the U.S. Chambers of Commerce in China.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand the British Foreign Office after 1919 certainly feared that British slowness and mercantile apathy might lead to an American and Japanese absorption of the unlimited possibilities of the Chinese market. At times the United States loomed as a greater menace than Japan. As Prime Minister Lloyd George said very clearly: "We should not leave China to be walked over by America and for the latter to get the whole of China's trade."<sup>37</sup>

While Commerce Department representatives in China may have had their doubts about the new international banking consortium and worried over the United States thereby giving up too much by limiting its field of operations in China, the State Department definitely saw the consortium as a good step in over-all policy toward China, and it kept full control over negotiations. Secretary Lansing kept Secretary of Commerce Alexander briefed on progress of negotiations and gave the State Department's blessing to emergency loans to the Chinese government pending the actual establishment of the Consortium. Lansing reported that Thomas Lamont, of the

Morgan Trust, the State Department's choice for envoy on consortium matters, would soon depart for the Orient to get things moving and to deal with the recalcitrant Japanese bankers.<sup>38</sup> The State Department was well aware that China was a possibly thorny question in the field of Anglo-American relations in the post-war world. The U.S. Ambassador in Tokyo urged the Department to work for a common agreed policy with Great Britain on the Far East to block efforts by either power to achieve exclusive control of China and thereby to prevent Japanese power further growth there.

In order to meet the situation the American and British governments should reach a frank understanding of each others purposes and act at least in parallel lines in order to avoid needless misunderstandings and possible antagonisms....

He urged Secretary Lansing to use President Wilson's visit to the Paris Conference to achieve a "comprehensive understanding" with the British. He added that Anglo-U.S. unity on Far Eastern policy would in fact strengthen the hand of the liberal elements in Japanese politics.<sup>39</sup>

Within the State Department, Assistant Secretary Breckenridge Long took the lead in promoting the consortium in China as an effective way of reducing potential friction with Great Britain in the Far East. In a departmental memo circulated by Long in November 1918 entitled "Points of Contact with Great Britain in the Far East" he noted that the chief point of Anglo-American contact in the Far East was in the matter of loans to China for administrative and

industrial purposes. The memo further pointed up a significant difference in approach by British and American authorities concerning the scope of a financial consortium. British financiers wanted to have a free hand in China as regards industrial loans, and thus the British government was reluctant to accept a broad approach, whereas the "position of the States" was that industrial loans, as well as administrative, needed to be included in the common agreement. Otherwise there could be no really constructive assistance to China under adequate guarantees as to proper expenditure. Long detailed several recent instances in which it appeared that British authorities were working at cross purposes with the United States on matters of common interest where cooperation had been presumed. He alleged that the British Consul-General at Shanghai had been secretly but actively working against the interests of American trade in China. The memo did reveal that while the Chinese trade was the subject of the discussion the real object of concern to Long was Great Britain's "secret" relations with Japan. Several of his instances of British "unfriendly" behavior dealt with dealings between the British ambassador in Tokyo and the Japanese Foreign office on Japanese intervention in Russia, a policy opposed by the Wilson administration. He pointed out that:

...Japan has been greatly assisted in her activities by the fact of her alliance with Great Britain, and the latter's preoccupation has led to a non-committal attitude which Japan has

(considered) to mean allowing her a free hand in the Far East....

Long contended that there existed,

...a radical division of opinion and a difference in method--a lack of frankness--which cannot but weaken any cooperation between the United States and Great Britain in the Far East.<sup>40</sup>

A few weeks later Long wrote to Under-Secretary William Phillips (Acting Secretary of State in Lansing's absence en route to the Paris Peace Conference) suggesting that Great Britain be approached about the areas of concern affecting the whole Far East which called for Anglo-U.S. cooperation and about the establishment of a policy limiting areas of exclusive control in China. He urged that Lansing be called in London to be told to remind the British government that Japanese activities in China and Siberia were in fact harmful to Britain's own larger interests. British and American interests were parallel, and the two countries should agree on a common policy.<sup>41</sup>

The Chinese Consortium issue brought more clearly to the fore the question of Japan's role in China and showed it to be a critical complicating factor in relations between Great Britain and the United States. Both western powers were concerned about the growth of Japanese military and economic power on the Asian mainland. Japan's annexation of Taiwan in 1895 following the war with China had been followed fifteen years later by the annexation of Korea. Both areas had been fully transformed into Japanese colonies. The war with



Russia in 1903-04 had put Japanese forces into Manchuria providing a foothold for political and economic penetration of that region. Japanese participation in World War I at the side of her British ally had contributed little of significance to the over-all war effort, but it had allowed Japan a free-hand in taking over German concessions in China, most notably Shantung. The "21 Demands" delivered to China by Japan in 1915 showed clearly what its intentions were. American policy toward Japan during the war years and immediately after had been cautious but not overtly hostile. The U.S. government tried to work amicably with its Japanese "ally" in the war against German imperialism while keeping a wary eye on Japan's own intentions. The basic policy of the Wilson administration was to try to "contain" Japan within a liberal system of international political and economic cooperation in East Asia. To encourage Japan's participation in the second Chinese consortium was the economic wing of this policy. While clearly opposing unilateral Japanese intervention in Siberia against the Bolsheviks in 1918, the U.S. was willing to enter into a joint intervention with the Japanese not simply as a move to block Japanese expansion but rather as an effort to bring Japan into a system of internationalism in political matters as well.<sup>42</sup>

Japan's need for China was far greater than that of the western powers. China had become the principal source of raw materials for Japanese industry. Whereas Great Britain and

the U.S. invested capital in China for long term profit, Japan until after World War I was short on capital for overseas investment and preferred to put it into enterprises which related directly and immediately to its own national economic advantage. Japan's economy did not, therefore, operate in a "spirit of consortium."

However, Japanese political leaders were coming to see the value of cooperation with the consortium idea for larger motives. After 1919 Japanese leaders sensed a new Anglo-American "front" against her Asiatic continental aspirations. Premier Shidehara actually sympathized with their viewpoint and desired to go halfway. When the United States first proposed a new financial consortium for China, Japanese bankers strongly insisted to the Tokyo government that Manchuria and Inner Mongolia be excluded from the consortium area. Great Britain and the United States objected. When the Japanese Cabinet remained firm on the point, the government in Washington promised that the consortium would not undertake operations "inimical to the vital interests of Japan." The Shidehara government readily accepted this formula. The actual written consortium agreement did not contain the promise, but Japan was satisfied with the private American assurances. Shidehara perceived in this banking diplomacy the growth of a common Anglo-American policy. He saw no point in holding out and decided advantages in showing a cooperative spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Both Great Britain and the U.S. by 1919 found themselves dealing with a Japan which was in no sense a client state but a true economic competitor particularly in the textile industry. Manchuria was particularly vital to the servicing of Japan's heavy industry by providing iron resources. Japan's growth of capital during and after the war led to increased investment in China itself. By the beginning of the 1920's nearly 35% of all foreign capital in China was Japanese, just marginally below British investment and far ahead of the American 10%.

By the beginning of the post-war era both British and American business and political leaders could see that a common program on economic and political levels toward China and Japan had decided advantages. The 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance had indeed fostered the development of Japanese economic power, because it enabled Japan to more easily get foreign loans for its own development and for its overseas expansion. As both nations viewed Japan's competition and favorable situation in China and Manchuria questions about this alliance and its bearing on Anglo-U.S. cooperation would have to be raised.<sup>44</sup>

While negotiations over the Chinese consortium continued in 1919, those within the State Department who saw the consortium as a way of reaching a realistic rapprochement with Great Britain in China counseled against panic about Japan which could push the United States still further away

from Great Britain. J.V.A. MacMurray, chief of the Far Eastern Division and a strong member of the "China lobby" within the Department, urged a flexible policy over cooperation with Great Britain on the Chinese consortium. In a letter to Under-Secretary Phillips in October 1919 MacMurray stressed the very great need to have British support for the consortium. He felt the U.S. government should be realistic about agreeing to special concessions to Japan in Manchuria. The Commerce Department especially objected to Manchuria's exclusion from the terms of the consortium. MacMurray rightly noted that the Lansing-Ishii Agreement could well be cited as an already existing U.S. approbation for a special Japanese economic role in Manchuria. He felt that Great Britain should not be pressed at that point to adopt a policy which seemed to go against her Japanese obligations. The United States should work discreetly to influence Great Britain toward a new approach to China policy and a change in her alliance with Japan. MacMurray feared that American intransigence toward Japan in the consortium negotiations could lead to the failure of the whole project and create a new era of "spheres of influence" in China.<sup>45</sup>

The British government for its part was as much concerned as the United States government about Japanese economic advances in China, in spite of its alliance with Japan. What concerned many British leaders was that American

policy on the consortium and its apparently inconsistent approach would simply further alienate Japan and justify her unilateral actions in China. The British government believed in the China consortium essentially, but wondered at times just how seriously the United States was committed to a genuinely cooperative policy. A case in point occurred in October 1919 when the U.S. government, while consortium negotiations were still in progress, approved a loan by the Chicago Continental and Commercial Bank of \$30,000,000 to the Chinese government. The State Department justified its approach to the British Foreign Office by stating that this loan to China for its immediate financial relief seemed to be "the only alternative to the political disintegration of China" and that after all the formation of the consortium was still pending. If and when it was formed the Chicago Bank would fully cooperate with the international banking consortium. The State Department memo to London vaguely implied that the British had "misbehaved" themselves by the Vickers Co. Airplane Loan of 1,800,000 British pounds to the Chinese government in October 1919. The reaction of the British government was clear. Perhaps the Chicago loan was not technically a violation since the consortium agreement had not yet been signed, but still it was at least an "unhelpful" deviation from a consortium spirit as outlined in the original U.S. consortium proposal. The Vickers loan was irrelevant. As a loan for military and defense construction

it did not fall under the consortium terms. When Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, learned of the American loan he cabled Lord Grey, the British ambassador in Washington, as follows:

...In spite of these reassuring explanations, I confess that I view with considerable apprehension the issue of such a loan by an American bank with the expressed approval of its government. Such action violates the basic principle of the original American proposals and opens the door to the indiscriminant and uncontrolled lending which they were intended to prevent. When this transaction becomes known to the Japanese government, they might justifiably consider themselves absolved from their assurance not to make any independent advance to China....<sup>46</sup>

#### BRITISH EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A COMMON POLICY ON CHINA

The British government was anxious to clarify and regularize its relations with the United States on China and related Far Eastern matters. In the summer of 1920, Sir Beilby Alston, Britain's ambassador in Peking, was returning on leave to London for consultation. He was instructed by the Foreign Office to travel via Canada and to make a side trip to Washington to discuss Far Eastern affairs with the State Department and if possible with President Wilson. Alston was not successful in seeing the President, but he did have a series of talks in Washington in late July with the new Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, Under-Secretary Norman H. Davis, with Roland Morris, the American ambassador to Tokyo, also home on leave, and with John V.A. MacMurray of

the Far Eastern Division. In a memo to the Foreign Office on his arrival in London in August, Alston reported on these "frank and cordial unofficial talks." He had emphasized to the Americans that both British and American policies in the Far East, especially regarding Japanese activity in China, had failed. He described the U.S. policy as "many words, no deeds." The British policy was worse, because as a result of its Japanese alliance and the need for Japanese support in the recent war Britain had not even been able to use strong words. Alston told the Secretary of State that it was crucial for two nations such as Great Britain and the United States, whose goals, ideals, and practical objectives regarding China were so similar to have a common policy, to be worked out in a spirit of cooperation. He proposed an agreement based on a naval balance of power through the creation of an "Anglo-Saxon fleet" in the Western Pacific and of a public proclamation of Anglo-American intent to support the integrity and independence of China. Alston reported that Colby, Morris, and MacMurray had "warmly recommended" his views.<sup>47</sup>

The Foreign Office received further advice from Alston based on his own reflections as well as his contacts in Washington. He had concluded that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was now decidedly disadvantageous to Great Britain's over all Far Eastern policy and should be reconsidered. Alston felt that a secure and peaceful future for China and

the Far East depended on real Anglo-American rapprochement in the region and that 1920/21 was the moment to act to develop a new policy along those lines. Japan's goals were diametrically opposed to those of the Anglo-Saxon powers and only a common show of force by the two nations would check Japanese aspirations. He repeated his call for an Anglo-Saxon fleet in the Pacific. The Anglo-Japanese alliance had been harmful to China's best interests and to British interests in China. Alston recommended giving early warning to Tokyo of British dissatisfaction with the alliance and of an intention to end it. Better relations with the United States in the Pacific would begin a whole new epoch in Far Eastern policy.<sup>48</sup>

The Alston memos put the finger on a critical factor in Anglo-U.S. relations in China, viz. the complicating role of the alliance with Japan. His views contributed still more fuel to the developing debate within the Foreign Office on the usefulness of that alliance, a debate which would continue for more than a year. In the meantime on the highest levels of diplomacy Great Britain and the United States continued to talk about unified policy. The Chinese consortium agreement was at last signed on October 15, 1920 and regarded as a very significant step toward that unity of action by the State Department advocates of Anglo-U.S. cooperation in China.<sup>49</sup> The Foreign Office seemed determined to live by the "consortium spirit." A Foreign



Office memo to the Colonial Secretary outlined the purposes and commitment involved in the new Chinese Consortium and emphasized that the whole British Empire was expected to cooperate on the policy. Concern was expressed about news which had been received that a Canadian bank had been negotiating a loan to China. The Foreign Office asked the Colonial Office to check into this and to clear all future colonial financial dealings with China through the Foreign Office in view of the importance of consortium cooperation.<sup>50</sup>

But commitment to cooperation on the highest levels of policy making did not always have great practical effect on the lower levels nor great practical effects on the British and American commercial and diplomatic agents "on the ground" in China. Representatives of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce continued to report to Washington about new British commercial and political activities in China and of the need for U.S. business to keep a wary eye on new techniques the British were developing to get a bigger share of the Chinese market and its investment possibilities.<sup>51</sup>

Even so strong an advocate of an Anglo-American policy in China as Sir Beilby Alston was reporting to London within a year of his memoranda cited above of the practical hostility shown by Americans in China to Great Britain. In a confidential letter to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, in August 1921 from Peking Alston noted:

...the suspicious almost hostile attitude of the Americans toward us in China. Doubtless this feeling may to some extent be a reflex of the wave of anti-British agitation passing over the United States...I feel it my duty to call attention to...the unjust suspicions with which our policy in China is regarded by the Americans and the consequent difficulty of wholehearted cooperation with them.<sup>52</sup>

Alston viewed the Anglo-Japanese alliance and commercial jealousy as the roots of this animosity. He quoted American journalists in China who frequently wrote about Great Britain's alleged attempts to create a war between Japan and the United States. Alston noted that unfortunately the U.S. Legation in Peking had also taken up this theme and was suggesting in memoranda that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was directed against the United States. Alston analyzed much of the problem as being a case of "projection." American failure to fully take advantage of its favorable commercial situation in China during and after the war due to inexperience was blamed on sinister British machinations. Alston noted that much of the non-cooperation and the unfriendliness of U.S. consular and naval personnel in China represented the ideas and interests of American missionaries and of the Standard Oil Company.

Anglo-American relations in China in the immediate post-war years did not produce an effective model for the smooth relations in the larger international arena between the two states. A number of important factors appeared which would have to be taken into account in the future. Popular

attitudes of the two competing nations toward each other would be as important a factor in determining public policy as the decisions of professional diplomatists would be. The "foreign policy" of commercial departments of government would be a vitally important factor in the direction of official foreign policy by diplomatic departments. China revealed the fact that Anglo-U.S. relations were more complicated than either party at first realized. Their bilateral relationship in fact was a tripartite one. Japan was always a major factor to be considered. It was already clear that a new relationship between Great Britain and the United States would have to mean the abandonment by both nations of their traditional attitudes toward security and their adoption of a new approach to the search for that goal in the Far East. China was an area of contention, but Japan was the real bone of contention.

JAPAN'S ROLE IN ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS: THE PROBLEM OF  
THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

The governments of the United States and of Great Britain were both increasingly aware that regardless of the angle from which their relations in the Far East might be viewed Japan appeared to block the way to a smooth rapprochement. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, once such a reassuring element in British imperial security in the Pacific, was by the end of World War I becoming a specter

arising to haunt the British Foreign Office and to frighten the U.S. State Department into defensiveness and hostility to Great Britain. The United States government regarded Japan as the primary threat to American interests in the Pacific and to American special relations with China. Britain's official ties to Japan complicated Anglo-U.S. relations during the war itself, because the United States feared, probably unnecessarily and rather paranoically, that information shared with friendly Great Britain ended almost as a matter of course in the hands of "unfriendly" Japan. As the Paris Peace Conference approached American diplomats already saw a need for a common Anglo-American approach to Japan as part of a coordinated Pacific policy. Undersecretary of State Polk favored a direct approach to Great Britain requesting coordination of an Anglo-American policy toward post-war Japan. Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long, one of the Far Eastern specialists at the State Department, replied to a memo from Polk on this proposal giving strong reasons why such a direct approach was not possible. To approach the British in this way would imply weakness on the part of the United States and would imply (or indeed reveal) an inability to deal with Japan alone. More importantly, Long pointed out, Great Britain because of its obligation to Japan under their alliance would certainly inform Japan about the American initiative. In Long's opinion Great Britain always deferred to Japan.

Experience had shown that the United States could not expect this kind of cooperative support from Britain. Long hoped that the Paris Peace Conference could establish a new international order in the Pacific which everyone could accept.<sup>53</sup>

In the final period of the Wilson administration after the Paris conference the subject of the alliance became increasingly the focus of attention for the Far Eastern experts in the State Department. As we have seen in an earlier section the Paris conference produced results most unwelcome to China and to pro-China people in the U.S. State Department. Both in China itself and in the United States Britain's links with Japan were blamed for this aspect of the Treaty. Wilson's deference to Great Britain for the sake of the League was blamed for U.S. concurrence. In the United States, concern over the Anglo-Japanese Alliance centered around two main questions: 1) the effect of the Alliance on American interests in China and on Chinese independence and integrity 2) the effect of the Alliance in determining British policy in the event of a war between the United States and Japan. The Alliance between Great Britain and Japan had been something of a new departure from traditional British diplomatic practice. Until it was signed in 1902 Britain had always steered clear of full alliances. It was renewed and revised in 1907 and again renewed in 1911. It was due to reach the end of its official ten-year life in

1921 but would continue in force until "denounced" by one party and opened for re-negotiation. Thus the subject of its continuation or termination was a matter of immediate importance for the parties in the post-war period.

As will be seen in the pages which follow, the Washington government had numerous concerns about the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and was very clear in its reasons for wanting to see it abrogated. The government in London was in a position to see advantages to its future relationship with the United States in ending the Alliance. On the other hand the Alliance had served British interests fairly well. The Atlanticists in the Foreign Office were anxious to end the Alliance. They could point to the minimal gains of Great Britain from the alliance in the past and the degree to which it bound the British to Japanese policies which deviated from its own. The traditional and more imperial-minded people in the government felt that it would damage Britain's standing with the rest of the world if it suddenly dropped "an old friend" when the friend became inconvenient. They resented American intrusion into British diplomatic relationships with others.<sup>54</sup> The argumentation will be treated fully later in connection with the London Imperial Conference of 1921 where the issues were fully aired. As early as the fall of 1919 Washington had been concerned about rumors that Great Britain was already in negotiation with Japan for treaty renewal. Acting Secretary of State Polk wired Ambassador John Davis in

London about the contents on any draft treaty:

...The Department desires particularly to learn whether there is on the part of Great Britain a tendency to broaden or restrict the recognition of Japan's special interests in eastern Asia or otherwise to modify the scope or purpose of the Treaty of Alliance assigned in 1911....<sup>55</sup>

The Ambassador replied that he had been assured by the Foreign Office that the construction of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was still undecided, but that it probably would be allowed to stand for at least another year until the Far Eastern situation was clearer.<sup>56</sup> A few weeks later an increasingly concerned State Department was actually proposing specific clauses to be inserted as modifications in a new Anglo-Japanese treaty.

...We are hopeful...that in making this renewal Great Britain will insist upon including...such provisions as shall safeguard the principle of equal opportunity in China and the rights of China more effectively. We also hope that it will be indicated that the alliance is not aimed at America.... The consortium negotiations have revealed...a common purpose held by America and Great Britain to resist the trend toward extending to China policies of special interests which tend to infringe upon Chinese rights and upon the Open Door Policy..., the principles which form the basis of the existing sympathetic Anglo-American cooperation should be more explicitly recognized.<sup>57</sup>

With the date of expiration or renewal still more than one year away the Far Eastern Division at the U.S. State Department in 1920 was already briefing the new Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby about the dangers of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. J.V.A. MacMurray, head of the Division

and China expert, sent a lengthy memo to Colby in April 1920 reviewing the history of the Alliance. He noted that while the Alliance had little practical use for Great Britain in the post-war world he felt certain that it would in fact be renewed. The failure of the United States to join the League of Nations and the general post-war treaty system left the U.S. in a weak bargaining position. MacMurray felt that the U.S. Government ought to try through informal channels to persuade the British to revise the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in ways which would bind Great Britain less closely to Japanese policies in China and which would in its wording make very clear that the alliance was not directed against the United States.<sup>58</sup>

The question of the Alliance was rapidly becoming the key issue in developing frictions between the United States and Great Britain. A very frank interview took place between the Undersecretary of State, Frank Polk, and the British Ambassador, Sir Auckland Geddes, in August, 1920 at which the Ambassador on specific instructions from President Wilson was rather bluntly "lectured." The Undersecretary told Sir Auckland that the United States had believed that Great Britain and the United States were in agreement about the need for cooperation in the Far East. Britain's apparent support of recent Japanese activities, notably the annexation of Sakhalin Island and efforts to get control of the Chinese Eastern Railroad, caused the U.S. to doubt the serious



interests of Great Britain in a common Anglo-U.S. policy. Geddes was warned that Britain could not play off the United States against Japan. Great Britain would have to come to a decision as to whose side she was on and whom she intended to work with! The Ambassador, somewhat shaken by the suddenness of this frontal attack, professed to be mystified. He knew of no change in his government's fundamental commitment to Anglo-U.S. cooperation. The actions referred to by the Undersecretary could not have been done with Foreign Office approval. He admitted that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was an "embarrassment," but that his government had retained it only in the hope of using the relationship to curb Japanese activities in the Far East. He spoke of his government's desire for a tripartite alliance to include the United States. The Undersecretary assured Geddes that an alliance was out of the question, but that possibly an "understanding" on Far East policy between the United States and Great Britain could be prepared and discussed.<sup>59</sup>

A CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON OPENS  
POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVED ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The advent of the Harding administration in March 1921 brought the possibility at least of a new realistic and objective look at Anglo-U.S. relations. The new Republican administration, dominated in policy matters by the "progressive" leadership of Charles Evans Hughes at State and

Herbert Hoover at the Commerce Department, was free of the negative effects of the war-time involvement with Great Britain, of the complications of the League of Nations idealism and the rigidity of the Wilson personality and policy. A fresh start could be made, and a pragmatic approach taken to international affairs and America's role in those affairs. There never was any likelihood of a return to pre-war isolationism. The new American leaders saw very clearly that the war had altered America's world situation, but moral leadership in a new community of peace was not their interest. Economic leadership in a recovering post-war world was much more interesting and practical. World peace was an important factor in ensuring economic growth and American trade expansion. Freedom of trade was another vital factor. For Great Britain the problem was no longer one of understanding the United States and its government's policy. The key to British power and world dominance for almost a century had been its industrial strength and commercial power. The Foreign Office and His Majesty's Ambassador in Washington may not have respected the new men of the Harding regime very much but they understood them very well! The United States had learned from British example and was set to create a new world order dominated by American industrial strength and commercial power. Nevertheless there was hope in Great Britain that things would go smoothly with the new American administration. A memo prepared for Ambassador

Geddes just before the inauguration of the new President by one familiar with the American scene, Cunliffe Owen, assured him that the future Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, had a very strong desire for better Anglo-American relations. Friendship and cooperation would be "the key-note of his policy and that of the President-elect." Hughes and Harding had no sympathy with pro-Irish agitation and probably would not follow the Wilson line on matter of Mesopotamian oil. The "outlook for the future could not be better."<sup>60</sup>

In May of 1921 Sir William Wiseman sent a lengthy memo on the foreign policy of the Harding administration to the Foreign Office for the use of a departmental committee engaged in the study of the future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It was a wide-ranging and perceptive document which covered the issues which would be at the root of Anglo-American frictions stemming from the new world positions of both countries over the next decade. It deserves to be treated here at some length as an introduction to the diplomatic and naval issues to follow.<sup>61</sup> Wiseman began by commenting on the tendency of American public and political opinion to attribute to alien and artificial causes difficulties which were in fact due to national and natural causes. He got to the heart of America's post-war malaise when he stated that

the chief reason why practical citizens wanted a lasting peace was that they might dominate the world to the advantage of their pockets. Mr. Wilson quite frankly supported the Covenant...by

the argument that lasting peace was essential if the richest country in the world, the greatest financiers in the world and the greatest mercantile marine in the world were to come on their own.

America clearly had the potential for international commercial dominance but as yet lacked the expertise which Great Britain had developed over centuries. However, a majority of Americans "vaguely fear that somehow or other they are being done in the eye by their British rivals." In this last statement Wiseman hit on the essential factor of stress in Anglo-American relations in the post-war period. Behind American concern for naval parity, behind its intense opposition to the Anglo-Japanese alliance lay the issue of trade and commercial power. Navies protected merchant fleets as much as national shores. Treaties guaranteed areas for commercial penetration and domination. Britain had experience with both. Whether navies or treaties would be used to prevent the economic and commercial growth of the United States in the 1920's was an open question, but many if not most Americans suspected that they would be so used and were already being used to "contain" American growth.

The post-war economic slump in the United States and the relatively high unemployment had caused a significant change in American economic thinking. Even during the war years the more international minded within the American business community together with progressive minds in both political parties had come to a kind of consensus on an approach to the

post-war economic world. Even traditionally free trade Democrats came to agree that a new "scientific tariff" system would be needed. The tariff could no longer be seen only as a revenue source, but neither could it be an unlimited bulwark of protection for U.S. industry. The best way to assure freer international trade would be to provide a measure of protection of the American domestic market against a flood of cheap goods resulting from depreciated European currencies. A means of protecting the American economy in the event of widespread commercial war needed to be found. Both the Wilson and Harding administrations shared the broad objectives of the American business community. Post-war trade relations should rest on a community of interest among industrial powers which would allow the protection of domestic markets and free competition in the underdeveloped areas of the world. It was this open competition for world markets, especially in the search for raw materials and resources in Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, which the United States wanted to foster and which would bring it into possible conflict with British commercial strength.<sup>62</sup> If the ability of the United States to remain politically isolationist was itself questionable, commercial isolation, in the appraisal of Wiseman was "hardly possible, especially if it means British exploitation of the undeveloped resources of the world." Wiseman saw two apparently contradictory results of this American "fear" of British competition for

world markets. On the one hand it produced complaints, generally ill-founded and unreflective, about "unfair" British commercial practices, but on the other it led to an increasingly vocal feeling in American progressive political circles that the United States and Great Britain could and should cooperate to make the world a more securely prosperous place. According to Wiseman's appraisal, this latter view, favorable to Anglo-American rapport, was held by President Harding in a rather vague form, and it was at the basis of his declarations about a new "association of nations" and his views on naval disarmament:

There is at the back of his mind a vague idea that the universe would be stable if Great Britain would assume through her fleet, responsibility for everything from the Atlantic coast of the United States eastward to Singapore while the United States did the same for the Pacific and the Far East. He would in fact, like to expand the American Monroe Doctrine into a Pacific Doctrine and supplement it with a similar British doctrine for the rest of the world....

President Harding did not pretend to any expertise in foreign affairs. He quite frankly allowed himself to be entirely guided in these matters by Secretary of State Hughes. Harding's public statements reflected the views of the progressive Hughes on international cooperation and association. The Secretary favored mechanisms for arbitration and conciliation as part of a progressive world order and had been favorable to the League of Nations idea. Hughes realized that the whole issue was still too sensitive and that Harding was not anxious to confront the Senate

irreconcilables on any policy resembling the League. After mid-1922 references to the "association of states" idea faded into the background.<sup>63</sup>

Herbert Hoover was more definite than the President. In a conversation with Wiseman Hoover stated:

England and the United States must run the world....When disarmament comes up England must be left so that she can dominate Europe. Get England and the United States so dovetailed together economically that they must act together. Europe is menaced by national selfishness...only Anglo-Saxon cooperation can pull things together....<sup>64</sup>

The Harding administration could not move too far too fast, in Wiseman's opinion, leading as it did a still badly fractured and divided Republican party, of which some elements were strongly suspicious of anything smacking of Wilsonian internationalism. However, the movement toward a cooperative relationship with Great Britain was real. For the moment United States foreign policy focus was primarily on the Pacific, and its goal was commercial expansion and therefore naval and political expansion in that region. Japan was the major obstacle to these goals. Great Britain's official relationship with Japan, which State Department officials saw as a continuing condonation of Japanese "bad behavior" in China and the Far East, was bound to be an obstacle to smooth relations with the Harding government.

Wiseman recommended that the government in London should give serious consideration to making a useful start in Anglo-American economic cooperation by the alleviation of a major

irritant in this economic area, the competition for oil resources:

In the opinion of Mr. Hoover and also in that of many of our unofficial friends the best solution of the controversy would be to offer Americans a share in the financing and output of our Persian and Mesopotamian fields. Mr. Hoover pointed out that no better arenas could be found of starting an economic and perhaps subsequently political inter-locking of British and American interests....<sup>65</sup>

Thus Sir William Wiseman cautioned the Foreign Office that prospects for friendly relations between Great Britain and the United States were good, but that for Great Britain this would involve acquiescence in the developing American idea of an association for joint supervision of the world. This new relationship rested on the twin pillars of British recognition of American hegemony in the Pacific and the adoption of a policy of shared development of the world's resources and markets.

#### THE U.S. INTENSIFIES ITS OPPOSITION TO THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

The advent of the Harding-Hughes administration brought no real change to United States policy regarding the desired termination of Anglo-Japanese Alliance, although it did bring a higher level of cordiality in the way the U.S. government expressed its opposition. There were a number of very specific fears which the U.S. government had about the possible evil the alliance could do, diplomatic, naval, and



economic.<sup>66</sup> Press comment in the United States not unexpectedly concentrated on the possibility of the alliance being used against the U.S. in a war and held that both Britain and Japan were "protesting too much" in denying this possibility.<sup>67</sup> The chance of war between Great Britain and the United States arising out of British commitments to Japan did not emerge as a serious theme in talks between British and American public officials. In fact in diplomatic (as well as naval) circles the idea of war between the United States and Japan was not considered as a probability. The effect of the Alliance on China and general Far Eastern Policy was the major concern of the U.S. government.

In an important talk between Secretary of State Hughes and Sir Auckland Geddes in June 1921 the issue of war did not emerge at all in their discussion of the Alliance and its future. Indeed in his remarks Hughes pointedly referred to the United States as a "cordial friend of Japan." He noted that the U.S. government--

...had very clear policies in the Far East which had been frequently stated, and he supposed and hoped that Great Britain and the United States had the same view as they appeared to have the same interests....

Hughes reiterated U.S. commitment to the Open Door policy and to the integrity of China (and now also to the integrity of Russia). He feared that if Great Britain had any pledge to support the special interests of Japan these might encourage the "militarist party" in Japan to take actions which the

U.S. would have to protest. He added:

...that if it were true that the policies of Great Britain in the Far East were like our own, there should be cooperation between the United States and Great Britain, and it should be possible for the United States to find complete support on the part of Great Britain in their maintenance and execution; that this was not an attitude antagonistic to Japan, but would be in her interests as in the interests of the peace of the world....

Ambassador Geddes in reply to Secretary Hughes seized on the suggestion that the U.S. intended no antagonism toward Japan and again raised the possibility of a tripartite agreement on Far East policy between Great Britain, United States, and Japan as a happy solution. Hughes, however, quickly put down the idea, noting that he did not think the American people would approve any alliance with any nation or any agreement that could be interpreted as an alliance. The new Secretary of State made clear that by cooperation he meant only having and maintaining common policies. As a kind of ominous parting shot at the end of this interview Hughes reminded Ambassador Geddes that Congress was about to debate a resolution calling for recognition of the Irish Republic. Any appearance of continued collaboration between Great Britain and Japan would strengthen the hand of Britain's vocal enemies in Congress, whereas some action on the part of the British government signifying a closer harmony with the United States on Far East policy would certainly assist Britain's friends in opposing this pro-Irish resolution in Congress.<sup>68</sup> This was the first time that an American

administration appeared to make use of a British domestic political concern in order to bring about conformity with American policies desires in the Far East.

On the day following this interview with the Secretary of State Sir Auckland Geddes reported on it to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon. Geddes noted that present American suspicions of Great Britain's dealings with Japan could not simply be dismissed as unimportant in the formulation of British policy. He saw a close parallel between the present situation in Anglo-American relations, with Japan as a complication, with the way Great Britain might have viewed Anglo-American relations in 1913 if the United States had been in some treaty relationship with Germany.<sup>69</sup>

As noted earlier in considering the negotiations over the Chinese banking consortium the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was strongly opposed within China itself both by the Chinese government and by American business representatives. The concerns of the Chinese government were clear and direct. China objected to the insult to her sovereignty by the very mention of China in the text of the alliance treaty without her consent. The Alliance had provided a cover for the violation of Chinese territorial integrity by Japan. It placed impediments in China's free economic development. The Alliance had failed in its stated goal of preserving peace in the Far East, and it would permit continued Japanese dominance over China.<sup>70</sup> While American businessmen were

concerned about competition from Great Britain in China their deeper concerns were with the growing power of Japan. They tried to offer proof to the United States government that the Alliance had tied Britain to Japanese economic policy in China and had brought Britain into opposition with American interests there. They cited the incident as far back as 1909 when Great Britain had declined to support an American proposal for construction of the Chinchow-Aigun Railroad in southern Manchuria as a joint Anglo-American venture. The British had known that Japan would resent this financial incursion in a Japanese economic sphere. The proposal was dropped by the U.S. as a result.<sup>71</sup> In the summer of 1921 when the issue of renewal of the Alliance was very much to the front both in Washington and London American business representatives in China and China supporters in the State Department were all active in denouncing the Alliance. Stanley Hornbeck wrote from China to Assistant Secretary of State Dearing in June 1921 advocating the end of all special agreements with Japan regarding China on the part of both Great Britain and the United States, including the latter's Lansing-Ishii Agreement of 1917. Of the Alliance he wrote:

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance has been and will continue to be a menace to American interests and to China interests. Henceforth it will also be a menace to amiable relations between Great Britain and the United States....<sup>72</sup>

In the same month the State Department received a report from its Consul-General in Shanghai which asserted that the whole

English-speaking community in China, Americans and British alike, opposed the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance; and he sent a file of news clippings from the English-language press in China supporting his opinion.<sup>73</sup>

Thomas F. Millard, long-time spokesman of American business interests in China, had earlier written to the State Department warning that the Alliance would always be a major obstacle to the operation of the Consortium and would continue to be the source of major Anglo-American differences in China. In his own articles in the Chinese press Millard warned that if the Alliance continued the United States would have to build a navy equal to the combined British and Japanese fleets to protect its own interests.<sup>74</sup> M.A. Oudin, the Foreign Manager for the General Electric Company, wrote to Undersecretary of State Fletcher in July 1921 to reinforce the view that renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would strengthen the hands of both of these competitors of the U.S. to proceed on a policy of monopoly of Chinese trade and the establishment of political influence in East Asia. Oudin added that even though technically the Alliance might not be directed against the United States it had a very unfavorable influence on American trade and prestige in the Far East.<sup>75</sup>

The representatives of American business in China were strongly seconded in their opposition to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance by American naval and military representatives there. U.S. military presence in China in the early 1920's

was not great. It consisted of a force of 400 Marines attached to the Legation in Peking and two battalions of the U.S. Army's 15th regiment stationed at Tientsin. On the other hand naval presence was not insignificant. The Asiatic fleet with its home base at Manila consisted usually of one or two cruisers, up to twenty destroyers, two submarine squadrons of six subs each, a number of gunboats, and assorted support vessels. The Fleet's stated function was to hold off the Japanese from the Philippines in case of war until the full U.S. Fleet could cross the Pacific. In actual fact the size of the Asiatic Fleet would have made it useless against Japan, but it proved very useful in patrolling Chinese coasts and far up the rivers into the interior of China. The Asiatic Fleet was an obvious protection for Americans and American business.<sup>76</sup>

The Office of Naval Intelligence was active in gaining information in China which was relayed to Washington. The ONI operated all over the world, but especially in Asia after World War I acting through the naval attachés in the various embassies, especially in Peking and Tokyo. Often a number of assistant naval attachés worked exclusively for ONI and had developed local systems of undercover agents and informants. Its reports were only as reliable as these operatives, and thus were frequently of doubtful value. The ONI itself in the years following the end of the war was strong in its opposition to naval reductions, active in Big Navy public

relations efforts, and decidedly anti-Oriental in its outlook, and because of Anglo-Japanese Alliance by implication anti-British.<sup>77</sup>

Thus the Navy Department was gathering its own information in opposition to any renewal of the Alliance through ONI. Naval Intelligence sources in China reported to Washington that both the native Chinese and the foreign population in China were against the Alliance and saw no need for renewal. There was a general belief that if the Alliance were renewed it would be a cover for a deal between Japan and Great Britain for the economic division of China, Japan being allowed a free hand to exploit the north while the British received a free hand in the south. These naval sources recommended the idea of a broad Pacific pact to replace the Alliance, because under such a new pact Great Britain would be less likely to support Japanese aspirations for control of northern China. While the British would still try to protect their own sphere in south China they would do so with less monopolistic tendencies under a new Pacific agreement.<sup>78</sup>

An "especially confidential" memorandum prepared by the State Department in the fall of 1921 showed how far American thinking had evolved in the direction of practical planning for realistic foreign policy goals in the Far East. It was entitled "A Pacific Policy for the United States." A few selections from this document show the degree to which the State Department at least was aware of China's weakness,

American goals there, and the possible and even probable necessity of war to achieve these goals.

The markets and raw materials of Central and South China indicate one important economic objective of American policy. The sentiments of the inhabitants of the area as well as its territorial propinquity to our ... base at Manila would facilitate industrial and commercial penetration of this area.

Possible clashes of interest both with Japan and Great Britain were noted, but it was asserted that the factors would all favor the U.S. in any such clash in these areas. It was accepted that Peking might well fall under Japanese control.

Were Washington in a position to control South China against the Peking Government when the latter falls more under the influences of Tokyo, an important balance would be obtained which could be used to the advantage of China as well as to the advantage of the United States....

A clash with British aspirations in the Indies should be counted on when the development of American trade in that area is under consideration...

The memorandum called for public announcement of the U.S. policy guaranteeing the independence of China and the defense of the Philippines and of the development of a war policy to carry out these ends, but:

Since exactly the same reassuring applies to a maritime war plan as to a plan for commercial competition in the Far East and for other reasons, it is believed that an explanation of the War Plan is unnecessary in so far as the public is concerned....

Both Tokyo and London had probably analyzed the American War Plan. The advantage of maintaining uncertainty in their minds



was clear to the Americans. The document concluded, "there is a wide gulf between knowing and not knowing."

By the end of the summer of 1921 the Anglo-Japanese alliance had become far more than a merely suspicious element in the foreign policy of a competing nation as far as American policy makers were concerned. It had become a symbol, something really larger than life, an obstacle to all of America's hopes and dreams about its role in China. Rational analyses of its concrete provisions were irrelevant. So influential was the emotional component of American views of the Alliance that almost unconsciously the State Department was being led in the direction of a whole new approach to its conduct of foreign policy in general and of Far Eastern policy in particular. In its passionate desire to remove the obstacle of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance it began looking toward a whole new order in the Far East, a new era of international involvement there for the U.S.

For the British government the Anglo-Japanese alliance had no such symbolic and emotional significance. For policy-makers in London the future of the Alliance was a practical matter of strategy and geopolitics. A decision on it, however, would be no less significant for its effect on the future of British foreign policy. The Alliance had in its origin been a bold departure from the traditional British reluctance to form defensive alliances, but it had come to be regarded as a key element in guaranteeing imperial security

and protection of Britain's interests in the Far East. Even before World War I Great Britain had realized that amiable relations with the United States would be very important in the years ahead and hoped that a way could be found to accommodate "special relationships" with both Japan and the United States. The war years had shown how difficult this policy would be to effect. Japan's policy in China had convinced many people in the Foreign Office that Britain and Japan had fundamentally incompatible goals in the Far East. By the end of the war suspicion and dislike of Japan was general in the British Foreign Office.

#### THE DEBATE IN LONDON OVER THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

The debate within the Foreign Office concerning the Japanese Alliance took place in two stages: from late 1919 to mid-1920 culminating in a decision favorable to renewal, and the discussions in 1921 which reached Cabinet level and ultimately led to the Washington Conference and termination of the Alliance. The first discussion was initiated by the appointment of a new ambassador to Japan, Sir Charles Eliot, in the fall of 1919. Eliot was called home from his post as High Commissioner in Siberia for talks prior to posting in Tokyo. Meanwhile in the Foreign Office efforts were being made to formulate a new policy toward Japan on which to base instructions for the new ambassador. The arguments in favor of renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance in some form were

well represented by a letter to Sir John Tilley in the Foreign Office from Beilbe Alston, writing from the British embassy in Tokyo. Alston accepted the view that the original purpose of the alliance had disappeared and that territorial protection was now to be guaranteed by the League of Nations. He felt, however, that "some kind of arrangement with Japan" was still useful in view of Japanese-U.S. tensions because "it would help us to play the part of mediator between the United States and Japan should need arise." Alston clearly saw that for Great Britain the critical issue was cooperation with the United States on China policy and the degree of seriousness on the part of the government in Washington about true Anglo-U.S. cooperation in Chinese rehabilitation. Alston had grave doubts about the chances for a real unified policy with the United States. He preferred a tripartite agreement but he doubted whether American political feeling would ever support the idea. This being the case Great Britain could not afford to give up its protective link with Japan. An annoyed Japan might very likely seek new friends in Germany and Russia.<sup>79</sup>

In the interest of fairness, Alston forwarded to Tilley at the Foreign Office a memorandum from C. Wingfield, first secretary of the British embassy in Tokyo, which put strongly the arguments against renewal of the Alliance with Japan. Wingfield argued forcefully that the alliance was inconsistent with the spirit of the League of Nations. He

also felt that the treaty hampered British interests in the Far East and injured relations with the United States and China. While acknowledging the "historical venerability" of the Alliance he felt that Japanese policy had made "the pact...in fact obsolescent, and it has even lost much of its sentimental value." Wingfield hoped the treaty could be dropped with as little bitterness as possible, perhaps best done through an invocation of League of Nations principles.<sup>80</sup>

A "secret memo" circulated within the Foreign Office in the following February (1920) listed six areas of present and future conflict between Great Britain and Japan: 1) Japan favored a weak China; Britain favored a strong China, 2) Japan wanted a "closed door" in China; Britain supported the "open door" concept, 3) Japan desired to control the Far East, 4) Japan and Great Britain were in economic competition in Asia, 5) Japanese planned territorial expansion in Asia and the Pacific, 6) the problem of the exclusion of Orientals in the Dominions.<sup>81</sup> Supporters of renewal of the Alliance with Japan in the Foreign Office continued to bring forth new arguments. It was asserted that domestic politics in Japan were in a fluid state and that an isolated Japan would be a potential enemy. In his words on one Foreign Office minute, Lord Curzon noted "...the existence of an understanding with Japan would enable us to continue to exercise that friendly pressure on her in the future which we have found on occasion

distinctly beneficial in the past...."<sup>82</sup> For all practical purposes this ended the first stage of the debate, although the Foreign Office exchanges made it clear that the final decision would not come until the Imperial Conference in June 1921.

In the fall of 1920 with less than a year to go before the expiration date of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in July 1921 the discussion within the British Foreign Office was reopened. Victor Wellesley, the Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs for the Far East, emerged in this stage of the debate as the leader of the forces opposed to renewal and favoring a strong pro-American policy. The new British ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Charles Eliot, was now the chief proponent in policy circles of renewal of the alliance.<sup>83</sup> Wellesley in effect reopened the debate and attempted to raise the level of the discussion to global dimensions in his circular memo in the Foreign Office dated 1 September 1920 on Far eastern policy and its relation to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. In his introductory remarks Wellesley stated:

No one who has devoted any time and attention to (the Far Eastern Question) can fail to recognize that with the termination of the 3rd period of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on July 13, 1921, we shall have reached the parting of the ways as regards our future policy in that quarter of the globe.... The importance of the occasion can therefore hardly be exaggerated and our choice must be a matter of deep and abiding concern to the whole civilized world. The time has therefore come for a review of the whole political situation of the Far East with the utmost care and circumspection, so that whatever decision be arrived at, that decision may be based on a full knowledge and

understanding of all factors which come into play in the shaping of our future policy....

Wellesley analyzed four possible alternatives to the renewal of the Alliance Treaty: 1) non-renewal 2) renewal of the treaty only with minor modifications to bring it into harmony with the Covenant of the League, 3) renewal of the Treaty in a modified form "less in the nature of an alliance" and with an adhesion clause leaving open to the United States the possibility of joining, 4) renewal of the treaty in a non-alliance mode and without any adhesion clause coupling it with a parallel agreement with the U.S. in similar language and with the hope of eventually merging the two agreements into one tripartite pact. Wellesley preferred option number 4. He believed that Great Britain and the United States could effectively restrain the actively aggressive tendencies of Japan within a multi-lateral treaty better than Britain alone could do with a renewed Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The memo frankly admitted the British failure in the past to control Japan and acknowledged both the necessity of doing so in the future, especially as regards China, and the impossibility of doing so except in close harmony with the United States.<sup>84</sup> Wellesley in a covering minute of 24 September 1920 called for the erection of a departmental committee in the Foreign Office to consider the course to be taken by the government regarding the Alliance and Far Eastern policy. This committee was in fact set up by the Foreign Secretary and was the focus of the discussion in the

months following.

The Foreign Office sought the advice of His Majesty's Ambassador in Washington on the renewal question, to American attitudes to the Alliance and to possible involvement of the U.S. in a multi-lateral pact. Sir Auckland Geddes replied in November 1920 soon after the American presidential election. The ambassador gave as his view that most serious Americans would welcome a tripartite agreement between the U.S., Great Britain, and Japan, but he clearly implied that most U.S. Senators did not fall into this "serious" category. A formal treaty could not be gotten through the Senate. Geddes recommended that the Anglo-Japanese alliance be renewed with modifications to bring it into accord with the League of Nations Covenant. He believed this could and should be coupled with some sort of executive agreement with the incoming Harding administration which would at least bring some stability to Anglo-U.S. relations in the Far East for four years. He did not believe that the alliance with Japan should be scrapped unless the British government was prepared to say that absence of friction with the United States was the paramount goal of its foreign policy. If that were true, Geddes warned that many more concessions by Britain to the U.S.A. would lie down the road.<sup>85</sup> Sir Auckland followed up these remarks with a more reflective letter a few weeks later in which he warned against any long-term dependence on the United States. "The price of Anglo-American cooperation in

the near future would be the introduction into British foreign policy of periodicity determined by the recurring presidential elections...." The ambassador referred to the "abysmal ignorance of world affairs" of most U.S. leaders and of the absence of any real American foreign policy beyond the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>86</sup>

Lord Curzon was continuing to receive from the Far East two opinions about renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. From Tokyo Sir Charles Eliot wrote in December 1920 warning that Japan was moving in the direction of major military and naval power and that if not retained as a formal ally Japan would be decidedly hostile to Great Britain. He warned ominously:

I anticipate grave difficulties in India and our other Asiatic possessions in the near future, and we cannot count on American sympathy there. I do not think we can afford to risk the enmity of Japan....<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand the Minister in Peking, Sir Beilbe Alston, reported growing opposition in China to renewal of the Alliance, but he added that the American legislation was mixed up in the agitation against the Alliance.<sup>88</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF THE DOMINION GOVERNMENTS ON BRITISH POLICY TOWARD JAPAN AND THE ALLIANCE

A new factor began to influence the considerations of the British Cabinet about policy on renewal of the Alliance in the early months of 1921. The Canadian Government felt



that it had a unique interest in any policy of the Empire which affected relations with the United States. Indeed it had become a postulate of the government in Ottawa in its relations with London that Canada should have a special voice in determining Imperial policy regarding the United States. Naturally the government in London was not prepared to concede to any one dominion such a formative role in Imperial policy but in the still developing state of relations between the mother-country and the self-governing dominions the strong feeling of any one of the overseas governments had to be taken into serious consideration.<sup>89</sup> In February 1921 the Canadian Cabinet had discussed the subject of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Governor-General communicated to the Colonial Office in London the view of his Cabinet to be shared with the British Cabinet. Canada felt that every effort should be made to find an alternative to renewal for the sake of continued good relations with the United States. The Canadian government recommended the termination of the alliance and the summoning of a conference of Pacific powers to adjust Far Eastern questions. The Canadian Cabinet further suggested that a Canadian representative should go to Washington in March 1921 to discuss the whole question with the Harding government to sound out American feeling about the Alliance and future Pacific policy before the scheduled meeting of the Imperial Conference in June in London. The Canadian view was that the idea of a Pacific Conference could

be more favorably received in Washington if it came from His Majesty's Government in Ottawa than from His Majesty's Government in London.<sup>90</sup>

However useful to the interests of the United States was this intervention by the Canadian government, there is no clear indication that the government in Washington fully appreciated or exploited this new weapon against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The developing relationship between Great Britain and the self-governing Dominions was not something to which the Americans were especially sensitive. In general the officials in Washington still saw a monolithic "British Empire" to be dealt with as a unit except perhaps in trade matters. There was no official conversation between Ottawa and Washington on the subject of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. There was one unofficial "go-between" whose influence is hard to evaluate. William Howard Gardiner was a wealthy American businessman and an ardent promoter both of naval expansion and Anglo-Saxon unity. As a member of the executive committee of the American Navy League and a past president of the U.S. branch of the English-Speaking Union he did have extensive contacts in both the United States and Canada. Gardiner had been actively speaking against the Anglo-Japanese alliance on both sides of the border. He had an entree into Republican Party circles, knew Secretary Hughes, and was close to Assistant Secretary of State Norman H. Davis.

Gardiner certainly spoke to both Davis and Hughes about Canadian concerns and the possibility of using Canadian pressure against the government in London for abrogation of the alliance. He apparently received encouragement to speak to Canadian Premier Meighen and to give a series of speeches in Canada on the dangers of the Alliance. The conversations with Meighen and other Canadian politicians were held in March and April 1921. Gardiner always dramatized his own influence on the Canadian government. Certainly Meighen had begun to speak about the problems of the Alliance before Gardiner appeared on the scene and would have needed no encouragement from Washington.<sup>91</sup>

This initiative from the Canadians produced some panic in London both because of the strong views it exhibited on a matter London was still handling in a tender way and because of the danger of a premature approach to the United States with possible development of a "North American front" regarding Japanese policy. The reply to the Canadian government on February 21 advised great caution, while agreeing that the matter of the Alliance's future was a serious one. London was adamant, however, that no official approach should be made to the United States about any Pacific conference until after the meeting of the Imperial Conference. Many attendant issues of imperial policy, especially regarding disarmament policy, naval building, and the future of the League of Nations had to be discussed first

at an Imperial Conference. The British Government, however, did suggest that the Canadian Cabinet dispatch former Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to London for talks on this and related issues and to explain possible useful unofficial ways of sounding American opinion before the opening of the Imperial Conference.<sup>92</sup>

This cautious British reply clearly annoyed the impatient Canadians. Prime Minister Meighen cabled the London government in April through the Governor-General that he greatly feared any delay in discussions with the Americans. This was the first big step in developing positive post-war Anglo-American relations, and it was most important to handle matters smoothly. He feared that delay would result in the Imperial Conference being presented with only two alternatives, either renewal of the Alliance in some form or pure and simple termination. He put on record his view that Canadians knew better than the British how to relate to the Americans. If no talks were held, and if as a result the Alliance was renewed, Canada would have to consider opting out of the implications of that Alliance.<sup>93</sup> Lloyd George was warned by William Tyrrell of the Foreign Office a few days after the receipt of this cable that every effort had to be made to block an independent approach by Canada to the United States on this matter. He suggested that the Prime Minister should tell the Canadians that renewal of the Alliance with Japan was to be left open until

the meeting of the Imperial Conference. Japan would be informed of this and a short three month renewal beyond its July 1921 expiration date requested. Canada should be told not to contact Washington meanwhile, but Ottawa could be assured that if a policy was agreed on which called for consultation with the Americans, Great Britain would welcome a Canadian mission to Washington.<sup>94</sup> Lloyd George followed the Foreign Office advice on this, which quieted the Canadian agitation for the moment, but London became more aware than ever that the question of the Alliance with Japan was a critical one, affecting not only Far Eastern policy, but also American policy, and relations with the self-governing dominions. Preparation for the June 1921 Imperial Conference now came almost exclusively to be focussed on this issue.

The Foreign Office committee which had been set up to study the issue of Alliance renewal made its preliminary report in the spring of 1921. Essentially it called for renewal with revisions. Recommended was a renewal for an additional three years only, instead of a repeat of the original ten-year span. All references in the treaty to China and India were to be dropped. The new text would contain a direct declaration of exclusion of a war with the United States by Great Britain as a possible result of the treaty. It would also explicitly state that the alliance would only be invoked if normal League of Nations measures failed.<sup>95</sup> In May the British Cabinet took up the question

of the Alliance in preparation for the forthcoming Imperial Conference. At a meeting of the Cabinet on May 30 Lord Curzon presented a report calling for renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. He presented the arguments on both sides of the issue. Curzon favored a modified form of renewal and the calling of a Pacific Conference. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, strongly supported renewal and if possible holding a conference. Balfour and Austin Chamberlain also supported renewal. Churchill supported renewal while stressing the advantages of a tripartite pact. Lloyd George was hopeful about securing such a pact, but his first interest was clearly in reassuring the Japanese about the British intent to renew the Alliance. Only Lord Lee of Fareham, First Lord of the Admiralty, was willing to risk the results of severing the Alliance. The Cabinet agreed on the following points. At the Imperial Conference Great Britain would support the idea of getting the United States to call a Pacific Conference and at the same time indicate that it did not intend to drop the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Britain would seek a renewal of the pact for a period of less than ten years. The British would seek Japanese agreement to short renewals of three months until a new version could be worked out. The Cabinet also called for papers from the Admiralty and the War Office on Japan's role and level of assistance during the recent war and from the Committee on Imperial Defence on the strategic effects of a termination of

the Alliance.<sup>96</sup>

In response to the request of the Cabinet for information about Japan's contribution to the war effort the First Lord of the Admiralty replied in June with a detailed memo which generally minimized the actual role which the Japanese had played, asserting that Japan had had minimal contact with the enemy. He summarized the Japanese attitude as follows:

...in general it may be said that Japanese naval assistance in so far as it conformed to direct Japanese interests, was freely and willingly given. Where, however, the object to be obtained did not especially further the policy of Japan, a certain amount of persuasion was necessary to induce her to undertake the required commitments....<sup>97</sup>

On the same day the CID submitted a memo to the Imperial Conference which had begun to meet in June, on the relation of the Alliance to British imperial strategic interests. The conclusions reported in their memo were: 1) that from the strategic point of view a renewal of the Alliance would render a war with Japan less likely, and the Empire was not in a position to fight such a war, 2) unless U.S., Britain, and Japan could come to an understanding on Pacific policy which would reduce the threat of war then Great Britain was better off keeping the Alliance, 3) in either case development of naval bases in the Far East could be essential, 4) if the Alliance were to be terminated the whole strategic position of the British Empire and Dominions would have to be reviewed in terms of Pacific policy as a

matter of the greatest urgency."<sup>8</sup>

THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE OF 1921 AND POLICY REGARDING THE  
ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

It had been clear for some months to all of the parties concerned with the decision on renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance that the Imperial Conference of 1921 would be a critical meeting. At the seventh meeting of the Conference on 28 June 1921 Lord Curzon made his presentation in favor of a renewal. To him (and to his Prime Minister) European strategic interests were paramount and Japan was seen as directly relating to those interests, whereas the United States did not. In reviewing the "pros" and "cons" of renewal Curzon cited the fears of the Foreign Office and of the War Office of possible linkage between Soviet Russia and Germany, a coalition of unhappy states which could be very attractive to Japan if the latter became annoyed over an apparent rejection by Great Britain. Curzon maintained, therefore, that the original purpose of the Alliance in 1902 had not ceased to exist but had only altered its outward appearance. Security of imperial interests in the Pacific still demanded the alliance with Japan."<sup>9</sup>

The United States of course was not a participant at the Imperial Conference, but it was there as a kind of ghostly presence making its feelings known in a variety of ways and



inevitably in the minds of all the official participants. By the time of the opening of the conference the exchanges between Secretary of State Hughes and Ambassador Geddes as well as the less satisfactory talks between Lord Curzon and Ambassador Harvey had taken place. The strong American opposition to renewal of the Alliance was known. The exchanges between the Canadian government and Lloyd George were also a matter of record. At the Imperial Conference Prime Minister Robert Meighen of Canada vigorously represented what he considered an imperial-based foreign policy in which the interests of the Dominions were of equal importance to those of Great Britain. To him such a policy clearly depended on close and friendly relations with the United States. In his addresses to the Imperial Conference Meighen attacked Curzon's notion that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance prevented a future Russo-German alliance. He believed on the contrary that Britain's link to Japan actually encouraged the formation of such an alliance. Meighen condemned the idea of any further British imperial complicity in the illegal expansionist activities of Japan. A Chinese-U.S. alliance in which Britain would find itself totally excluded from the Chinese market would be a likely result of a renewed Anglo-Japanese alliance. Since Japan would at the very least expect Britain to preserve benevolent neutrality in the event of a Japanese-American war, the United States would be right in seeing future Japanese

conquests as done with British connivance. Meighen pointed to the expressed desire of the London government for a Pacific naval arms limitation agreement and maintained that this could be far better achieved by not renewing the Alliance. Behind these arguments lay the Canadian fear of potential military involvement for Canada if the United States went to war with Japan allied to Great Britain.<sup>100</sup> Meighen had made it clear long before his arrival at the Imperial Conference that he saw the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as a source of potential war between Great Britain and the United States. In an interview before his departure from Canada for the conference in comments intended to be shared with Secretary of State Hughes Prime Minister Meighen had noted that alliances are of no use unless they are workable against someone. In the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance against whom was it likely to be invoked? He saw it frankly as directed against the United States in spite of the denial implied in the test and public disavowals. He viewed the British link with Japan and the American link with China as leading to a very possible, even probable, conflict between Britain and the United States. In such a war Canada would be caught between imperial ties and loyalties and the practical realities of her national situation.<sup>101</sup>

Canadian opposition to the renewal of the Alliance was not supported by the other Dominions at the London Imperial Conference of 1921. However, the comments of the Australian,

New Zealand, and South African representatives made it clear that good relations with the United States were a very high priority with all those nations with Pacific interests. Almost their sole reason for supporting London in its call for renewal was the practical matter of their own defense. Whereas Canada could realistically very likely be included in an American defense perimeter, it was not at all certain that an isolationist-minded United States would extend and use its navy for the protection of the other Pacific Dominions. Until such guarantees were forthcoming the security of the Pacific states seemed to demand a continued alliance with Japan.<sup>102</sup>

The different situation of Great Britain herself in the event of a Japanese-American war was indeed a factor the British government was considering in these months of 1921. A Foreign Office memorandum entitled "British neutrality in the event of a Japanese-American war" had been circulated within the government. The memo laid out the practical problems of any form of neutrality for Great Britain in such a war. It questioned whether it would not be virtually impossible for Britain to remain neutral in any protracted war and asked:

...whether the geographical and economic situation would not compromise us more and more in the direction of a pro-Japanese intervention, in spite of the fact that our natural sympathies would be on the American side....

The paper contained an expression of fear that Great Britain

for its own economic interests might be forced to intervene to prevent the United States from reducing Japan to a state of complete bankruptcy,

a proceeding which would postpone indefinitely that era of Anglo-American cooperation which we believe to be the goal of British policy. Further the disruptive effect of divergent policies on the British Empire itself would add a further element of anxiety....A Japanese-American war would be a calamity to the British Empire....<sup>103</sup>

By the time the British Cabinet met again at the end of June following several sessions of the Imperial Conference the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was no longer the goal pure and simple. New developments had occurred, especially the unexpectedly intense opposition of Canada to renewal expressed at the Imperial Conference and the reception of definite word from Ambassador Geddes in Washington about the strong American opposition to renewal. In Cabinet Lloyd George stated that Great Britain could not afford to quarrel with the United States. Yet neither could Great Britain afford to insult Japan. China had to be taken into consideration as part of the problem. Chinese trade could eventually reach 4 billion a year, and all of this should not be left to the exclusive benefit of the United States! The Cabinet agreed on the need for full and frank discussions between representatives of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan on the whole range of Pacific policy issues. The Cabinet also adopted a course of action which appeared to provide a way around the vociferous Canadian

objectives to renewal of the Alliance. The Lord Chancellor was instructed to look into the language of the treaty in the context of international law to determine whether the earlier notice given to the Japanese by Great Britain of its desire to reconsider the treaty's status constituted a formal "denunciation" of the treaty.<sup>104</sup> If the treaty had not been so denounced by one of the parties then it automatically continued in force beyond its ten year expiration date until denunciation by one of the parties. To no one's real surprise the Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead, ruled that the Anglo-Japanese Treaty had not been formally denounced. Therefore, the matter of renewal was not really up for discussion, and the Dominions were in no legal position to force the London government to cancel an existing long standing treaty. London had already received sufficient indication of Washington's willingness to consider the Pacific talks and felt that in view of this Japan, while still secure in its treaty link to Great Britain, could not easily refuse to join in such talks. In fact the Japanese government was not nearly as nervous about a change in the anglo-Japanese Alliance as the British were themselves. Although there was a militant faction within the government in Tokyo which opposed anything which hinted at concessions to western powers, Foreign Minister Shidehara had seen the necessity of preserving good relations with both London and Washington. He perceived that the Alliance was a

complicating factor and one which was no longer necessary to Japanese interests. As will be shown in the following chapter Japanese cooperation at the Washington Conference smoothed the way to the abrogation of the Alliance and its replacement by a four-power Pacific consultative pact.<sup>105</sup> The British government was reasonably confident that from these tripartite discussions a "way out" of the existing treaty could be found which would enable Britain to remain friendly with both Japan and the United States and which would satisfy the security concerns of Canada and the other Dominions. With the announcement of these Cabinet decisions to the Imperial Conference the role of the Dominions in the saga of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and its relations to American policy effectively ended. A real decision had been avoided. The status quo was to be maintained for the present, but a way had been opened for the development of a new policy to deal with a changed world and a different imperial situation.

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## CHAPTER THREE

ANGLO-AMERICAN NAVAL RIVALRY: TOWARD THE WASHINGTON  
CONFERENCE OF 1921

The two years which followed the close of the Paris Peace Conference had brought to the surface a number of new issues affecting the relations between Great Britain and the United States which had scarcely been touched on at Paris. As was shown in Chapter II the desirability of developing a coordinated Pacific policy was increasingly seen by both sides. Attitudes toward both China and Japan had to be re-examined in light of the post-war realities. Great Britain particularly saw the need for a new international conference involving at least the Pacific powers to consider structures for guaranteeing security in the region. But Pacific policy and the Japanese problem were not the only issues complicating Anglo-American relations in the 1920-21 period. The older and still unresolved friction over comparative naval strength was still very much alive, and from the American point of view probably the most serious issue requiring further discussion. This chapter looks at the revival of the "naval battle of Paris" and the underlying issues. American desire for a new naval conference and the British desire for talks about the Pacific security came together uneasily to produce the Washington Conference which opened in November 1921, a conference which acknowledged new realities in the sensitive balance of power between Great

Britain and the United States.

For the sake of clarity it will be useful in this chapter to review again the final years of the Wilson administration and the first year of the Harding administration to follow the development of naval policy specifically. There was a basic continuity of approach under both administrations in this area. The close link between Pacific policy and naval power was perceived by American leaders of both parties. The navy rivalry between the two powers had not abated significantly since the Paris Conference. As has been noted, the Wilson administration used the threat of an American naval building program to try to frighten the British into committing themselves to the League of Nations. The conclusion of the Paris Conference had not ended the determination of both British and American naval authorities to convince their governments of the necessity of maintaining an edge in naval superiority. The 1919-1920 period saw an escalation on both sides of the Atlantic of an attitude of naval belligerence. Each side claimed that its own naval planning was done "in the abstract," but clearly both sides were thinking in terms of a possible war with the other. Although a war between Japan and the United States over China was seen as the more immediately probable scenario the more general tensions between Great Britain and the United States over domination of world trade and the perennial problem of their differing



views on neutral trading rights were seen as sufficient reason to draw up practical plans for possible naval war against the rival.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL BOARD OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

In this and the succeeding chapters the role of the General Board of the U.S. Navy in formulating and verbalizing American naval objectives will become increasingly important. The General Board itself was the central planning organ of the U.S. Navy. It was a committee of up to twelve senior Admirals and chaired by their most senior member. Certain officials such as the Chief of Naval Operations served on the Board ex officio. Others were appointed by the civilian Secretary of the Navy. The Board had no executive authority, which was possessed exclusively by the Secretary and by the professional head, the Chief of Naval Operations, both appointed by and responsible to the President. Still, given the professional experience of its members its views on American naval strength and future needs bore great weight at a period when the Navy Secretary himself usually obtained his office more for political reasons than for naval knowledge. Unlike the British Board of Admiralty which included political and civil service members, the American General Board did not include the Secretary or any responsible officials. It viewed policy-making exclusively

from the professional angle.<sup>2</sup> A year after the close of the Paris Conference the General Board of the United States Navy in a report to the Secretary of the Navy expressed its fears of British dominance and American need for a navy "second to none."

Great Britain has come out the great gainer by the war, but with her gains are corresponding weaknesses...her national temperament has always been one of dominance. Her unequalled merchant fleet has granted her monopolistic control of international trade...with all the middle man's profits attached to small business. Her cables and radio systems reinforce her business advantage...we now challenge her with our new shipping, but as a nation we scarcely realize what we are doing. If we retain our merchant fleet and adhere to our declaration for a navy second to none, we can maintain ourselves without a war only by alliance to form a balance of power....<sup>3</sup>

In the years after Paris the United States Navy's newly emphasized role as protector and promoter of American commercial trade was the theme which was emerging much more strongly than the traditional task of protecting American shores and overseas possessions. Security seemed less of a concern than guaranteeing "fair competition." The commander of the U.S. Naval Force in the Atlantic in a speech in London in January 1921 spoke of the common ideals and political standards of Great Britain and the United States with the corresponding need for greater efforts at mutual understanding. He stressed the inevitability of British and American rivalry for foreign markets. The future of Anglo-American relations depended on an acceptance of competition as a "sporting proposition." Admiral Albert P. Niblack

warned that the United States was resolved now to take its place as a maritime nation, and its trade activities should not be viewed with suspicion.<sup>4</sup>

In the summer of 1921, especially after the announcement of a conference to be held in Washington on naval and Pacific matters in the autumn, U.S. naval authorities became increasingly concerned about possible concessions to the British and intensified their warnings to civilian authorities about the British threat to American interests. In response to the growing talk of a possible tripartite alliance between the United States, Great Britain, and Japan the General Board of the Navy firmly reminded the Secretary of the Navy that the American people would never support such an alliance, so contradictory to their traditions. It was necessary for the U.S. government to assure efficient naval and military strength so that the United States could stand on its own as "second to none." The policy of maintaining a position equal to the strongest naval power should become a permanent policy. As to statements that no war is conceivable between Britain and the United States, history showed that war between no two peoples could ever be termed "unthinkable."<sup>5</sup>

Members of the General Board submitted their thoughts as part of the Board's preparation of advice to the American delegation to the coming Washington Conference. Admiral William L. Rodgers felt that peaceful cooperation with Great

Britain might be possible, but he warned that the U.S. government should not agree to naval reductions until Great Britain showed some sign of "good faith," such as an agreement on absolute naval parity and renunciation of its claims to special commercial priorities in parts of the world. He noted that "...the navy is not to be regarded as a national burden but as an insurance of national business against international rivalry."<sup>6</sup> Admiral H.P. Huse saw the United States as the successor of Spain, France, and Germany, earlier rivals of Great Britain whom she eventually had to fight to secure her security and commercial superiority. Britain would never alter her determination to maintain world mercantile and naval supremacy. Admiral Huse pointed to the strained economic relations which already existed between Great Britain and the United States. The only way to assure good relations with the British was for the governments of the two nations to come to terms on the mercantile division of the world between them!<sup>7</sup>

The General Board did not underestimate the problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but they tended to see the Japanese problem as a secondary theme in the issue of Anglo-American relations, whereas the State Department and the diplomatists in general saw Japanese-American relations as the real problem, with Great Britain as a complicating factor in this relationship. Nevertheless both groups agreed on the importance of bringing about a termination of the Anglo-

Japanese Alliance. In an important statement of "official" Navy views the General Board reported to the Secretary of the Navy in August 1921 on its appraisal of British policy. In the Board's opinion Great Britain currently had four major objectives which should greatly concern the government of the United States: 1) control of world communications in radio and cable 2) domination of world markets 3) opposition to domination of the continent of Europe by any power 4) eventual cancellation of her debt to America. On this fourth point the Board emphasized that cancellation of the British war debt would amount to the U.S. government paying each year for 50% of the cost of new building for the British navy, a building program directed against the United States. The long standing British policy of controlling world markets, fuel supplies, and now communications as well had grown out of an alleged need for "self-preservation." Great Britain always shielded its greed "in the shadow of the policy of self-preservation." As for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the General Board viewed it as a further source of alienation between two nations who ought to be united on Pacific policy.

This alliance extends a more lawful influence over the term of years of peace than it will over the term of years of war; for it is the most subtle influence which could intervene between two nations racially akin and actuated in the main by the same aims and ideals. It serves only as a temporary solution for the Pacific and Far Eastern problems which would be better and more permanently solved, in the interest of the world at large, by the wise administration of sea power in the hands of an undivided anglo-Saxon race.<sup>8</sup>

BRITISH REACTIONS TO THE AMERICAN NAVAL BUILD-UP

On the British side the professional naval authorities were concerned about relations with the United States but far less suspicious about American policy than their American counterparts were about British policy. Nor was there any significant divergence between British Admiralty and Foreign Office views about the desirability of smooth relations with the United States. The Admiralty was concerned about the size of the American Navy, not because it saw a direct challenge to British interests, but because even maintenance of a "one-power standard" of naval parity would require a dangerously expensive building program if the Royal Navy intended to preserve parity with the expanding U.S. Navy into the 1920's. British prestige was at stake. As early as July 1919, soon after the Paris conference, the Admiralty Board had sent a memo to the Cabinet objecting to reductions in the number of battleships in the Royal Navy in view of the higher than anticipated number of such ships at fleet readiness in the U.S. Navy.

...the acceptance of this position would ... be regarded generally as the handing over of sea supremacy by the British Empire to the United States of America. The Admiralty concur that a war with the U.S.A. is improbable, but they consider that they would be failing in their duty if they did not recommend a policy of keeping the British Navy, upon which the Empire depends, at a strength at least equal to that of the U.S. Navy....

The Admiralty also noted that it was not yet clear exactly why the United States wanted such a large navy, but they felt

it might be an attempt to force League of Nations member states to agree to naval reductions.' This theme was one that would bedevil Anglo-American naval relations throughout the decade of the 1920's. Why did the United States insist on maintaining such a large navy? The British professed to see no need for it, given the limited American overseas responsibilities. The British had been for so long without a serious commercial rival that British naval thinking concentrated almost exclusively on the strategic and essentially offensive role of navies. They had failed to adequately appreciate the importance to American naval thought of the pre-war conflict with Britain over trade. The British could see no strategic or imperial need for the United States to have a large navy. The Americans by 1919 were not thinking of "commitments" of that kind at all. By late 1919 the Admiralty was beginning to see what American objectives were, but for many years both sides declined to bring the real issues of modern naval power to the surface of their discussions.

On August 18, 1919 the Cabinet had decided on budget reductions for the Royal Navy in spite of Admiralty warnings of the dangers involved in such action. In the following month the Admiralty sent another and fuller memo to the Cabinet asking for reconsideration of the reduction policy. The Board respected its view that such policy would leave Britain still supreme in European waters, but in a state of

"shared supremacy" with the United States over-all, a rough parity which would soon disappear with the age of British ships compared to new U.S. ships under construction. The memo stated:

...the fact remains that the passing of our sea supremacy, whether it is stated to be temporary or not, will make a profound impression throughout the Empire and may obviously have important effects on our prestige and our diplomatic and commercial interests....

The Admiralty acknowledged that formerly the United States did not constitute a factor in British calculations about the necessary size of its own navy, only because there was no practical way of effective naval cooperation between an American and a European power against Great Britain. Now, however, the issue was American power alone. The U.S. clearly intended to maintain a navy equal to that of Great Britain, and this was dangerous in view of American mercantile aspirations. The Admiralty's conclusions deserve to be quoted in full.

The United States are building up a Mercantile Marine with the idea of competing with Great Britain in the world carrying-trade. Avowedly, they propose to protect that trade with a strong Navy, and those who hold the responsibility for advice cannot afford to ignore the fact that conflict of interests may bring us into difficult relations with the United States in the same way as it has done with other powers in our history.... It is not suggested that this involves war between the United States and the British Empire. Having deprived us by peaceful means of the supremacy of the sea, their subsequent victories are probably destined to be commercial and diplomatic, but the effect of these upon our trade and empire maybe no less serious on this account....<sup>10</sup>



Nevertheless, the Cabinet's economy policy was not rescinded. The comparative figures on British and American commercial shipping in the months after the Treaty of Paris show that the government in London had reason to be concerned. The war years had seen Great Britain necessarily devote most of its ship-building capacity to naval construction for the war effort. During those same years in the United States a greatly expanded effort had been put into commercial construction. In 1913, the year before the war began in Europe, British yards had seen 688 commercial ships launched compared to 182 in the United States. In 1919, British yards produced 612 ships while in the United States 852 were launched. These merchant ships would require protection by an expanded U.S. naval power.<sup>11</sup> Faced with this situation the Admiralty necessarily had to push for a policy of mutual reductions and urge the government to initiate discussions with the government in Washington about limitations of naval power and of naval expenditures.

The Lloyd George government was anxious to prevent an expensive naval building race with the United States. However, the Prime Minister remembered all too well the tensions which had resulted from Anglo-American relations at the Paris Conference when the naval question had arisen. Was the time now ripe for a quiet approach to the United States government about talks on reducing naval building? Lord Grey, the new ambassador in Washington, was consulted. He

replied to the Prime Minister in November 1919 that the time still was not suitable. It was not desirable, Grey felt, to make any official inquiries of the Americans about prospects for reducing naval building and expenditures. The information they would give about their intentions would not be reliable, and the very act of inquiry would arouse U.S. suspicions of Great Britain and produce friction. Grey's hope was that reductions in British spending would be reciprocated.

I am convinced that the best course for us is to produce moderate navy estimates...in the expectation that example set by us will be followed here. Attempts to strike a bargain with the Americans in advance about navy estimates will have a contrary effect and stimulate agitation for the "biggest in the world" navy....<sup>12</sup>

A few weeks later as the Admiralty Board began to consider its budget estimates for 1920/21 the practical problem of equalling American naval strength became all too clear. A memo from the First Sea Lord to the members of the Board respecting the size and distribution of the British fleet dealt with the over-all position of the Royal Navy as compared with United States Navy. The comparative figures for the British and American battle fleets as of the end of 1919 were not in themselves alarming. Great Britain had a total combined number of battle ships and battle-cruisers of 42 to the American 16. Of much greater concern was the projected American naval building program approved in 1916. Under this plan the U.S. battle fleet by 1923 would reach 35

vessels compared to a projected British fleet of 43 by the same date. Already Congress was being urged in 1919 by the General Board to double the American building program. These U.S. vessels would be more modern, carry heavier armament, and be significantly superior to British battle fleet over all.<sup>13</sup> The First Lord could see only two solutions: to make a definite approach to the U.S. government with a view to naval limitations on a basis of material strength, or to undertake a greater naval building program to assure at least parity between the British and American navies. The Board agreed to report in this vein to the Cabinet. The First Lord indicated his intention of having talks with Lord Grey about naval relations with the Americans.<sup>14</sup> The memo sent to the Cabinet reported on the options mentioned above, but added the Admiralty view that a true offensive and defensive alliance by Great Britain with Japan was inconceivable. The best policy was some sort of entente with the United States, a link demanded by the ideals of both states for the achievement of joint goals. If an agreement with the Americans was not possible then the Admiralty memo concluded that the British government had to do everything to assure parity on the one-power standard, which should not in itself prejudice relations with the United States. Competition with the U.S.A. should be repugnant to all concerned on both sides.<sup>15</sup>

British government concerns about the American naval

building plans continued through 1920, but the object of concern was not so much the plans the United States might have for the use of this larger navy, but rather the domestic political necessity of maintaining equality with the Americans and the serious financial effects this would have on an uncertain British economy. Lord Grey's successor as ambassador in Washington, Sir Auckland Geddes, in a private letter to the Prime Minister warned:

...there is one further thing about which you should have no illusion, and that is that if we do not get some agreement with the States we are in for a most ruinous competition in naval armaments...I propose to pursue the subject and to take soundings, but of course it is impossible for the present administration really to do anything....<sup>16</sup>

The British took some comfort from the fact that neither the Republican or Democratic party platforms in the campaign of 1920 had put much emphasis on the big navy issue. A naval agreement with the outgoing Wilson administration had not been possible, with all of the suspicion and anxieties held over from the "naval battle of Paris", but the British government was determined to make every effort to create a better situation with the next American administration.

For all of his natural tendency to bombast and strong critical statements about the United States, Lloyd George knew well that Great Britain could not afford a naval race with the Americans, a race which both sides seemed to be moving toward in the final months of 1920. At a meeting of the Committee on Imperial Defense in December the Prime

Minister stated very forcefully the absolute necessity of accommodation with the Washington government on naval issues. A war with the United States he viewed as absolutely out of the question. Neither war nor a real naval competition was an economic possibility for Great Britain. At this same meeting Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War and Air, supported the Prime Minister's position on the need for an agreement with the Americans but raised the closely related question of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Could the two issues be separated in the mind of the Americans? Churchill recommended exploration of the whole question in terms of a Pacific settlement. One of the C.I.D.'s decisions at this meeting was to instruct Ambassador Geddes to continue discreet soundings in Washington on the matter of naval arms limitations and to return to London for consultations with government officials. Geddes, however, was told not to reveal in Washington the purpose of his return to London.<sup>17</sup>

The situation worsened publicly at least with the U.S. Navy Department's recommendation to Congress in December 1920 of a three-year building program of 88 additional vessels. The British Admiralty was already on record as supporting a British building program to keep pace with the Americans, if as seemed increasingly likely, no limitations agreement could be reached with the United States. Still the British government hoped to avoid the expense of the naval race. Lloyd George wanted as First Lord of the Admiralty someone

who got on well with the Americans and whose appointment would be seen by Washington as a sign of British interest in accommodation. He approached Lord Lee of Fareham about this appointment in February 1921. Lord Lee had an American wife and close links with many influential American politicians, especially in the Republican Party which was about to assume control in Washington. Lord Lee knew little of current naval policy in the British government, but he was genuinely alarmed by what he interpreted as a belligerent attitude toward the United States by the British government. In a letter to the Prime Minister regarding his own possible appointment to head the Admiralty Lord Lee went out of his way to state his pro-American stance.

...as I...understand the present Admiralty case, it is that we must equip ourselves immediately--and be ever prepared, at a moment's notice--for war with the United States. To that proposition I cannot assent...I feel that it would matter little which country eventually emerged victorious (in a military sense) from such an insane encounter--for both would be irretrievably ruined.... If a new First Lord is wanted who will base his policy upon a probable war with America, I am not the man for the job!<sup>18</sup>

Lord Lee's concerns about the policy of the Lloyd George government were apparently relieved, and he accepted appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty in February 1921.

Sir Auckland Geddes returned to London for discussions with the Cabinet and C.I.D. on the naval question and related American matters in February 1921. He gave a very pessimistic report on the possibility of any agreement with

the new American government or of any lasting arrangement with the Americans. He did not feel that it was the right moment to open discussions. Lord Lee took strong exception to the approach of Geddes whom he regarded as "overstrung and panicky." He disagreed with the Geddes appraisal of the chances of a meeting of minds with the Harding administration and felt this was the favorable moment for a fresh British overture on naval limitations. Lee pointed out that the new Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., was a personal friend of his. He offered to go to Washington in April under any pretext to sound out the Americans. A few days earlier Lord Lee had given a widely publicized speech before the Institute of Naval Architects in Glasgow on the need for a common Anglo-American naval policy, which he felt would stand him in good stead for a favorable reception in Washington. Lee stressed that talks and tentative agreements should take place before the London Imperial Conference in June so that meaningful Pacific decisions could be based on them.<sup>19</sup> The Cabinet did not take up the First Lord's offer to go as emissary to Washington, and in fact the Parliament in March voted funds for construction of four new dreadnoughts, a step toward continuation of the naval race he opposed.

#### REMOTE PREPARATIONS FOR AN ANGLO-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

Thus by the early summer of 1921 the question of naval

limitations was emerging as a second major theme in the story of the increasingly strained and complicated Anglo-American relations. The British government did not seem concerned about the implications of a larger U.S. Navy in itself as a threat to immediate British interests and objectives. Abandonment of equality with the U.S. in naval power would be the loss of a valuable symbol of imperial power which no London government could afford. Neither Washington nor London really knew what the other's concrete naval objectives were, and the developing race was becoming a disastrously expensive and dangerous exercise in status-seeking. The need for frank discussions between the two powers on issues of global policy became more obvious as the interrelations of Pacific and naval questions became clearer to both sides.

The Washington Conference of 1921-22 has been the subject of many detailed studies and has been examined from a number of different angles. Notable modern treatments would include those of John Chambers Vinson in 1955 and Thomas H. Buckley in 1970.<sup>20</sup> Buckley looks strictly at the American role in the process of the Washington Conference. He concentrates on presenting the conference as the best example of the practical realism of the diplomacy of Secretary Hughes, an emphasis on achievable goals rather than moral reconstruction of the world. Hughes saw that congressional support for big naval expansion was not forthcoming and opted for halting the arms race on the best



achievable terms. Buckley sees China policy and the Nine-Power Treaty as the weakest aspect of the Washington accords and points out the failure of the signatories to follow up on the "auspicious detente" achieved at Washington. Vinson's work concentrates on the role of the United States Senate in the treaty process. He sees the whole Washington conference as a manifestation of a renewed role of Congress in foreign affairs. The Senate's assertion of American traditions of peace, independence, and sovereignty led to the administration's achieving a set of agreements which for a time led to security without subordination to international organizations or to extreme navalism. As a significant new departure for the United States in the field of diplomacy it is probably not surprising that American historians have given the Washington Conference more attention than have British historians. For the latter the London Imperial Conference of 1921, which was so intertwined with the calling of the Washington Conference, has had greater interest. For purposes of this present study the details of the Washington Conference, its make-up, proceedings, resulting treaties, do not need to be re-examined. Viewed within the larger context of Anglo-American relations in the years following World War I the actual outcome of the conference is less significant than the fact that the conference was held at all. The calling of the conference, the differing goals for it held by Great Britain and the United States, and the determination by

both states for complex domestic and international political reasons that the conference should be a "success"--these are the major areas of interest for this study.

The advantages, even the necessity, of a serious conference between the United States and Great Britain (and probably Japan as well) were clear from the early months of 1921. As we have seen earlier the possibility of drawing the United States into a new tripartite Pacific agreement which would replace the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been broached to the new Harding administration by the British government very early. The generally "interested" response of Secretary of State Hughes certainly supported the need for future talks.

The Harding administration was also receiving pressure in the direction of a formal conference with the British and Japanese from another quarter. Congress was in the process of considering a resolution proposed by Senator William Borah which called on the President to convene a conference with Great Britain and Japan to consider a plan for naval limitations. The disarmament movement was very popular both in Congress and outside, combining as it did a traditional American suspicion of a military establishment and a love of peace with the normal desire to avoid higher taxes. The resolution was ironically originally attached as a rider to a naval appropriations bill which had not yet received action before the end of the pre-inaugural session of Congress. The

bill was revived in the special session of Congress called by President Harding in March 1921. The President, guided by his Secretary of State, regarded the Borah resolution as an unwarranted congressional interference in the executive prerogative to direct foreign policy; but the new Republican administration, whatever its real views on naval disarmament may have been, could not afford to appear to oppose a popular peace movement. Thus matters stood on the domestic front until June 1921.

It was certainly the clear understanding of the government in London that the United States was interested in a conference and even anxious to take the initiative in issuing invitations. In July 1921, shortly after the opening of the Imperial Conference, a Foreign Office spokesman was quoted as saying in reference to a future conference with the Americans:

Our whole attitude with regard to a conference amounts to this--that the idea of a conference has been canvassed in America during these last three or four months; ever since President Harding came into office. We have repeatedly informed the United States...that we should welcome a conference....<sup>21</sup>

Both President Harding and Secretary Hughes asserted in response to the Borah resolution that the administration had in fact been working toward such a conference during May and June 1921.<sup>22</sup> That such a conference might achieve success in producing a naval understanding between the United States and Great Britain was indicated by some indirect signs. The

Navy Department had circulated a proposal for establishing a "Grand Fleet" in the Pacific, essentially stripping the Atlantic fleet of all battleships and leaving only a scouting and control fleet in that area. All of the U.S. Navy's battle strength would be concentrated in the Pacific. In effect the Atlantic would be left to the British Navy's dominance.<sup>23</sup> Such a move by the United States could not be made without a clear naval agreement with Great Britain and a broad mutual understanding about policy goals and interests. John V. MacMurray, of the State Department Far Eastern Division, saw decided diplomatic advantages in the grand fleet idea. He commented to the Secretary of State that such a fleet distribution by the U.S. would cause the Japanese to think seriously about their actions, would encourage China, and most of all it would help Great Britain to find a way to end the Japanese Alliance and develop a new Pacific pact. The State Department notified the Navy Department somewhat cautiously that it did not feel it could veto the Pacific grand fleet proposal.<sup>24</sup> A few days later, however, President Harding postponed implementation of the proposal while allowing planning to continue. He felt it should be put off for a while with the enigmatic remark that it should wait "until we are ready to stand sponsor for such a demonstration as it will doubtless be construed to be."<sup>25</sup>

This whole idea of the U.S. leaving the Atlantic to the British and concentrating American naval power in the Pacific

was possibly related to information which had been received by the Navy Department from an unofficial contact with Lord Lee, the new British First Lord of the Admiralty, that Great Britain was prepared to concentrate its fleet in the Atlantic and to accept naval parity with the United States. Navy Secretary Edwin Denby, however, did not officially reply to these overtures nor even inform the State Department about them until much later.<sup>26</sup>

It was in this atmosphere of hopefulness about the possibility of formal talks between the United States and Great Britain which could relieve the very real tensions of diplomatic and naval antagonisms between the two powers that the Imperial conference had convened in London in late June 1921. As we have already seen in Chapter II, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance became the critical issue of the Conference. The United States has been referred to as the "ghost" at the Imperial Conference of 1921, because its views on imperial policy and its possible reactions to decisions of the Conference were a major factor to be considered by the participating members. As Michael Fry has made clear in his book Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918-22 the London Imperial Conference of 1921 was a major arena of conflict between two schools of thought on the future of imperial foreign policy. The "Atlanticists" looked to a new era of English-speaking unity in the guidance of world affairs and stressed the critical need for cooperation with

the United States. Traditionalists still looked to an independent British policy based essentially on European relationships and old balance of power concepts. These policy-makers, including the Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, were suspicious of the United States as a fickle and unreliable partner. The issue of renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance brought the two schools of thought into open conflict and both looked for support to Dominion representatives at the Imperial Conference.<sup>27</sup>

The Imperial Conference agreed to modify the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which would remain in force for another year beginning July 13, 1921. The Conference further agreed on July 2, 1921 that a conference should be called

to consider all essential matters bearing upon the Far East and the Pacific Ocean with a view to arriving at a common understanding designed to assure settlement by peaceful means, the elimination of arms, etc.

The Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was instructed to inquire of the United States, Japan, and China about their reactions to this suggestion of a conference.<sup>28</sup>

At this point the question of who actually called the conference becomes mired in a complex of political "one-upmanship" both British and American. As early as June 28th Lord Curzon had discussed a possible Pacific and naval conference with the American ambassador in London, Colonel George Harvey. Harvey was a political crony of President

Harding with no previous diplomatic experience and little diplomatic sensitivity. Secretary of State Hughes had no confidence in him and little respect, which resulted in little or no effective communication between the State Department in Washington and the American Embassy in London. Harvey was completely unaware of the discussions which had already taken place between Secretary Hughes and Sir Auckland Geddes in Washington during which the strong opposition of the United States government to renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been made clear. In his talk with Lord Curzon on June 28 Harvey had actually told the Foreign Secretary that the Alliance was a matter of no concern to his government, which was quite prepared to accept whatever decision the British government made about it. Curzon had cabled this information to Sir Auckland Geddes in Washington on the following day. On July 2 Geddes cabled Curzon that the views expressed by Harvey were entirely incorrect and reminding him of his previous reports to London on his own talks with Secretary Hughes. Geddes further counselled that

...not too much reliability...be placed  
on the above expressions of view by the  
American Ambassador, who is the subject  
of some reserve on the part of the  
Secretary of State....<sup>29</sup>

On July 5th, following the endorsement by the Imperial Conference of the calling of a conference on Pacific and naval matters Lord Curzon again saw Ambassador Harvey and requested that he propose to Washington that President

Harding invite the powers concerned to take part in such a conference. This was a request approved by the British Cabinet. Since Curzon apparently indicated that an immediate reply was not expected Harvey prepared to report the matter to Washington by regular diplomatic pouch. Two days later Curzon informed Harvey that a reply was needed very soon because the Prime Minister was being pressed in the House of Commons for a statement about any forthcoming conference and had to reply definitely by July 11th. Harvey accordingly cabled the request to the Secretary of State on July 8th.<sup>30</sup> Just a few hours before receiving this cable from Harvey Secretary Hughes had himself cabled to London instructing Harvey to "ascertain informally whether it would be agreeable to the British government to be invited by this government to participate in a conference on limitation of armament, the conference to be held in Washington at a mutually convenient time...." The Secretary added significantly "...for your information only: It is probable that formal invitation will not be sent until after Congress passes the naval bill with the Borah Resolution."<sup>31</sup>

Ambassador Harvey, having been rebuked by Hughes earlier for his failure to communicate to the government in London the real views of the American government on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, now became an enthusiastic supporter of the naval conference project, determined to "win points" for the American side. In his cable cited above of July 8 to



Hughes passing on Curzon's inquiry he urged the Secretary to get the President to seize the moment and issue a call for a naval conference before Lloyd George made his statement on July 11 in Parliament. Harvey suspected the Prime Minister was out to steal the President's thunder.

It is true that the Prime Minister is being pressed for a reply but I suppose he is not averse to acquiring credit for initiating a movement which may prove to be the most far reaching and effective ever known for world peace...the President would then be in a position...of acting at the instigation of Lloyd George, thereby depriving himself of his rightful credit and antagonizing all anti-British elements in the United States....

Harvey wanted the Prime Minister's statement to be an acceptance of a Harding initiative and not the other way around.<sup>32</sup> The suggestion was taken. Hughes informed the President about the new developments on the following day and a draft was cabled to Harvey for submission to the British government for its comments and suggestions. Since the text included reference to the Pacific questions as well as to the real American interest, naval limitations, as topics for the conference, the British government was satisfied and happy to acquiesce in the American initiative.

By acting when he did Hughes had scored a useful double victory. In the area of Anglo-American relations the American leadership in the cause of naval limitations and Pacific settlements was assured. In the area of domestic American politics the July 10th date was also significant. Although Congress had passed the Borah resolution on June

29th it did not take effect until the naval bill to which it was attached was signed into law, which President Harding was scheduled to do on July 12th. By issuing the call for the conference on July 10 Harding was acting in accordance with the expressed spirit of Congress, but on his own executive initiative in the area of foreign policy and not as instructed by congressional action. A fine point perhaps, but one that appealed to the mind of a constitutional lawyer like Hughes.

In spite of the Ambassador's partly justifiable suspicions of the motivations of Lloyd George the British government collectively at least had no desire to steal the diplomatic glory away from the United States in the matter of calling the conference. Curzon especially, in spite of his own pronounced distaste for the American way of conducting foreign policy, was consistent in his urging of the American initiative. Lord Lee at the Admiralty had also seen the necessity for American initiative in the matter of naval limitation talks. Ambassador Geddes had warned the Foreign Office that the American public had a most reverential trust in Secretary Hughes, and that Hughes in turn had a strong suspicion against any idea emanating from Downing street. His professional advisers in the State Department, Geddes reported, were generally anti-British. Far better under these circumstances to let Washington take the initiative.<sup>33</sup> The British Cabinet in its discussions of a location for a

conference had in fact urged a Washington initiative and a Washington location on the grounds that the object of a conference for the British was to lead the U.S. to make naval concessions and abandon its naval build-up. It would not be expedient in that case that a British-based conference be held. Results in American would be better.<sup>34</sup> Considering also the British hope that the conference would produce a way out of the difficult Japanese Alliance it was definitely to British advantage that another power actually call the conference into being which prevented its being seen by Japan as a British initiative.<sup>35</sup> However, Harvey was right about Lloyd George, whose statement in Parliament on July 11, while announcing the American invitation to a conference, stressed British leadership in the whole matter, referring to Harding's invitation as a satisfactory answer to earlier British suggestions. Later the Prime Minister tended to claim that his idea all along had been to let President Harding have the honor of acting as father of the Washington Conference whereas the British were the true originators of the idea.<sup>36</sup>

THE CALLING OF THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AND THE ISSUE  
OF A "PRELIMINARY MEETING"

President Harding's invitation to Great Britain and Japan and other interested Pacific powers to participate in an international conference to meet in Washington to discuss

naval issues and Far Eastern problems seemed to be a decisive new stroke in the direction of a positive foreign policy on the part of the United States. To the American government the acceptance in principle of the call to this conference by the British government was a great new victory for American diplomacy and an implied acknowledgement by Great Britain of a continuing leadership role by the United States. The truth of British involvement in the whole process preparatory to Harding's invitation to the conference was not known to the general public or to Congress and not fully appreciated even by the Harding administration. While the invitation to the Washington Conference represented broad agreement on the part of the United States and Great Britain about the future direction of policy it did not represent unanimity of goals. The debate over the need for or desirability of a "preliminary conference" to prepare for the later Washington Conference which began almost immediately after the Harding invitation and which continued with much heat for a month or more showed that there was still some distance between the interests and emphasis of Washington and London.

The primary cause of American interest in a conference was the hope of achieving naval limitations and of responding positively but in a controlled way to Senate initiatives in this direction and to the growing popular peace movement. The British government had always been less interested in these goals for a conference than it was in resolving Far

Eastern policy questions, protection of its interests in the Pacific and East Asia and a satisfactory termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>37</sup> Secretary Hughes had always recognized the linkage between both sets of issues, naval and Far Eastern, and for that reason and with the conscious intent to embrace the British concerns both sets had been included in Harding's official invitations to a Washington Conference. The British government, while agreeing with its own Admiralty officials on the need for the naval agreements which could result, felt more pressure from the Dominions governments and its own Foreign Office to emphasize the Far Eastern goals. Thus Prime Minister Lloyd George in his speech in the House of Commons on July 11th, 1921 announcing President Harding's initiative spoke of the President's desire for "preliminary talks" to take place very soon on Far Eastern matters to prepare the ground for the later Washington Conference. In fact such a suggestion was never part of the American proposal nor was it included in Harding's message.

On the following day the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, proposed to Ambassador Harvey that a preparatory conference on Pacific affairs be held almost immediately in London, while the Imperial Conference was still in progress. This would allow Dominion representatives to participate in the discussions with the United States and Japan. The later Washington talks could then concentrate on disarmament.

Secretary of State Hughes replied, at this point still calmly, that the proposal was unacceptable because it would reduce the general significance of the Washington Conference.<sup>38</sup> Hughes hoped that this reply would end this matter and that planning the agenda for the future Washington Conference could proceed in the usual way through normal channels of communication. He had received word on July 13 that the Japanese government was willing to attend a conference on naval disarmament but as to the inclusion of Far Eastern issues it could not reply until it knew what the exact agenda would be. Hughes instructed Harvey in London to consult the British Foreign Office about suggestions the British might already have made to the Japanese as agenda items. The Secretary of State stated the U.S. position on the issues to be discussed: the open door policy, equal commercial opportunity in China, territorial control of narcotics traffic.<sup>39</sup>

Lord Curzon had seriously underestimated the psychological importance to the Americans of keeping the forthcoming conference an American inspired and controlled affair. He reported to Sir Auckland Geddes in Washington his disappointment at the news of American government opposition to a preliminary conference in London. Curzon denied any British attempt to scuttle President Harding's conference. He felt that Hughes' proposed agenda was far too ambitious and focussed too narrowly on Chinese affairs. The conference

was likely to drag on interminably and never get down to naval issues at all unless the Far Eastern topics were trimmed and well prepared. Curzon also noted in a memo on this topic that this whole Far Eastern conference idea had originated in the framework of the London Imperial Conference. He had agreed to the Harding proposal only because he assumed that talks in London would precede it to work out the basic agreements to be finalized at the Washington Conference.<sup>40</sup> Secretary Hughes steadfastly insisted that he had agreed to add the Far Eastern items to the American proposal for a naval disarmament conference out of concession to British desires, but that at no time had a separate preliminary conference ever been planned. To his mind both sides had agreed to one conference with not more than informal preliminary consultations to agree on the agenda.<sup>41</sup>

On July 15 Ambassador Harvey again cabled Hughes that Lord Curzon still felt that a preliminary conference on the Pacific was essential. The British government felt that the Dominion prime ministers needed to be part of these discussions which would not be possible in Washington in the fall or winter of 1921. Hughes replied that he was willing to try to adjust the date of the Washington meeting to accommodate the Dominion representatives, but he still opposed an earlier and separate Pacific conference. The British were suggesting a date for this preliminary

conference as early as August 15, which the Secretary of State utterly rejected on the grounds of insufficient preparation time. He also felt it very important that no such meeting be held in London. Only in Washington could any such conference be in close touch with United States opinion which would be essential for its success. Any "preliminary conference" would lessen the value and significance of the Washington Conference.<sup>42</sup>

In British government circles there was growing concern that the broad membership and highly public character of the Washington Conference as envisioned by the Americans would prevent the kind of negotiation which was necessary for reaching a real tripartite understanding between Great Britain, the United States, and Japan. Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War, wrote to the Prime Minister that the location of the preliminary Pacific Conference was not nearly as important as its actually taking place. He did not feel that France and Italy (also invited to the Washington Conference) should be in on the Pacific talks. Only Great Britain, United States, and Japan should be present; France and Italy would sell out Britain's interests to curry favor with the United States or Japan. Lloyd George replied expressing his exasperation with the Americans. It would be less than useless to hold a poorly prepared conference in November 1921 in Washington with only second rate delegations there.



...the whole American conception is amateurish in the extreme. If they had one man there with any previous experience in international affairs they would never have made this muddle....<sup>43</sup>

The Prime Minister warmed to his theme of American mishandling of the Pacific discussions at the 25th meeting of the Imperial Conference held on July 19.

Whether the President of the United States of America and his advisors there are running this purely as a political stunt in America--well, I am afraid it bears a good deal of the characteristics of American diplomacy and that it has too little regard for the susceptibilities of other nations. They have their own politics, but they forget other nations also have their own politics....<sup>44</sup>

The following session of the Imperial Conference was devoted almost entirely to the formulation of an official response of the British Empire to President Harding's invitation and to the linkage between disarmament and Pacific questions in the future conference. Lloyd George held that he had made clear to Ambassador Harvey from the beginning what Britain's position was, viz. an early Pacific conference in London to be followed by a later naval conference in Washington. The United States government was insisting on one conference in Washington. The Prime Minister felt this would be disastrous. It would last too long, the principal ministers would not be able to stay for all of it, Dominion representatives would not be able to go at all. He felt that the American government was sabotaging the conference before it started. Prime Minister Meighen of Canada defended the American government. He felt it was clear that Washington

had never suggested or envisioned two conferences. Lloyd George continued with a statement expressing fear that Japan would not attend a Pacific conference held in Washington under American auspices.<sup>45</sup>

On July 24, 1921 his Majesty's Government formally replied to the United States Government accepting the invitation of the President of the United States to a conference on Naval limitations and Pacific questions and praising the President's "bold initiative." In its reply, however, the British government clearly stated its feeling that preliminary talks ought to be held on Pacific questions by the principal Pacific powers in order to prepare the way for the main conference and to assure its success. The British proposed a meeting at Honolulu, Hawaii in the early fall 1921, even if necessary deferring the opening of the major conference at Washington until spring 1922.<sup>46</sup>

So insistent was the British government on a preliminary conference that the idea of holding it in London had been given up. Perhaps the Americans would be less suspicious and more open to the idea if the preliminary talks were also on American soil. In addition to the Honolulu suggestion which the Americans might see as impractical a new idea arose in London. Lloyd George and the Dominion Prime Ministers, immediately following the close of the Imperial Conference in London in mid-August, would sail by a speedy warship to Bar Harbor, Maine for a week's conference. There were good train

connections between Washington and Bar Harbor, and indeed many State Department officials maintained summer homes there. In these pleasant vacation surroundings far from the summer heat of Washington and in an atmosphere of informality the preliminary conference could take place pleasantly and painlessly! This latest plan was conveyed through Harvey to Secretary Hughes on July 27. With firmness which showed signs of losing patience, the Secretary of State replied that this latest proposal was unwise and impractical. For the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the premiers of the principal Dominions of the British Empire to be conveyed at record speed by a battleship of the Royal Navy across the Atlantic to a rendez-vous with U.S. officials at a New England vacation resort for a one-week meeting would hardly be classified as an "informal consultation"! This would in fact be a major conference which would attract world attention and suspicion. Harvey was to tell Lord Curzon that the United States government remained firm that no preliminary conference was even part of the Harding proposal and that the President's plan should be followed.<sup>47</sup>

Exchanges between Lord Curzon in London and Sir Auckland Geddes, British Ambassador in Washington place much of the blame for the confusion over the preliminary conference on Ambassador Harvey, who is accused of stirring up suspicions in the State Department about British motives in wanting this conference.<sup>48</sup> However inept Harvey may have been, in this

case he does not seem to have done much more than convey messages. The basic suspicion that Great Britain was out to steal American thunder by upstaging the future Washington Conference was certainly the idea of Secretary Hughes himself, who needed no encouragement to be wary of British proposals. The British government continued to lament "... a deplorable misunderstanding on the part of the American Secretary of State on the motives of the British government in asking for these conversations...." especially in view of the fact that there were clear understandings between the British government and the American ambassador.<sup>49</sup>

By the beginning of August 1921 the British had given up the pursuit of a preliminary conference in a sense of frustration and weariness and with a strong feeling that as a result of American small mindedness on this point the future Washington Conference was doomed. Lord Curzon's final cable to Sir Auckland Geddes on the subject summarizes the whole story from London's point of view.

It seems useless now to prolong correspondence on a subject which has been so overlaid with so much misunderstanding, and prejudiced by such deplorable but utterly unwarranted suspicion...the idea that His Majesty's Government ever wished to rob President Harding of a single leaf of his laurels for originating the conference on disarmament or to hoodwink the American government is a fantastic chimera. Disarmament has scarcely been mentioned here, because the conference upon it was regarded as an accepted major premise of the whole situation, and the President's initiative was treated as unchallenged. Any attempt to insinuate the contrary can only have been the result of malice or stupidity. Our sole desire was to assist the President in an object

with which is bound up...the future peace of the East.... It was with this intention that we made the suggestions contained in my previous telegrams. The American Government not having seen their way to accept them, we have no desire to persist; and we shall...best escape all chance of further misunderstanding if we leave the exclusive responsibility for the Conference to the Government who initiated it and for whose success we shall continue to hope....

A similar note of regret but resigned acquiescence about the American opposition to a preliminary conference to facilitate the later disarmament conference was also sounded in the final report of the London Imperial Conference of 1921.<sup>50</sup>

Lord Curzon's reference to "malice or stupidity" being behind the failure to achieve agreement on a preliminary conference only looked at the surface problem. Beneath the clash of personalities and diplomatic styles were more fundamental differences of interest and approach. As we have already seen Great Britain was primarily interested in a Far Eastern conference between the three major Pacific powers. The United States was chiefly interested in a naval disarmament conference embracing a larger number of states. The British preferred secret talks between the principals to settle major questions, leaving only details and ceremonial public blessings to general conferences.

The Americans, still wary of the evils of "secret diplomacy", wanted all secrets kept until a public conference could reveal the hands of all the players and open negotiations could occur. Secretary Hughes and the Harding Republican administration were anxious to show that the

United States could play a positive yet independent role in international affairs, while avoiding any hint of secret machinations, which many Americans still felt had swallowed up Wilson at the Paris Conference. For them issues were settled during conferences and not beforehand. The more experienced British naturally felt that conferences could be dangerous places, unless the script was written beforehand and the characters all knew their roles. While willing to trust to luck at an unprepared conference on naval matters which were secondary to them, the British wanted to be very clear on the outcome in Far Eastern matters which were much more vital.

The differences in emphasis on goals and general approach to the conference between the governments in London and Washington largely resulted from the differing pressures both were experiencing. The British government had seen clearly at the London Imperial Conference of 1921 that a new Pacific policy was needed embracing a resolution of the future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It had a kind of moral mandate from the Dominions to use this forthcoming American-sponsored conference to do something on the Pacific question. Naval reductions of course and an amicable settlement with America on this matter would greatly ease their defense concerns and allow financial economies. The U.S. government on the other hand had called the conference in response to Congressional disarmament pressures as

represented by the Borah resolution in the Senate. Naval limitations had to be the primary goal of the conference. Hughes was interested in settling Pacific policy too, but Congressional and general public suspicion of any U.S. involvement in treaty arrangements would not support a conference mainly for a discussion of Pacific policy. Harding and Hughes wanted a broad "peace conference" with open and positive results to contrast with the apparent "failure" of Wilson's conference at Paris. If agreement on Pacific policy could be achieved under the wings of a naval limitations conference, so much the better, but the conference could not be widely advertised to the American public as a policy conference between great powers only.

GOOD FEELING RESTORED: IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE  
WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The Anglo-American tensions of the summer of 1921 over the true authorship of the Washington Conference itself and over the need for a preliminary conference on Far Eastern questions happily and very quickly seemed to dissolve as autumn came and the November scheduled opening of the conference approached. That amiable and even close relations were so soon restored resulted from the practical realization by both the United States and Great Britain that a successful

conference was an absolute necessity. Whatever differences in style and approach existed between the major English-speaking powers both knew well that the third party to be at the conference, Japan, was their real problem. Only an essential unity of purpose between the Washington and London governments could lead to an effective and secure new order in the Pacific embracing Japan and guaranteeing the basic interests of all. The "success factor" became a guiding element in the final preparations for the Washington Conference and during its proceedings. Ironically both Washington and London had reasons for wanting the Conference to be an American success story and to have the world view it in that light. The Harding administration wanted to demonstrate a model for a positive internationalism outside the League of Nations structure and to reinvolve the United States in world affairs in a way acceptable to domestic politics. Great Britain in what amounted almost to a new "diplomatic revolution" in its imperial affairs had come to see its own security to be closely bound to the exercise and direction of American power in world affairs. Both the State Department and the Foreign Office were determined to keep control of their own country's policies during the conference against all opponents, foreign and domestic, to assure a successful outcome for the talks.

Once the "preliminary conference crisis" of July and August 1921 was over, with relief in Washington and



resignation in London, a new "era of good feeling" dawned. On September 20, 1921 Secretary of State Hughes had a long interview with Ambassador Sir Auckland Geddes during which he was cordial but assumed a somewhat magisterial tone as host of the forthcoming Washington Conference. He graciously granted a British request for six delegates to the Conference so that the Dominions and India could be officially represented. In response to a question for Geddes about the order of the conference agenda--would naval matters or Pacific matters be taken up first--Hughes replied that work would go on simultaneously through two committees. In a concession to known British desires the Secretary also said he intended that separate meetings with only the representatives of Great Britain, United States, and Japan present would take place to facilitate the proceedings of the full public conference and to replace the preliminary talks the British had so clearly wanted but which Washington had refused. Hughes said little about naval questions at all. He lectured Geddes on the need for reaching practical results in the Far East. The time had come he felt to put "constant sentiments and cordial expressions" on the line. There was a need for a common Anglo-American understanding on Japan. Did Great Britain intend to support Japan in its aggressive attitudes in the Far East? When Geddes replied that Britain did not feel that she had to choose between old and new friends Hughes was quick to retort that it was a matter of

whether Great Britain intended to follow an old policy which would encourage Japan to follow policies of its own detrimental to the interests of everyone. The United States had no aggressive intentions regarding Japan, and the latter had no valid cause for fears.<sup>51</sup>

An unusually positive and enthusiastic Geddes cabled the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, on the following day. He noted:

There has been a complete change in the atmosphere at the State Department...the soreness and suspicion engendered in July...over the conference proposal have vanished.... Influences in public life which favour Anglo-American cooperation are in the ascendant....

The ambassador was confident that possibilities for a successful tripartite Pacific pact were excellent. He even felt that the American government would be open to tariff and war debt adjustments if the United States got the sort of agreements it wanted at the Conference. He concluded:

This situation is better than I had almost dared to hope for when the misunderstandings of July confused the whole issue. I think that ground which was then lost...has been fully recovered and trust that no effort will now be spared on our part to make the conference the success which I am convinced it can be made if we are so determined.<sup>52</sup>

On the same day Geddes sent to Curzon a longer informational letter, analyzing recent trends in American policy and attitudes, for use by the British delegates to the Washington Conference. In it he reviewed the positive growth of the "English-speaking unity" concept in America. The ambassador

noted that the actions of the British delegates to the Washington Conference would either encourage or discourage this movement. Unless some untoward incident were to occur before the Conference met

the meeting will convene in an atmosphere charged, so far as American public opinion is concerned, with the expectation that Britain and America will find themselves standing together as the leaders of the world in the direction of world peace....<sup>53</sup>

The ambassador's strong hint that the choice of the British Empire delegates to the Conference and the impression that they would make there would be crucial factors in its success was clearly followed up by the British government. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was preoccupied with Irish affairs in the autumn of 1921 and with the beginnings of those negotiations with Sinn Fein which ultimately led to the establishment of the Irish Free State. This development was in itself a very helpful element in the improvement of Anglo-American relations. Lloyd George could therefore not spare the time and probably lacked the interest to come to the United States for several weeks. For similar reasons the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, could not attend. Thus the British Empire delegation was to be headed by Lord Balfour, former foreign secretary and prime minister and one-time special envoy to the United States after World War I. Balfour, always regarded as "America's favorite Englishman", was again called out of retirement to take up a sensitive post relating to Americans. With him was Lord Lee of

Fareham, First Lord of the Admiralty, and the most outspoken pro-American member of the Cabinet. These choices were clear signals of British intentions to have good relations with the Americans and hopefully good results.

The goals of Great Britain for the Washington Conference were clear. In a Foreign Office memo prepared for the British Empire delegation to the conference it was stated that there were only two "desiderata": 1) a tripartite agreement or at least a declaration of common policy on Pacific matters by the United States, Great Britain and Japan 2) a naval agreement regarding the Pacific. Everything else was regarded as secondary. The delegates were advised to expect that the Americans would want to avoid all "touchy" issues in order to have the conference appear to be a success.<sup>54</sup> The British Foreign Office expected China to pressure the Americans into an anti-Japanese stance at the Conference which if pushed too far would result in complete failure to reach a Pacific settlement. The U.S. State Department, the British felt, could be counted on to do the wrong thing! However, there was hope, as another Foreign Office paper put it:

(It is) not unlikely that the United States Government will set greater store by the outward success of the Conference than by a real settlement of the Pacific question, in which case it is highly probable that they will only be too ready to eschew all dangerous topics.... It can hardly be said that the United States Government follow any clearly thought-out line of policy in the Far East...their conduct is often erratic, inconsistent, and bears the stamp of political

inexperience....<sup>55</sup>

Sir Arthur Balfour had learned indirectly through David Jayne Hill, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, that the Harding administration put very great store on the success of the Washington Conference. Hill felt that the conference would be a first step toward a new American internationalism and toward an "Association of Nations" which would have a non-compulsory character and eventually replace the League of Nations.<sup>56</sup> To encourage this new attitude toward a spirit of cooperation in the Americans would have very positive results for the British.

Secretary of State Hughes was even more anxious than the British for a genuine American diplomatic success at the Washington Conference. There were decided advantages to be gained in the area of domestic politics as well as in improvement of America's image in international affairs. The achievement of any kind of meaningful limitation of naval building would go far toward bringing the increasingly strong and vocal disarmament movement in the country behind the Harding administration and reduce government expenditures significantly. A Far Eastern agreement would relieve serious tensions with both Japan and Great Britain and would demonstrate American willingness to play a positive role in international cooperation, altering the public image in the world current since the Paris Conference of the United States as a selfish, obstructionist, and isolationist power.

President Harding had made public statements of a characteristically vague nature about an "association of nations" of the kind referred to above in the letter to Sir Arthur Balfour through David Jayne Hill. Even as late as the opening of the Washington Conference he had again made reference to the idea, and he seems to have done this on his own and without any encouragement from the Secretary of State. Although press comments were favorable to the new association idea reactions from the ever suspicious "irreconcilable" element of the Senate made it clear that permanent conciliatory structures, even of a voluntary nature were not to be easily sold in the U.S. Hughes downplayed the association idea in favor of more limited goals in order to keep Republicans unified behind any treaties which would emerge from the conference and to avoid attacks by isolationist Democrats and progressive Republicans alike.<sup>57</sup>

UNITED STATES NAVY SEEKS A VOICE IN AMERICAN PROPOSALS  
FOR THE CONFERENCE

A more serious problem for Hughes in assuring a successful conference was the U.S. Navy. He was determined that the naval rivalries which had played such a key role in embittering Anglo-American relations at Paris and had prevented reaching of any naval accords there should not resurface at Washington. Though one of the avowed purposes for summoning the conference was naval limitations Hughes was

determined to keep the planning and control of the conference in the hands of the State Department. The professional navy leadership represented by the General Board of the Navy were highly suspicious of the goals and possible outcomes of the forthcoming conference and continued to harbor real animosities toward the British. The Navy was anxious to have its say.

Within a month of the formal calling of the conference staff officers sent a joint memo to the Chief of Naval Operations noting that press reports indicated that naval reductions were to be a major element in the future talks and yet the Department of State had made no overtures to the Navy Department, which was vitally concerned with these matters. It was essential, they felt, that the naval point of view be presented and urged the Secretary of the Navy to raise this question in the Cabinet.<sup>58</sup> Reports from the General Board of the Navy submitted to the Secretary of the Navy in the course of the summer of 1921 showed clearly the continuing strong anti-British suspicions of the naval professionals. Great Britain's determination to preserve commercial dominance to the detriment of American interests was a constant naval theme. The anti-American intent of the Anglo-Japanese alliance was regularly asserted. All of which led to the General Board's insistence that American "national needs" demanded a navy equal in size and strength to that of Great Britain, a position which would remain firm and

complicate Anglo-U.S. naval relations in the future as it had since Paris.<sup>59</sup> It was not only in strictly naval affairs that the professional naval leadership wanted to have a voice. In the Far Eastern policy discussions to be held at the Washington Conference the General Board also felt the Navy should be represented. The Board warned the Secretary of the Navy that peace in the Far East and the safety of China absolutely depended on the ability of the United States to put a predominant force in the western Pacific. Admiral Pratt gave several reasons why naval technical advisors should be present at any Far Eastern discussions at the Conference. Among these were: 1) China--the need to control it in case of a war with Japan 2) importance to the navy of the petroleum resources of the Dutch East Indies 3) the importance of Guam and the Philippines to the Navy in carrying out its functions.<sup>60</sup>

Secretary of the Navy Denby was caught between the demands of his professional advisors for American naval strength and the pressures of the State Department for proposals which would lead to a successful conference and long-term peace. He played little role in the pre-Conference debates. Hughes relied on Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt Jr., and on Admirals Robert E. Coontz and William V. Pratt, all of whom were sympathetic to these broader international goals, for information about what was being said and done in the Navy Department and in the General



Board. He also used former Senator George Sutherland as a go-between with Navy officials. Early in October 1921 the General Board reported as required by a mandate from the Secretary of the Navy on a plan for the limitation of naval armaments. Assistant Secretary Roosevelt reported to Hughes that the plan was most unsatisfactory and continued to stress the "national needs" concept. Hughes was determined to present a plan which called for reduction of actual armaments as well as limits on future building. As a result, the Secretary of the Navy refused to approve and submit the first General Board plan and ordered a new one prepared. When this was finally produced it differed little from the first one and pointedly noted that its modifications, as ordered by the Secretary, assumed "...that no alliance inimical to the interests of the United States will exist subsequent to the Conference...."<sup>61</sup>

The plan for naval limitations which Secretary of State Hughes ultimately presented on behalf of the United States as the opening of the Washington Conference thus had only grudging approval and forced acquiescence by the professional navy leadership. Hughes had resolved to break out of the "national needs" concept by calling for a cessation of building, for freezing navies at their 1921 level as a basis for any agreement and of preserving that ratio. Only nine people knew the details of the Hughes proposal before it was laid before the Conference. The Secretary was careful to

preserve secrecy to prevent a naval frontal attack from developing before the positive public reaction he expected from his proposal could be generated in support. Copies of the plan for distribution at the Conference were mimeographed by a trusted Admiral (Coontz or Pratt) and kept in Hughes' private office safe.<sup>62</sup>

The conflict in policy between State and Navy Departments did not go undetected by the British. Soon after the opening of the Conference and the presentation of the Hughes plan, Maurice Hankey, secretary of the British delegation, reported to the Prime Minister:

...I hear from a private and reliable source that the proposals originally put up by the American naval experts were far from sufficient and that there was a battle royal between them and the administration before their assent was secured to the drastic policy of scrapping the old and new vessels enunciated by Hughes in his speech....<sup>63</sup>

#### THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AND ITS AGREEMENTS

Even after the opening of the Washington Conference on November 12, 1921 the differing primary goals of Great Britain and the United States continued to be evident, but equally evident was the desire of both to reach agreements acceptable to both powers. A Pacific settlement had always been the chief British goal. Shortly after his arrival in Washington and on the eve of the Conference opening Lord Balfour wrote in a secret dispatch to the Prime Minister that he felt Pacific problems needed to be dealt with before naval questions. He was convinced more than ever that the Anglo-

Japanese Alliance would be a key factor. It was most unwelcome in American circles, and its continued existence would be a block to any naval limitations agreement. Balfour intended to propose a tripartite Pacific agreement to replace it.<sup>64</sup> The British seemed genuinely surprised to discover that American opinion still believed that Britain wanted to retain the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, whereas the opposite was true. Hankey reported to Lloyd George from Washington:

(Lee) has gathered...that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance is, as we all knew, intensely unpopular. What we did not know, however, is that they (U.S. leaders) all have the impression that we are out to renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance in its old form, and they have not appreciated our own intense desire for a tripartite agreement if it can be found.... Once we get rid of this I foresee no special difficulty in securing an agreement....<sup>65</sup>

Securing American adherence to any Pacific pact necessarily involved a greater British sensitivity to American attitudes toward China. The British saw that it was incumbent upon them to induce the Japanese to settle the Shantung question and to demonstrate good will toward China. Balfour learned from talks with members of the American conference delegation that the U.S. was keenly interested in the return of Shantung to China. This issue had been an important factor in American rejection of the League covenant. A settlement of the matter would have to precede any arrangement between U.S., Great Britain, and Japan.<sup>66</sup>

Hankey also reported to Lloyd George that:

I have never concealed from you...that I believe

Shantung to be the key to the whole situation. If the Shantung negotiations fail, it makes the passage of the Quadruple Arrangement through the Senate very much more perilous...<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand there were signs that the United States was itself moving away from automatic support for Chinese policy objectives in the direction of achieving closer rapport with Great Britain. The Chinese were insisting that cancellation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance be part of the formal agenda of The Washington Conference. Secretary of State Hughes made it very clear to the Chinese Minister (Sze) before the opening of the conference that such demands by China were inappropriate and would not be supported by the United States. It would only lead to protests by Great Britain and Japan. Only the powers concerned could hold such discussions. The United States felt that the atmosphere of the conference would be conducive to such informal and hopefully productive discussions of the future shape of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>68</sup>

Hughes and the American delegation joined with the British delegates at the Washington Conference as facilitators of the Chinese-Japanese talks, outside the formal conference structure. Pressure from Hughes certainly convinced the government in Peking to ultimately accept Japan's terms on Shantung, though these were far short of original Chinese hopes. Hughes also fully realized that China had powerful friends in the Senate and that without an "officially" satisfied China no new Far Eastern agreement

could achieve Senate approval.<sup>69</sup>

The Pacific pact was the result of a meeting of interests of both Great Britain and the United States which was achieved at the Washington Conference with relatively little difficulty. Both sides for differing reasons were anxious to see the Anglo-Japanese Alliance go. Both Great Britain and Japan were open to including the United States in a new arrangement. The United States wanted no special treaty arrangements with either or both of these powers. The broad agreement for Pacific security fit American ideals exactly. Its style and content were seen to strike at the roots of the old diplomacy of power politics of the type that had produced the Anglo-Japanese alliance.<sup>70</sup> The inclusion of France in what had been conceived of by Balfour as a tripartite pact was an American idea. Hughes was anxious to include France for several reasons. First it would please France and improve U.S.-French relations at a time when they were strained. Also it would "sweeten the pill" for a reluctant Senate if the French, generally more popular there than the British and Japanese, were a part of the agreement. Finally Hughes foresaw the possibility of 2-1 splits on Pacific issues with the U.S. in the minority in a tripartite discussion. France was much more likely to side with the U.S.<sup>71</sup> Great Britain and Japan accepted the proposal without opposition. Not only did Hughes succeed in seeing an end to the suspected Anglo-Japanese Alliance but through the

language of the new Quadruple Pact he managed to rid the U.S. of two of its own "understandings" with Japan which he disliked, the Root-Takahira agreement and the secret Lansing-Ishii protocol.

In the area of naval policy surprising levels of agreement between Great Britain and the United States were discovered. But in fact this discovery should not have been all that surprising. All three of the major naval powers present at Washington were under similar financial pressures which dictated a need for limitations and reductions in naval expenditure. In Great Britain the Lloyd George government had restored to the Treasury its control over all spending, a power somewhat reduced during the war years. Retrenchment was called for in view of the enormous war debt. The Cabinet finance committee in 1919 had called for reduction of the fleet to pre-war levels and insisted on the principle of the "10 Year Rule", viz. that all government planning should operate on the assumption of no war for 10 years. The admiralty budget of 1918/19 was £334 million. In 1919/20 it was cut to £147 million. In 1920/21 it was set at £84 million. Although the Admiralty had eventually to accept this new order of things it still saw a need for new battleship construction to keep pace with the American building program adopted in 1916. For the British government a naval limitation agreement would be a convenient way of avoiding unpleasant domestic political decisions on future

naval policy.

For the Harding administration the domestic pressures for economy were similar. The American economy was only just recovering from the post-war recession. Reduction in government spending was seen as a way of helping recovery. The Borah resolution calling on Harding to call a naval conference had been a response to the Naval Appropriations Bill for 1921/22 which included funds for more ships under the 1916 program. The administration was anxious to find a way of reducing naval spending without appearing to abandon the policy of parity of strength with Great Britain.

Even the Japanese, feeling that their role in the western Pacific was threatened by an Anglo-American naval build-up had for domestic economic reasons put its plans for massive naval expansion on hold, pending an assessment of the actual British and American construction plans. The Japanese government was anxious to avoid huge naval expenditures. An expansion of the Japanese fleet with new and technologically superior ships was a threat to both Great Britain and the United States, a majority of whose ships were aging and approaching obsolescence. Both powers were willing not only to limit new construction but to scrap old ships as a means of reducing Japan's claims to new construction to preserve a ratio with the total fleets of Great Britain and the U.S.<sup>72</sup> Secretary of State Hughes had taken the conference and the world by storm with his dramatic proposal in his opening

address as chairman of the conference for a holiday on naval construction and his expression of American willingness to actually reduce the size of the existing navy by destruction of ships to reach an agreed ratio level. In appraising the work of the Washington Conference Balfour gave full credit to Hughes for setting a tone which led to success. In reporting to Lloyd George later on in the conference proceedings Balfour commented:

All these (efforts) together might have failed of their effect had it not been for the bold statement in regard to the limitation of naval armament announced by the chairman at the very first meeting. This was conceived in a spirit of high statesmanship which raised the whole level of our debates. In no other way would it have been possible, in my judgement, to have discussed the endless technical details of the Naval Agreement without being lost in a morass of petty disputations. By no other approach could we have reached the self denying policy with regard to naval bases in the Pacific which provides one of the great securities for naval peace in that vast area....

Balfour went on to state that the British Empire delegation had endeavored to follow the American example in a spirit of confidence and cooperation.<sup>73</sup>

The British Cabinet had instructed the Empire delegates in Washington to go along with the holiday on new naval construction. Indeed when the Americans themselves began to have second thoughts about aspects of the Hughes proposal they turned to the British for advice. Meetings between the two delegations helped to elucidate doubtful points, but the British went out of their way not to appear in any way



hostile to the holiday concept. Hankey reassured Lloyd George that the delegates were adhering to Cabinet policy on the matter.<sup>74</sup>

It was Balfour who succeeded in mediating between the U.S. and Japan on the question of naval ratio. By getting the Americans to agree not to fortify the Pacific Islands he also got Japan to accept the 10:10:6 naval ratio rather than the 10:10:7 which the Japanese had been pushing for. Balfour regarded this ratio as merely a fair arrangement for the present, not a permanent reflection of each nation's actual needs.<sup>75</sup> The question of "national needs" was still to haunt the Washington Conference and never to be completely resolved.

The British were very willing to accept the American proposal for imposing the 10:10:6 ratio for capital ships and aircraft carriers. The Americans were desirous of extending the ratio to all classes of warships, including those of a fleet auxiliary nature such as cruisers. The British delegation at an internal caucus to determine its own policy debated the whole matter of Great Britain's need for cruisers to protect sea routes, a purely defensive role. Cruisers as "insurance of vital national interests" was raised as an issue for reflection and resolution. Balfour notified the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, that the delegation intended to propose in effect two classes of cruisers. For large cruisers with a maximum of 10,000 tons, intended for fleet

purposes the British would agree to the 10:10:6 ratio, if the U.S. would agree to the British claim for a considerable number of smaller cruisers (possibly 50) "above this ratio" for defense of commerce.<sup>76</sup> Not to be completely outdone by the Americans in their public commitment to naval disarmament Lord Lee on behalf of the British Empire delegates proposed total abolition of the submarine. This went far beyond the American desire merely to preserve a ratio in the number of submarines. Nor were the Americans very happy about this British suggestion, which at once received warm approval in the American press and appeared to put the British in the position of better understanding the peaceful aspirations of the American people than did the Harding administration itself.

In the end it was France who played an unintended useful role in preserving Anglo-U.S. amity on naval issues at the Washington Conference. By its own demands on naval policy France got both Great Britain and the United States off the hook on potentially touchy matters. Balfour was able to report with some relief to Lloyd George early in 1922 that:

...the French, on the 29th of December, refused to accept the limits proposed by the United States for auxiliary combatant craft and submarines, and no agreement on these two subjects will be arrived at, as far as I can see, by the Washington Conference....<sup>77</sup>

Success in itself was the primary goal for the Washington Conference for both Britain and the United States. In the early weeks of the conference Maurice Hankey continued

to urge the Prime Minister to make at least a brief personal appearance in Washington for public relations purposes. He assured Lloyd George that the U.S. delegates kept harping on the theme of improved Anglo-American relations which would spill over from a successful conference into settlement of other sticky issues between the two nations.

I have an idea that in their minds they have the question of the debt...but if we succeed...in establishing relations, they will be in a much stronger position to deal with influences such as the Standard Oil Company which are working against us all over the world.... The great work that you could do here would be to intensify the good feeling with the administration and with the people....<sup>78</sup>

The limited treaties which ultimately emerged as the finished products of the Washington Conference certainly indicated "success" of a type. The British were very happy at the outcome for both Far Eastern policy and naval limitations of a non-threatening variety. Sir Auckland Geddes in a final report on the Conference to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was able to state the true value of the meeting as follows:

While France has lost and Japan has gained in American estimation, the most striking result of the Conference has been its effect on Anglo-American relations. The American public has witnessed the spectacle of America apparently finding a greater and more sustained support of her policies from Great Britain than from any other power...on the submarine question the British delegation are freely said to have better gauged the trend of American opinion....more accurately than the American Delegates themselves. It has...been demonstrated that the British and American approach to the questions discussed and the British and American method of negotiation are

almost identical....<sup>79</sup>

The Washington Conference was the culmination of a period of more than two years of adjustment in the relations between the United States and Great Britain, a period which could on the surface be viewed as successful for both sides. Regardless of the long term effects of the agreements reached at the Washington Conference the very fact that the talks were held at all and came to amicable conclusions demonstrated to the world that the United States was prepared to play a positive if independent role in international affairs. The Harding administration showed American openness to cooperation outside the League of Nations structure and a practical approach to creating harmony in the world economic community.<sup>80</sup> The Republican administration had shown that it could, unlike its Democratic predecessor, take the lead in international discussions without surrender of principles or servitude to European interests. The United States had apparently seized the leadership of a world peace and disarmament movement. The British and Japanese had been detached at long last. A realistic attitude toward China and Japan had been reached. The formerly unilateral Open Door Policy was now enshrined in international treaties.<sup>81</sup>

Great Britain too had apparently achieved much at the Washington Conference. She had stood at the parting of the ways in 1921 in terms of her Far Eastern policy. Apparently forced to choose between the old and the new in diplomatic

links between the security of the Japanese relationship or the volatility of the American relationship, Great Britain succeeded in transcending this antithesis and establishing a new synthesis of relationships. London realized the inevitability of its links to the United States. The long-range security of its Empire lay in cooperation with the uncooperative Americans.<sup>82</sup> Through a policy of prudent leading of the Americans disguised as enthusiastic following the British government had helped to achieve better relations between the two states than had existed since before World War I. This had required great patience and considerable self-effacement for the London government, but there were great expectations for even more positive results of this new rapprochement. The embarrassment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was gone and without hard feelings. Naval economies and the avoidance of a new and costly arms race seemed possible after the Washington Conference.

Certainly the frictions of Paris had been avoided, which was in itself a good. But had the hard questions really been grappled with? How deep was this new found accord between Washington and London? Beneath the diplomatic smoothness of the State Department and Secretary of State Hughes who had engineered the American contribution to a successful Washington Conference still lay the decidedly troubled waters of naval rivalry and potential trade conflict. The suspicions and the foot-dragging of the Navy Department and

the General Board of the Navy in Washington showed that the "naval battle of Paris" was always ripe for renewal. The forces had never been allowed to engage at Washington. The modern navy with its self-proclaimed role as protector of national commerce had to be concerned about expansion of markets, extension of trade lanes, neutral rights in time of war. To professional navy men it was a matter of surprise and horror that the United States at the Washington Conference over their protests had agreed to scrap ships without getting any agreement on the old issue of neutral rights. This question remained the major unsolved problem of Anglo-American relations. As long as this business remained unfinished naval men could and would continue to demand a navy of a size commensurate with the navy's old and new responsibilities.<sup>83</sup> A great shadow over the future had already been cast at the Washington Conference itself when Balfour had made his suggestion about two categories of cruisers with limits only on the larger numbers of smaller "defensive" cruisers to protect trade. The concept of "national needs" which so annoyed Secretary Hughes in his search for agreement had never really gone away. As the following chapters will show, between the apparent concession of naval parity at Washington and the strategic necessities of the British Admiralty lay the seeds of Anglo-American naval difficulties for the next decade.<sup>84</sup> The cruiser issue raised by Balfour at the conference could be neatly side-

stepped for the moment as a source of Anglo-American tension due to the opposition of France. It was, however, to prove to be a critically important issue in the next decade. The question of parity in cruisers was not to be easily resolved. Behind it lurked the still critical question of trade rivalry, neutral trading rights, and the larger issue of the exact meaning of "parity" between fleets. A temporary check on naval rivalry was achieved at Washington. Not many years would pass, however, before it became plain that the settlement of the naval parity issue in the capital ship class had merely resulted in stimulating rivalry in the unrestricted classes of warship--cruisers, destroyers, and submarines.<sup>85</sup> The atmosphere at the beginning of 1922, as the delegates to the Washington Conference departed for home was decidedly better than had been the case in 1919 after Paris. The British and Americans had met as equals in the company of a group of other interested states, some "more equal than others" in relation to the topics to be discussed. A successful relief of tensions had been the main goal at Washington, not as at Paris the construction of a new world. In the Far East and in naval rivalry limited agreements had been achieved which did in fact reduce tensions for a while. Had a new era in diplomacy begun? The economic factors which lay behind Far Eastern and naval rivalries had not been and could not have been resolved at the Washington Conference. Nor had the personalities of the nations involved changed.

The level and quality of the debate was changed after 1921,  
but the fundamental problems remained.



## Notes for Chapter III

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#225-103:4. On the question of petroleum supplies the U.S. Navy and the government in general were particularly concerned at this time. The Anglo-French San Remo Agreement of 1920 had excluded all but British and French companies from obtaining leases to oil fields in Iraq. Only in 1924 did the U.S. force Britain to an opening in that area to American firms. Also in 1920 the Netherlands government had passed a new mining law excluding all but Dutch-owned companies from exploiting mineral resources in the Dutch East Indies, a policy not reversed until 1927. See Stephen D. Krasner, Defending the National Interest (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

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## CHAPTER FOUR

FROM WASHINGTON TO GENEVA, 1922-1927: THE BREAKDOWN OF  
ANGLO-AMERICAN ACCORD

The close of the Washington Conference brought to an end a period of imaginative initiative by the Department of State in the field of Anglo-American relations. President Harding, though not knowledgeable in foreign affairs, had broad internationalist instincts and allowed his administration's policy to be led by Secretary of State Hughes. The State Department definitely held the ascendancy in the formulation of policy regarding Great Britain. Harding's successor, Calvin Coolidge, lacked the interest which even Harding had in the area of foreign relations and also the sense of deference to Secretary Hughes. The replacement of the latter by Frank Kellogg in March 1925 brought a change in the role of the State Department. Kellogg lacked the vision and the skills of Hughes, and without strong leadership at State the shaping of policy relating to naval armaments shifted to the Navy Department, and within that department to the General Board, the appropriate "experts" in the opinion of Coolidge and Kellogg. This Chapter deals with the years between 1922 and 1927 during which in the U.S. there was a subtle but real shift in attitudes and direction of events toward a more nationalist and defensive posture. The Navy department and its professionals viewed the Washington Conference agreements with regret, as a battle lost in the continuing "war" for

naval supremacy. They looked now for a regrouping of forces, new strategy where necessary, and new determination to win the internal struggle to shape American policy.

The years following the close of the Washington Conference saw American naval professionals begin to look more concretely at the expression of broad policy in actual strategic goals and the implementation of those goals through naval construction programs of a particular design. Discussions and inevitable clashes with the British during the 1920's often seemed mired in the intricacies of ship size and design. Diplomats became frustrated over the concentration of their naval colleagues on such "details", but behind these apparently minor matters lay a set of policy objectives held by the Navy Department and its professional advisers on the General Board.

No comprehensive official statement of the objectives of U.S. Naval policy was ever developed in the 1920's, but there were a number of general assumed goals. American strategic needs were defense of its two coasts, defense of the Panama Canal, security in the Caribbean for the sake of the first two objectives, insurance of uninterrupted shipping and trade, thus the ability to break any blockade, and finally protection of the Philippines.

World War I had clearly revealed the key role of the navy in blockade policy. If the United States had resisted British war-time blockade of Europe the war would have been



lost by the Allies. The "naval battle of Paris" in 1919 showed that American navalists knew this and were determined never to be victims of blockade again. Japanese acquisition of the former German possessions in the Pacific had been a blow to U.S. Navy policy regarding protection of the Philippines. The Navy strongly wished to fortify Guam and to improve its bases in the Philippines. The Washington Treaties of 1922 forbade fortification of those areas, leaving Hawaii as the western-most American base for its fleet. With Manila 5,000 miles from Pearl Harbor the Navy needed ships with long-range cruising capacity and thus of heavier weight and larger size.

By 1922 the minimum naval standard for the U.S. Navy, i.e. battle fleet parity with Great Britain alone, was adequate only to protect coastal, Caribbean, and Panama Canal interests. The maximum standard, i.e. a two-power standard in numbers of ships with Great Britain and Japan, was not really adequate to give the U.S. effective dominance of both its coasts, the Caribbean, and in the far western Pacific.

Throughout the 1920's Japan was the focus of naval policy, though in presenting its needs to Congress the Navy could not compare its strength only to Japan and expect the appropriations for construction that it wanted. Thus its constantly offered comparisons with Great Britain as a "substitute foe."

The Washington Treaties had stymied the Navy as far as

capital ships and Pacific bases were concerned, but had left unregulated the matter of fast cruisers and submarines, the weapons of a "guerre de course" involving shipping. American power would have to be developed in these areas in ways capable of meeting the Navy's strategic objectives around the world.

By 1930 and the London Conference with which this dissertation ends the State Department and even many naval professionals had concluded that the large cruiser issue itself was no longer critical because the Philippines were essentially indefensible short of massive spending, which a Congress considering Filipino independence was unlikely to favor. The often apparently petty squabbles between American and British naval professionals and the two governments which this chapter deals with do indeed reflect underlying real strategic concerns.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1922, a month after the close of the Washington Conference, Professor James Q. Dealey delivered the annual lecture on world affairs to the graduating class of young naval officers at the Naval War College in Washington. Dealey, born in England in 1861 had a distinguished academic career in the United States, serving on the faculty at Brown University in history and international relations. He became a popular writer of articles on politics, sociology, and foreign policy. His sympathies were strongly with the "Big Navy" advocates and

thus he was appointed lecturer at the Naval War College and served from 1916 to 1928, leaving to assume the editorship of the Dallas News. Dealey entitled his 1922 address "Our National Policies as affected by the results of the Conference on Limitation of Armaments." The extent to which Professor Dealey actually influenced naval thinking is of course impossible to gauge, but his startlingly clear portrayal of the role of the United States in the future of geopolitics placed the future of the Navy as an instrument of national policy in context for the rising leaders of the U.S. Navy. His remarks deserve to be summarized here.

Dealey began by pointing up the significance of the fact that the powers concerned with Far Eastern security had met in Washington at the invitation of the United States and not of either Great Britain or the League of Nations. American leadership in the Pacific was recognized; henceforth the League would be essentially a European security agency. The League, under British control, would be a center for discussion of European problems. The other two centers of international debate and decision-making would be the Pan-American Union, already under United States leadership, and the new entente of Far Eastern powers. In this last group the United States should strive to take the lead, because the world's history henceforth would center in the Pacific.

Should the U.S. be able to attain leadership, then the Anglo-American nations, for a few generations at least, would have it in their power to guide into peaceful commercial directions the energies

of all the world....

Dealey viewed the Washington Conference accords between Great Britain and the United States as an agreement to equal sharing of sea power and a British commitment to follow American policy leads in China. The Washington Conference had been "a great triumph for the American policy of settling differences through discussion, arbitration, and compromise...." The end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had made possible friendly relations in the Pacific between the United States and the British Empire in the Australasian region. Dealey answered possible criticisms of American treaty involvement in the Pacific by saying that America's traditional policy of non-entanglement had never been seen as applying to the Pacific, but only to Europe. He saw now a need for the American and British governments to work together on a policy of "watchful waiting" regarding Japan, particularly as a factor in China policy. American commercial interests in China definitely called for a revival of the Chinese Consortium to replace Japanese investment there.<sup>2</sup>

The young naval officers who listened to Professor Dealey in February 1922 and to other similar lectures during their tenure at the Naval War College had apparently come to agree with the idea that the future of world power was in the Pacific and that, therefore, the future of American policy lay with the U.S. Navy. The class thesis for the Naval War

College class of 1923 (which graduated in September 1922) was "Policy--In its relation to War: with special reference to U.S. policy in the Pacific." The papers submitted by the graduates on this subject generally accepted America's new role and deprecated the naval policy decisions of the Washington Conference which prevented the building up of bases in the Western Pacific which would have enabled the U.S. Navy to exert its strength against aggressors. The writers called for an active naval building campaign.<sup>3</sup>

NAVY DOMINANCE IN AMERICAN POLICY-MAKING AFTER THE  
WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The thrust of naval policy as far as the professional navy was concerned was taking shape very rapidly in the post-Washington Conference era. The future young officers who listened to Professor Dealey at the Naval War College may have adopted some of his rosy Anglo-Saxon unity concepts about naval and commercial cooperation but clearly the senior officers on the General Board did not. They agreed on the future role of the Navy in American policy, but their overriding concern was British power and the need to equal and surpass it.

The civilian leadership of the Navy Department during these years of its ascendancy in policy direction was of a mixed character. Harding's Secretary of the Navy, Edwin Denby, had been a political associate of the President's, but

had no skill either in naval affairs or administration. He became deeply implicated in the Tea Pot Dome scandal over the sale of oil leases and resigned in February 1924 to avoid possible impeachment. Coolidge appointed the competent but uninspired Curtis Wilbur to head the department for the rest of his administration. Not one to challenge ideas and estimates of his professional naval advisors Wilbur left much of the liaison work with the admirals to his Assistant Secretary, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who like his father in the same post, energetically supported the General Board in its big navy, anti-limitations policies. The Board in these years included a number of strong personalities such as the two Chiefs of Naval Operations, Admirals William L. Rodgers and Edward W. Eberle. Admiral Hilary P. Jones, Commander of the Atlantic fleet, and Admiral Frank H. Schofield, head of the War Plans Division, were articulate and outspoken representatives of the general naval Anglophobia and future delegates to naval conferences. Board members Admirals Mark Bristol, William Phelps, and Fiske Bradley were also ready speech makers before Congressional committees or citizens groups to spread the big navy gospel. In a report to the Secretary of the Navy in March 1922 the General Board already endorsed the "Navy second to none" policy. The report gave comparative figures on size and condition of the U.S. Navy and the British Royal Navy. The Washington Treaty had established parity only in capital ships. In cruisers Great

Britain was far ahead. In destroyers the United States had an edge. In submarines the British and Americans were about equal. In merchant shipping the British were absolutely dominant. All of these figures led the General Board to see the United States as far behind in a race for over-all parity with Great Britain, a fact in itself more than sufficient justification for the Navy's advocacy of a "building to strength" program for the 1920's.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1922 the General Board issued an overview report on the purposes and functions of the modern navy which pursued the theme of the need for "a navy second to none." The Board hoped that confidence and trust in the Washington Conference agreements would not lead to premature and rash disarmament. The permitted size of world navies might have been lowered, but their purposes had not changed. The key role now for the Navy according to the collective mind of the General Board was not only defense and maintenance of peace through strength, but also the guarantee of free use of the seas by American commerce. American prosperity depended on this. A year later in a supplement to this report the General Board found that tensions in the world had not relaxed. In spite of the Washington agreements and other international agencies and accords force still prevailed in the world. A nation's economic prosperity depended on aggressive commercial competition, and the nation's merchant fleet needed to be protected by a strong Navy.<sup>5</sup> This concern

for protection of the commercial fleet was also reflected in the production by the Naval War College in July 1922 of a "proposed code of maritime law," based on a text prepared for the State Department in 1915 for use at the Third Hague Conference, but never discussed. This revised text reflected American experiences during and before the war and showed a major concern for the commercial rights of neutrals. This War College document, while not a major item in the story of the developing tension with Great Britain in official naval circles, still reveals a critical underlying concern. Protection of American shipping in peace and war was now a main theme of big navy apologists in the United States. A determination never to permit the kind of interference of the 1914-17 period was strong. The question of a possible codification of maritime law arises in the next chapter in the run-up to the London Naval Conference of 1930. Great Britain became open to concessions to avoid a strictly defined code of this type. The U.S. attitudes also changed as its own potential power over other neutral trade in a case of all-out war became clearer.<sup>6</sup>

Professional naval leadership in the United States, almost always backed by the civilian Secretaries of the Navy in the 1920's, was consistently and profoundly concerned about the apparent propaganda victory which Great Britain had achieved at the Washington Conference. The rest of the world (and a good many Americans) seemed to believe that the



British had conceded full naval parity whereas they had only agreed to parity in the heavy and most expensive battleships. Naval leaders were worried that even the State Department seemed to believe that this was only a technicality and that naval equality with Britain was now a settled issue. The General Board and the Naval War College all during 1922 continued to pour out warning reports about British superiority. The officers at the War College completed a strategy study "in the event of war between the United States and Great Britain," which showed American inferiority in virtually all naval categories. Admiral Sims commented on this report to Secretary Denby:

Hence the popular idea, which is apparently the official idea, that Great Britain by the terms of the recent Conference has taken on practical equality with us is far from being a fact, and is so erroneous that it is believed to be dangerous to the national safety not to recognize it.<sup>7</sup>

THE SHIP IMPROVEMENTS CONTROVERSY: AMERICAN SUSPICIONS  
AND THE ROLE OF THE "BIG NAVY" LOBBY, 1922-24

Naval fears and suspicion of Great Britain were never very far below the surface during the years after the Washington Conference. How seriously the American admirals believed in the possibility of a future war with Britain is difficult to gauge, but clearly, if they were to present a convincing case for increased expenditure on naval construction to an increasingly "pacifist" public and an always parsimonious Congress, it was only Britain that could

be offered as a standard of meaningful comparison. It is in this context that the "gun turret controversy" of 1922-23 makes sense as a mole-hill which nearly became a mountain.

All the Navy reports during 1922 had played on the theme of American inferiority. In November 1922 the General Board again reported to the Secretary of the Navy comparing the strength of the U.S. vs. the British capital fleets, especially in terms of gun ranges etc. Naturally the report found the American fleet to be decidedly deficient. How could the situation be rectified? No new battleships could be laid down for 10 years by virtue of the Washington treaties. The Board report stated that modernization of existing American vessels could go far toward bringing them to true parity with the British. The Board recommended appropriate elevation of turret guns and heavier armaments and deck protection.<sup>8</sup>

Naval Intelligence had been keeping watch on British navy yards for some time and monitored government statements in Britain itself about naval construction or reconstruction. Reports from the U.S. naval attaché in London to the Navy Department about possible British alterations and improvements on its older battleships provided the Department with what it considered as "justification" for its own budget requests for ship improvements. Hints were dropped in Congress by big navy supporters about British violations of the Washington Treaty which made American efforts to

modernize absolutely essential. Secretary of State Hughes, preparing to give a major address on foreign policy one year after the close of the Washington Conference, had heard the "rumours" of Treaty violations and requested Navy Secretary Denby to provide him with pertinent facts. Denby replied that the Navy Department had no information about any power violating Treaty provisions. He noted, however, that Great Britain had made improvements on her older ships, whereas the U.S. had merely built its permitted quota of new ships. He reported the General Board's recommendation, which had been submitted to Congress, for a modernization program to help achieve true parity with the British in capital ships.<sup>9</sup>

Relying on this information from the Navy Department Secretary of State Hughes in a speech in New Haven on 29 December 1922 stated that Great Britain was making alterations in elevations of turret guns on its battleships, something which was not allowed under the provisions of the Washington Treaty. This speech coupled with similar statements by Navy Secretary Denby to a House appropriations committee opened a three-month war of words between London and Washington. The British government absolutely denied the allegations made by the U.S. government about treaty violations. Hughes became suspicious that the Navy Department had led him into a trap. Documentation was demanded all around. Much correspondence followed between the Office of Naval Intelligence, the naval attaché in

London, and the Navy and State Departments. The British Ambassador, Sir Auckland Geddes, insisted that the only alterations done to Royal Navy vessels since the Washington Treaty were those already begun before the war ever ended. In view of the prestige of Hughes as the father of the Washington Treaties the Foreign Office demanded an official retraction from him of the allegations against Great Britain in his speech of December 29, which were calculated in London's view to create unrest in relations between two friendly powers, both signatories to the Washington Treaty. Sir Auckland Geddes recognized that Hughes himself had been taken in by the naval lobby and noted to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon:

I propose to draw his attention to these statements by naval officers holding responsible positions in the American government and to ask whether nothing can be done to put a stop to what appears to be an anti-British campaign emanating from American naval circles...harmful to the good relations so happily prevailing between our two countries.<sup>10</sup>

With all investigations completed Hughes was forced rather embarrassedly to conclude that there had been no Treaty violations and that he had been misled by the Navy Department. On March 20, 1923 Secretary Hughes issued a formal statement of correction, noting that the earlier charges by himself and other American officials had been based on incorrect information. The controversy, though superficial as to the issues, left an unpleasant feeling all around. The "Washington spirit" seemed to have rapidly

dissipated, and all unnecessarily from the point of view of the diplomats. Hughes was confirmed in his own view that his State Department alone had to be the formulator of foreign policy and was not to be guided by other departments with issues and objectives of their own.<sup>11</sup>

The controversy over naval improvements did not go away easily. Occasional press reports continued to suggest that Great Britain had made or was in the process of making alterations which were not allowed under the Washington Treaty and which placed the American Navy at a disadvantage. The situation in fact became strangely reversed when the Navy Department in its annual report for 1923 indicated plans for the use of a large appropriation (\$6,500,000) previously made to increase the gun elevation on many of its ships. Presumably the navy professionals felt that enough suspicion had been raised about British gun improvements that Congress and the public would accept what might otherwise have been construed as an American violation of treaty provisions. The British Ambassador was quick to catch the significance of the Navy Department plans and to lodge a protest with the Secretary of State about this projected violation of the spirit and probably of the letter of the Washington Treaty. He urged the United States not to become the leader in a new naval arms race! Secretary Hughes referred the British protest to President Coolidge and to Navy Secretary Denby, adding his own statement of opinion that these proposed ship

improvements were not necessary in relation to British or Japanese naval power. The Bureau of the Budget replied to Secretary Hughes that the Navy Department had no authority to use the appropriation in the way indicated without a further authorization by Congress.<sup>12</sup> Navy Secretary Denby expressed the official navy view. He disagreed with the British charge that the proposed alterations involved reconstruction of a type prohibited by the Washington Treaties. It only involved an equalizing of American range power with that possessed by the British, in the spirit of the Treaty. Hughes repeated his view to the House Committee on Naval Affairs. He felt that even if the Navy's plans did not strictly constitute treaty violations they were unnecessary and likely to provoke undesirable competition.<sup>13</sup> For the moment the plans were shelved.

The British government was anxious to prevent this side-ways movement into a new arms competition. In the summer of 1924 notes were sent to both the United States and Japan proposing a moratorium on all gun improvements or modifications during the period of the Washington Treaty. Japan was anxious to know what American reaction to the proposal would be before replying herself. But in spite of repeated British requests for a reply the government in Washington never formally responded and only answered that the matter was "under study."<sup>14</sup>

In spite of these rough passages in Anglo-American naval

relations in 1923 that same year did see one happy settlement between the two powers in a different but related area. The complicated story of the war reparations and the British War debts to the United States is outside the scope of this dissertation, although it did relate broadly to the question of competition between the economies of the two nations. The British government viewed American insistence on repayment of the war debt at a time when Britain itself was unable to collect significant war reparations from Germany or debt repayment from its European allies as an effort by the American government and business community to keep Britain in a debtor relationship and retard recovery. Stanley Baldwin, chancellor of the exchequer in the Boman Law government, headed a delegation to Washington in December 1922 which arrived at a plan for debt repayment satisfactory to the American government. Convincing the Cabinet in London of the fairness of the plan proved more difficult, but by July 1923 the British government had accepted the plan, and the debt issue was settled.<sup>15</sup>

The departure of Sir Auckland Geddes as British Ambassador to Washington in the spring of 1924 brought the possibility of a change of tone in Anglo-American relations. Sir Auckland had scarcely been able to conceal his disdain for things American and his near-contempt for the officials of the Harding and Coolidge administrations. Secretary of State Hughes clearly found it difficult to separate his

official and personal feelings about Sir Auckland. January 1924 saw the advent of a new government in London, the first Labour administration of Ramsay MacDonald, one committed to a policy of peace and disarmament. The arrival in Washington of Sir Esmé Howard as the new British Ambassador opened new vistas for positive relations. Sir Esmé was of the old aristocracy with a tradition of public service and had served in a number of diplomatic posts in Europe. Like so many of his class he had a liking for America and Americans. He had a smooth and relaxed personality, very much in the Balfour tradition, which appealed to Americans. Sir Esmé was by nature and by policy determined to smooth Anglo-American relations.

Sir Esmé Howard's arrival in Washington found the ship reconstruction controversy still with glowing embers even though the flame was out. He first renewed old acquaintances in the United States to try to get a sounding of opinion about the renewed Anglo-U.S. naval rivalry. He visited Colonel House, long retired from public influence but still an avid supporter of a close Anglo-American policy link. Col. House advised the British to simply ignore the controversy and the propaganda of the Big Navy lobby in the United States. The British should do whatever they felt necessary with their own navy, acting on the safe assumption that the United States would never go to war against Great Britain. Therefore, it could not matter how much the U.S.



Navy was improved or expanded. A bigger and better U.S. Navy might even be a positive asset in the interests of a common foreign policy. House advised London to cease criticism of any proposed expansion plans in Washington. British criticism was always counter-productive in Washington! If the British government simply remained silent, all serious efforts to expand the U.S. Navy significantly would die in Congress. Howard supported House's views. Officials in the Foreign Office were less sanguine. Sir Robert Vansittart, of the American department at the Foreign Office, and others noted in commenting on Sir Esmé's report to the Foreign Secretary about his conversations with House that the theory of the "unthinkable war" between Great Britain and the United States was good but that it was dangerous to rely on theory as a basis for practical policy. Vansittart commented:

Pitt considered it childish to suppose that two nations must always be enemies. To stake one's life on the converse is equally childish.<sup>16</sup>

The ship improvement controversy is a very clear example of the so-called "big navy lobby" at work. Like all special interest groups which seek to influence public opinion and shape government policy the "big navy" group was an amorphous group. It was an association of legislators, retired naval officers, industrialists, publicists, and "patriots" who worked to promote expansion of the U.S. Navy. It was loosely grouped around the Navy League, an organization formed in New York in 1902 by a group of Spanish-American War naval

veterans. It patterned itself on a similar group founded in Great Britain in 1894. Through its national magazine, the Journal, it sought to awake public interest in the role of the Navy and its general improvement and expansion. In 1922 the League invented the idea of the annual "Navy Day" first celebrated in that year. The League promoted legislation for naval construction, opposed all limitations agreements such as those resulting from the Washington Conference, and generally promoted anti-British and anti-Japanese propaganda. Frequently at odds with the Wilson administration the League made peace with the Harding government and agreed to tone down its rhetoric by omitting some of its criticisms of the Washington Conference. In Congress there was small group of legislators who were a core group who reliably promoted legislation supported by the Navy lobby and the League. In the Senate Senators Hale, Walsh and Swanson and in the House Congressmen Butler, Britten, and Longworth could be counted on the defend League-sponsored bills. Although general membership of the Navy League probably never exceeded 7500 its finances were supported by the steel and ship-building industry for whom a big navy was an economic boon. The big navy lobby suspected President Coolidge of being less than loyal to their cause. In spite of his nationalist rhetoric he loved economy too much! Thus the group in the mid-1920's was especially active in its propaganda work.<sup>17</sup>

Although the governments both in London and Washington

by the end of 1924 were anxious to let go of the ship improvement controversy, the press and big navy propagandists in the U.S. were not. William B. Shearer was a self-styled "naval expert" who contributed numerous articles to popular journals and newspapers on naval policy and the importance of maintaining and increasing American naval strength. He was later revealed to be a paid lobbyist, secretly in the service of a number of major industrial firms involved in past or potential government contracts for ship construction. When the U.S. government was preparing in 1924 for the scrapping of the battleship "Washington" under the Washington Treaty agreements, Shearer sought an injunction in the federal courts to prevent the action. His request was denied, and he appealed. The appeal was ultimately also rejected but the publicity attached allowed Shearer and others to make a number of allegations about British treaty violations.

Sir Esmé Howard felt certain that the charges and the court actions were supported by a group of naval officers. Secretary of State Hughes and the U.S. government did not support the charges but obviously felt they had no means of preventing press activity of this kind. Hughes cooperated fully in the proposal of Sir Esmé to give a major address on the subject. In Kansas City in November 1924 the ambassador spoke out vigorously, noting that no government had ever accused Great Britain of violating the provisions of the Washington treaties and that the "British conscience is

clear." Secretary Hughes praised the ambassador's speech. Foreign Office comment expressed doubt that the speech had ended matters. Ronald I. Campbell, counsellor in the Foreign Office, commented to the Foreign Secretary that the speech of Howard had been useful, but that false charges could not just be ignored in the high-minded way Howard preferred. Dangerous situations could result. He added, "...the defense of our honor has the added merit of conducing to the defense of our skins."<sup>18</sup>

PERSONNEL CHANGES IN WASHINGTON AND LONDON: NEW  
INITIATIVES TOWARD NAVAL LIMITATIONS TALKS, 1925-27

The controversy over ship reconstruction was largely swallowed up by new concerns and new initiatives in the naval relations area in 1925. The election of 1924 in the United States gave President Coolidge the presidency in his own right and the freedom to construct his own administration and make his own mark in foreign policy. Charles Evans Hughes resigned the position of Secretary of State in March 1925 and was replaced by Frank B. Kellogg, former Michigan senator and most recently Ambassador to Great Britain. Hughes was ironically to play one last role in the ship reconstruction controversy. 1925 and the advent of a Coolidge-Kellogg partnership saw a new level of Anglo-U.S. discussion and the possibility for a new arms limitation conference. The naval professionals were still concerned about the need for

modernization of the navy. Necessarily everyone was now sensitive to the charge of violations of the Washington agreements. Admiral Pratt, representing the General Board of the Navy, held a meeting in June 1925 with the Navy's former nemesis, former Secretary of State Hughes, still the living embodiment of the spirit of the Washington Conference and the acknowledged expert on the meaning of its agreements. Pratt and the admirals were concerned about getting a reliable interpretation of the "reconstruct clause" of the treaty (chapter II, Part III, clause (d), of section 1.) Together they went through the various drafts of the clause and the text of its final form in all of the intricate legal details seeking an answer to precisely what was allowed by way of reconstruction on various grades of ship. Pratt reported to Secretary of the Navy Wilbur that the result of all this investigation was further confusion! Ultimately Hughes had advised that considering the atmosphere of the conference and the attitude of general trust which had prevailed there it could be morally assumed that no attempt had been made to be restrictive within reason and the general goals of the conference on the matter of reconstruction. While hardly a reliable legal decision it seemed to satisfy the navy, an artful obfuscation by a one-time Associate Justice and future Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States!

This matter of ship improvement programs did not die easily. The Navy, always impatient about restrictions on new

ship construction, was determined to apply the latest naval technology to its existing ships in an effort to bring them into a state of relative equality with newer British ships. It was anxious that the British Navy not do this, lest it keep a further edge of superiority. In the next chapter we shall see that the issue was reopened in 1929 with new charges of treaty violations against the British with counter-revelations by them about known (but ignored) American violations.

There were no concrete points of friction for a time after the "gun turret controversy" had been allowed to die. Coolidge himself had a great desire both to reduce government expenditures and to foster international peace and reduction of tensions. On both counts he and his new Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, saw decided advantages in further limitations in naval armaments. Coolidge, like his predecessor Harding, was anxious to be remembered as a supporter of peace. To make a bold step in the area of disarmament and to bring upon the Coolidge-Kellogg years some of the domestic acclaim and international fame which the Washington Conference of 1922 had brought to the Harding-Hughes period was a desirable goal.

The Baldwin Conservative government in London, while less dedicated to the principle of disarmament than the short-lived 1924 Labor regime of Ramsay MacDonald which it succeeded, was still very concerned about the costs of naval

construction, the apparent continued naval build-up by Japan, and the capacity of the American economy to finance unlimited naval construction programs. There were categories of naval vessel not touched on at the Washington Conference where limitations or even abolition could result in significant economies. The British government was also very interested in further reductions in size and numbers of battleships beyond the limits set by the Washington agreements.

By the end of 1924 both governments were becoming increasingly interested in new formal talks on naval disarmament and related questions, partly for the same and partly for different reasons. Retrospective attitudes toward the Washington Conference and its agreements differed. The naval departments of both governments viewed it with varying degrees of regret. The British Foreign Office did not remember it as a major success for British foreign policy but rather as a useful diplomatic compromise which had relieved tensions at the time and solved some problems. The American State Department on the other hand looked back on the Conference as something of a sacred moment, a major success for the United States and the spirit of peace. The emphasis on "spirit" is key. London looked to the specifics of the limited agreements. Washington exulted in the generalities of attitudes and "feelings" generated by the meeting. Feelings are easily damaged by insistence on texts and their meaning.

From the beginning of 1925 to the summer of 1927 the United States and Great Britain moved toward a new meeting on naval limitations, ostensibly to carry forward the agreements of 1922. The elaborate diplomatic ritual, the "talks about talks," revealed all the problems to come when the conference finally did meet at Geneva in 1927, a meeting of delegates, but hardly a meeting of minds. In a strange way the discussions of 1925-27 recalled the Paris Conference more than the Washington Conference, because the insurmountable issue of parity and its meaning surfaced once again, and the shadow of the League of Nations issue clouded the direct mutual understanding between Great Britain and the United States. In the last weeks of 1924 both of these matters were under discussion.

In a speech before the House Naval Affairs Committee in December 1924 Secretary of the Navy Wilbur supported the administration's call for an increased naval building program, implying that it was necessary to achieve parity with Great Britain in cruisers and other types of vessel, citing the principle of the Washington agreements. Sir Esmé Howard, the British Ambassador in Washington, wrote on December 22, 1924 to Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, recounting a talk which he had held with Navy Secretary Wilbur. Wilbur had spoken strongly of President Coolidge's desire to reduce naval spending, but also stressing the American government's determination to preserve



the 5-5-3 ratio in all categories of naval vessel. The ambassador evidently did not perceive the problem in this and went on to state his view that Congress was in the mood to support naval reductions and to back a call for a new naval conference.<sup>19</sup> The Foreign Office did not fail to perceive the ominous note in Secretary Wilbur's stress on general parity. The Wilbur speech to the House Naval Affairs Committee was circulated in the Foreign Office. Ronald I. Campbell minuted the circular on Dec. 30, 1924 noting that the 5-5-3 ratio at the Washington Conference was never intended to extend to cruisers, "...as we need more cruisers than other nations to protect our larger and more important lines of communication...." Robert Vansittart, head of the American Department at the Foreign Office, commented that Wilbur was out for equality in cruisers and superiority in other categories and that "his goal should be exposed."<sup>20</sup> The British government was always very clear on its position about cruisers. They felt that at the Washington Conference the British Empire delegation had never conceded numerical parity on cruisers, or indeed in any category below battle-ships. Their perceived need for a large number of cruisers to protect trade on which the existence of the empire depended was frankly expressed. Balfour had been saved from making a publicized issue of the matter at the 1921 Conference because the French delegation had taken the lead in making reservations about cruisers. Secretary of State

Hughes had acknowledged and accepted the French reservations, happy at least to have a parity agreement on the battle-ships.<sup>21</sup>

In replying to Ambassador Howard's report on his talks with Secretary of the Navy Wilbur, Foreign Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain put his finger on what amounted to the central issue at the root of Anglo-American naval difficulties in the mid-1920's. Chamberlain was very sensitive to American attitudes toward the League of Nations. Since the end of the Washington Conference and America's "reopening" to the international arena, the administration in Washington had quietly been taking small but positive steps toward cooperation with the League. Chamberlain was anxious to encourage this development. The Geneva Protocol regarding sanctions by League members against a member state violating the League Covenant through aggressive action was under debate in the member states in late 1924. Chamberlain asked Howard for his views on American reactions to the Protocol proposal. He himself saw problems with raising American fears.

A consideration to which we are bound to attach the utmost importance is that the system of sanctions embodied in the Protocol joined to the obligation to submit to arbitration in every possible case of dispute, may easily involve this country in measures of naval and commercial blockade which would certainly affect American trade disadvantageously....

Chamberlain went on to comment that in matters of trade the United States always pursues national interests and not the

great ideals which its political leaders preach. In cases of commercial conflict the United States was never sentimental or unselfish!<sup>22</sup> The specter of the blockade problem of 1914-1917 (or indeed of 1807-1812) was still there to bedevil Anglo-American relations. Should Great Britain as part of a League action be involved in blockade of a state with whom the United States was a major trading partner would the threat of naval conflict become real? The rights of neutral powers in such situations was still unsettled. The protection of trade by both Great Britain and the United States was at the heart of the developing controversy over numbers of cruisers.

Chamberlain had even earlier expressed concern lest the British appear to be pressuring the American government in any way toward League membership. Lord Cecil, a member of the Baldwin Cabinet and its representative for League affairs, had been invited to the United States in late 1924 to receive an award from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. Chamberlain approved the trip but suggested prudently that the American State Department be consulted before Cecil accepted. Chamberlain's concern was that Cecil while in America would be called on to give speeches, and these would either offend pro-League American opinion by being too soft and circumspect or offend and further alienate the anti-League forces by being too strongly positive. The Foreign Secretary was anxious that London not revive an issue in

American politics which was still not dead!<sup>23</sup> In the end the State Department raised no objection to Cecil's trip, and it took place without provoking any incident or notable press comment.

The British Cabinet was concerned about American reactions to the Geneva Protocol, and its own decision on ratification would in part depend on American feeling. Howard's effort to gauge this feeling without definitely asking for an official response from the State Department, which would hardly have been appropriate, was reported to Chamberlain in early 1925 and conveyed by the Foreign Secretary to the Cabinet. He reported that Washington hoped that the Geneva Protocol would die a natural death. Its adoption by the League would lead the United States beyond suspicion of the League of Nations into actual hostility. American fears about the sanctions element of the Protocol revolved around two issues, possible violation of the Monroe Doctrine and violation of American neutral trading rights as a result of League actions against an "aggressor" state. Chamberlain added his own opinion that interference with American trade in any such action was a virtual certainty. If the British government did ratify the Protocol "they will be running a serious risk of grave trouble with the U.S. in the future."<sup>24</sup> A few weeks later Howard reported to the Foreign Secretary that American sensitivity about any threat to its special relationship to Latin America was a key factor

in American resistance to League membership. The Monroe Doctrine and the Pan-American idea had become one. It would be necessary to convince the government in Washington that a relationship with the League did not present a danger to United States influence in Latin America.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, League sanctions and possible naval blockade of a Latin American state would present a threat to the Monroe Doctrine renewing the Anglo-U.S. crisis of 1895-96, which had brought the two nations perilously close to war over the Venezuela-Guiana border issue.

With the obvious heating-up of the naval race by the end of 1924, exemplified by the Navy Department's requests to Congress for funding of new major ship construction, there was every good reason for the political leadership in both countries to seek a conference on naval limitations to supplement the Washington agreements of 1922. Ambassador Howard informed Chamberlain that he felt certain that President Coolidge and Secretary of State Hughes both supported further naval limitations for financial reasons and would endorse a proposal either for a League of Nations disarmament conference with American participation or of a separate naval conference, probably to be held again in Washington. Democrats also were supportive of a conference because of their fear of an unending battle with the "big navy" lobby each time Great Britain added a new cruiser. Even Senator William E. Borah, the great opponent of the

League and all its works, backed an international arms conference which would include the United States as well as Germany and Russia.<sup>26</sup>

In his final interview with the British Foreign Secretary before leaving his post as American ambassador in London to take up his appointment as Secretary of State in 1925, Frank Kellogg had broached with Chamberlain the useful possibilities of a new conference on naval limitations. Chamberlain had agreed and suggested that Kellogg put out "feelers" to other governments to get their reactions. However, he gave this early warning that agreement on cruiser limits would not be as easy to obtain as the earlier agreement on battle-ships had been. He proposed limitations on submarines as a possible realistic goal, and probably of destroyers and air-craft carriers as well.<sup>27</sup> A few days later the Foreign Secretary cabled Sir Esmé Howard in Washington after discussing with the Cabinet possible naval talks, affirming London's acceptance of the idea of talks. He noted that if the United States called a conference it would of course have the right to set the agenda, but Chamberlain again warned:

It is obvious that there are geographical and other reasons for which the ratio already agreed on for capital ships could not be applied in the case of cruisers....

He suggested that size and armaments of cruisers could be usefully discussed, as well as numbers of other smaller categories of vessels.<sup>28</sup>

The British government was anxious to have new naval limitation discussions, but equally anxious not to appear overly eager or to seem to be pressuring the Americans in that direction, mindful of the ever-present American sensitivity about following British leads. At a Cabinet meeting in April Chamberlain recommended that the British government should do nothing about such a conference, but that the ambassador in Washington should be told that London was ready to enter such talks if the other great naval powers were prepared to participate. France had already shown some reluctance. A Cabinet committee on the naval budget had recommended that reduction in size and armaments of cruisers would be very useful and desirable and indicated that the Admiralty was open to this idea.

The Admiralty position, however, had already been made abundantly clear. W. C. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, told Chamberlain in February that no discussion of cruisers could be held except on the basis of two fundamental principles, viz. that the British Empire should be allowed a number of cruisers no less than the minimum number needed for the scouting line of the main fleet plus the number required for trade protection, and that all other powers be required to acknowledge and accept the British Empire's need for superiority in cruiser strength. Bridgeman also had expressed the Admiralty's grave concern about the Japanese cruiser building program which had occurred since the

Washington Conference, strongly challenging the views expressed in Cabinet by Winston Churchill about Japan's economic weakness and stating his own fears about future Japanese aggressive activity in the Pacific. The First Lord was asked to report on Admiralty views about possible agreement on cruisers.<sup>29</sup> The Admiralty's reply to the Cabinet request for advice, given by Bridgeman in a memo to the Cabinet, reinforced its earlier statements about any changes resulting from a naval conference with the United States and Japan. It was clear that the admiralty's greatest concern was British strength as compared to Japan and the European naval powers and not in relation to the strength of the United States. In comparing figures for projected cruiser strength by 1931 under existing authorized programs, British strength in large cruisers was more closely challenged by France and Italy than by the United States. The Admiralty, therefore, opposed talks about naval limits in which France and Italy were not involved.<sup>30</sup>

If the British Cabinet had clearly realized the need for knowing how far the professional naval leadership was willing to go toward further naval limits it also knew that a critical factor for successful talks would be the position of the American naval leadership, quite apart from the interests or desires for limitations on the part of United States political leaders. To gauge this W.C. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, undertook a trip to Washington for talks



with American naval authorities in early May 1925. He reported to the Foreign Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain, in a surprisingly positive vein. Bridgeman recounted his visits with Secretary of the Navy Wilbur and the principal admirals on the Navy General Board. He felt certain that officials of the U.S. Navy would not oppose a new naval conference. Bridgeman wrote:

I put some searching questions to them, particularly as to the basis on which the two countries should calculate their necessary strength, and it was interesting that subject to complete frankness on our part (nothing up our sleeves, as they put it), they would be with us right through. What a splendid opportunity this declaration opens up for the limitations I am so interested in....<sup>31</sup>

The statements of support for a conference which the First Lord obviously felt he had received from the American admirals conflicted with the feelings these officers were expressing amongst themselves. The desire to be polite to the distinguished British guest possibly fogged complete clarity in the expression of their real views; but Bridgeman may also have failed to see the significance of the words "subject to complete frankness on our part." Would the British really be forthcoming in explaining to the Americans why they needed such a large number (even superiority) of cruisers? Both sides already saw that issue as the rock on which talks about limits would founder.

Even before Kellogg returned from London to head the State Department rumours of new naval talks were in the air

in Washington. Secretary of the Navy Wilbur authorized the General Board of the Navy to begin discussions and preparations for a possible new disarmament conference. The Navy Secretary issued a set of fundamental policy guidelines which the Board was to assume as "givens" about U.S. naval policy. Included in the list of points were affirmations that the U.S. would not accept any limits on its navy which imperiled any part of its sovereign territory and that the U.S. intended to maintain a navy strong enough to insure open lines of communication for its world-wide commerce.<sup>32</sup>

A certain amount of naivete existed on the American side about prospects for success of a new naval conference. Secretary of State Kellogg had written to President Coolidge just before the visit to Washington of W. C. Bridgeman giving his thoughts about calling a new disarmament conference. He mentioned to the President that Chamberlain supported the idea of the talks and reviewed the topics which could be open to discussion. He mentioned almost casually that he was concerned about the British position on cruisers. The United States had to insist on parity in size and number of cruisers, but Kellogg felt that the British would go along with this. He was more worried about Japan, France, and Italy.<sup>33</sup>

THE NAVY DEPARTMENT DELAYS MOVEMENT TOWARD RENEWED TALKS  
WITH GREAT BRITAIN

If all this "talk about talks" produced no real results in 1925 it was in large part due to hesitations and delays on the part of the U.S. Navy Department, especially from the General Board. The suspicions of the American naval professionals about the goals of the British were long-standing but had become acute once again in the mid-1920's as the American Navy more and more took to its new role as protector of American commerce and overseas business expansion. This added commercial rivalry to the traditional defense reasons for fearing British naval power. The Navy Department bitterly resented the fact that it had been excluded from any major role in the decisions of the Washington Conference and was determined to be better prepared to have a voice in any future conference and if possible to forestall it altogether.

The records of the General Board of the U.S. Navy show that throughout the summer of 1925 the American admirals were very much exercised about the naval conference which now seemed inevitable to them and which was full of dangers. The multitude of position papers and memos exchanged internally within the Board and the Navy Department show a broad range of concerns and a virtual paranoia regarding Great Britain. The possibility of war with the British over trade conflicts was never far from the collective mind of the General Board, even if far from the minds of their political masters. The cause of war would be eliminated if the United States would

concede to Great Britain supremacy on the seas, but to do so would be to yield control of American national defense and economic development to the British. Calls for disarmament were a British ploy to weaken American power as were all British protestations about the desire for closer Anglo-American ties. Britain was again tricking the United States into calling another naval conference. These were some of the thoughts expressed.

The admirals of the General Board emphasized the need to enlist powerful support outside naval circles for the positions of the professional navy. It was vitally important to keep in close touch with Secretary Hoover and the Commerce Department on issues related to international trade and business expansion overseas. Not only was the State Department unreliable because of its unreflective desire to seek accommodation with the British, but the Department of the Army was nearly as bad! The Army's recent reports and strategy studies revealed that the army had been "wrongly indoctrinated" into believing that the Washington Conference had really given the U.S. equality with Great Britain in sea power and that supremacy in sea power was somehow essential to the existence of the British Empire and to world peace.

Any conference spawned by or related to the League of Nations was suspected by the General Board. The League in the opinions of the admirals was a creature of Great Britain. It was used by the British as a kind of "front" to control a

broader range of world interests beyond their own empire. League calls for disarmament were British inspired, and a League conference on the issue would work for British goals.<sup>34</sup>

The talk about a possible conference on naval limitations not surprisingly went nowhere during 1925. Within the American government it was the Navy Department that was exercising the dominant role in determining official government policy. Within that department the civilian leadership fairly consistently followed the guidance of the naval professionals on the General Board. Their ideas, as expressed above, did not encourage thoughts on limitations. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg was still feeling his way into his position and by personality was not the self-assured leader Hughes had been. Thus the State Department was not wielding its former influence in the naval policy area. The British government was itself divided in its counsels and uncertain about the wisdom or direction of any naval conference.

Nevertheless the new year 1926 presented opportunities for a renewed effort toward negotiations for naval arms limitations. In his messages to Congress on December 8, 1925 and January 4, 1926 President Coolidge pointed to the recent Locarno treaties as signs that the need for great armaments had been reduced. He emphasized that the American government supported any measures "having a reasonable tendency" to lead

to reduction of armaments, for humanitarian and fiscal reasons.<sup>35</sup> The scene now shifted to the League of Nations in Geneva as the venue for "reasonable tendencies" towards arms reduction, a source and location which did nothing to allay the hostility of the naval authorities in Washington. The League had established a Preparatory Commission to lay the groundwork for a future League sponsored international conference on disarmament. The Preparatory Commission was scheduled to meet in Geneva on May 18, 1926. On December 12, 1925 the League had invited the United States along with several other powers who were not members of the League to participate in the Commission. The Coolidge administration had accepted the invitation. Enthusiasm for this new venture was not universal even within the State Department. Some officials, notably Alanson B. Houghton, the American Ambassador in London, were fearful of the large conference on unfamiliar terrain, where the United States would be at a disadvantage compared to Great Britain, a League member and a leader. The Americans had as a principal concern their own naval relations with Britain. The positions which the British might put forward at the Geneva talks were critical to the United States in establishing its own role at the conference. Secretary Kellogg was very anxious for a clear straight-forward statement of British policies and probable conference proposals before the talks opened. Ambassador Houghton sought information from Foreign Secretary Sir Austen

Chamberlain. The Ambassador, after talks both with Chamberlain and with Lord Cecil, the British chief representative to the League and head of the delegation to the Preparatory Commission, reported to the Secretary of State in late February, 1926. Houghton indicated that his talks with Chamberlain and Cecil had been frank and cordial and that he felt certain that the British would work with the Americans during the talks. The British leaders had declined to give specifics about their possible proposals, preferring to see what the atmosphere of the conference produced. For them these talks were just one small part of the development of a global foreign policy. The Americans wanted immediate solutions to immediate practical strategic problems. The Ambassador advised the Secretary:

...we are about to take part in a Conference whose decisions will be determined...in part at least by considerations of general policy which have no direct interest to the United States...unless we follow the British in concessions they feel it wise to make, the American delegates are likely to find themselves standing alone and thus responsible for making an agreement impossible....

Houghton's real concern was that, like it or not, by participating in these League discussions the position of the United States toward the League of Nations would be substantially altered with a consequent loss of freedom for developing an independent policy.<sup>36</sup> Soon after sending this report Ambassador Houghton returned to Washington for consultations with the State Department.

Cecil reported to the Foreign Office his own impressions

based on these same conversations between himself and Ambassador Houghton. Cecil felt that Houghton's questions had shown his hostility toward American participation in the Geneva talks, a fact apparently admitted by the Ambassador to Cecil. The latter had declined to give Houghton the information he wanted about British plans for the conference. Cecil recommended that Houghton be by-passed by the Foreign Office in contacting the American government about the conference. It would be preferable to go through Sir Esmé Howard, the British Ambassador in Washington, and thus to the State Department directly, if a positive and cooperative spirit were to be generated. Howard should be kept fully briefed about Cabinet plans. It would be very important for the United States and Great Britain to keep in step on plans regarding naval disarmament. Cecil noted that Hugh Gibson, the American minister in Switzerland, would be heading the American delegation to the Preparatory Commission. He would be easier to work with than Houghton.<sup>37</sup>

Relations between Houghton and the British government were further worsened as a result of the ambassador's visit home to the United States in the spring of 1926. While in Washington the ambassador had given a very pessimistic report about affairs in Europe and a negative appraisal of the League of Nations. While Great Britain itself was not the object of direct criticism, a certain British weakness was implied and a tendency to go along with the French for the



sake of imperial interests. The substance of Houghton's report somehow found its way into the American press and was published in the London Times. The report caused something of a flurry within the Foreign Office, although British press comment was more sympathetic than critical. Peace was quickly restored between the Foreign Secretary and a very embarrassed Houghton on his return to London, but Chamberlain expressed the general opinion of the Foreign Office that thereafter the American Ambassador was not altogether to be trusted and that great care had to be exercised about the degree to which official policy could really be opened up to him.<sup>38</sup>

Houghton's doubts about the work of the Preparatory Commission only confirmed the natural hesitancy of the State Department about League-related activity. Certainly the instructions issued on April 23, 1926 for the American delegation to the Preparatory Commission were decidedly cautious and gave little ground for significant breakthroughs toward a disarmament agreement. The Secretary of State informed Hugh Gibson, the American minister in Berne, that he was to head the delegation, leading a group of eight others, two from the State Department (Allen Dulles and Dorsey Richardson), three naval officers representing the Navy Department, (Admiral Hilary Jones, Adm. Andrew Long, and Capt. Adolphus Andrews) and three officers representing the Department of the Army. The head of the delegation was not

given much room for either manoeuvre or active leadership in the discussions. Instructions were fairly specific. The Secretary made it clear that the United State was not particularly interested in the question of land armaments, which was seen as a European issue. On this topic Gibson was told to take no active role unless his opinions were sought. On the subject of limitation of naval armament the keynote of American concern was stated: "The 5-5-3 ratio (Washington Treaty 1922) should be firmly maintained as applicable to all types of combatant naval units so far as the United States, Great Britain and Japan are concerned." The goal was not to alter but to complete the Washington agreement. The greatest assurance of success in limiting naval armaments was, in the opinion of the State Department, a conference of the five naval powers who had attended the Washington Conference and which would be in effect a continuation of that conference. The United States was highly suspicious about talk of a country's "potential war strength."

The United States representation should not agree to the application to this country of any formula for the limitation of armaments which is based upon an estimate of the potential war strength of a nation....

In two other areas the State Department made clear that the United States was not moving from traditional policies.

The United States will not tolerate the supervision of any outside body in this matter nor be subject to inspection or supervision by foreign powers or individuals....  
You will...bear in mind that it is contrary to the traditional policy of this Government to enter

into commitments as to the applications of a regime of sanctions for the enforcement of Treaty obligations.... In consequence of this policy of this Government you should not make any commitments in the matter of sanctions....<sup>39</sup>

These instructions to Ambassador Gibson emanated officially from the Department of State over the signature of Secretary Kellogg. They very closely reflect policy statements issued a few weeks earlier by the General Board of the Navy. The Secretary of State viewed these talks essentially as a technical naval matter in a diplomatic format and in these and the subsequent three-power talks in Geneva in 1927 sought the guidance of the Navy Department. The dispatching of Admiral Jones, the current chairman of the General Board, as a delegate along with comparatively low level State Department personnel assured that the policies of the Navy would be dominant. Reports sent to Secretary Kellogg about proceedings were regularly passed on to Navy Secretary Wilbur.<sup>40</sup>

THE ACTIVITY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS PREPARATORY COMMISSION, 1926-27

The League of Nations Preparatory Commission on disarmament began its sessions in May 1926 and continued to meet through the summer and fall of that year. Very soon signs of dissatisfaction with its structure and procedures appeared within the ranks of the major naval powers. Japan

appears to have been the first to propose that a separate naval conference should be convoked, either to go on simultaneously with the Preparatory Commission or after its conclusion, to be held either at Geneva or Washington. Lord Cecil felt that nothing should be done to prejudice the Geneva talks in these early stages, but he expressed the British view that separate naval talks could well usefully occur if the Geneva talks failed to come to grips with naval limitation.<sup>41</sup> By July 1926 the State Department was disenchanted with the Geneva proceedings, which did not seem to be getting anywhere on real naval limitations and which in fact seemed to be calling into question parts of the Washington Conference agreements. The main stumbling block was not Anglo-U.S. disagreements, because at this point the two powers were in harmony in opposing a definition of naval limits by total tonnage, a position strongly favored by France and Italy. The presence of the smaller powers at Geneva was complicating matters. The total tonnage concept gave flexibility to the smaller powers to build whatever size ships they wanted. The size factor was the real crux of naval armament races. The total tonnage idea in the opinion of the American Geneva delegation would not do away with naval competition, nor lessen international suspicions.<sup>42</sup>

In July 1926 Ambassador Houghton spoke to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, about the progress or lack of it at Geneva. Chamberlain acknowledged that

progress was slow, but he felt good results would eventually come through patient persistence. A breakdown at this point would be calamitous.<sup>43</sup> The Cabinet was in fact already engaged in discussion of possible separate naval talks among the major powers. Allen Dulles of the American delegation at the Preparatory Commission in Geneva had already approached Cecil about this idea. At the end of July the British Cabinet authorized Cecil to tell Dulles that at the next session of the preparatory Commission in Geneva (in 1927) he would be prepared to hold informal discussions with representatives of the United States and Japan about a basis for extension of the provisions of the Washington agreements for eventual adoption either by the Preparatory Commission itself or by a separate naval agreement among the Washington Treaty signatories. The Cabinet was anxious to follow the Admiralty's lead on all of this, and Cecil was instructed to get from the First Lord, W.C. Bridgeman, a list of topics which could be discussed at such a separate naval conference. Cecil was instructed to inform the French and Italian delegations at Geneva that the British government had been approached and agreed to discussions, but had not initiated the call for separate talks.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, as the Preparatory commission in Geneva continued its work, the major naval powers, at this point still in general agreement, had given up hope of achieving new limitations through its agency and were prepared to enter a

new forum in the following year. The Geneva talks in 1926 foreshadowed the difficulty of the Washington Treaty signatories in achieving unanimity on any naval agreement.

President Coolidge had hopes of achieving British cooperation toward further naval disarmament in 1927. Coolidge wanted real progress on a naval limitation agreement with London. Pressure from the big navy lobby and the industrial power in the United States was something Coolidge had to keep at bay. A wider and more popular "lobby" was the general public and Congress with its desire for less spending on naval programs. During Coolidge's time in office there had been periodic calls within Congress and from the wider political community for more direct American leadership toward world disarmament. On the Democratic side former presidential candidate and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan had been advocating an American offer to reduce or cancel the European war debts in return for a program of international disarmament. Within his own Republican party Coolidge had to contend with progressives such as Senator William Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who spoke of the fight for disarmament as the fight for civilization. Resolutions in support of a disarmament conference were offered as recently as 1924 in the House of Representatives by congressmen Hamilton Fish Jr. and Frederick C. Hicks. The basic position of his party and his own personal inclination was always toward economy. Even

strong supporters of naval strength were beginning to feel that naval reduction could lead to security and economy.<sup>45</sup>

Economy was not the only issue pushing President Coolidge toward an initiative in the area of naval limitations. During 1925 and 1926 his administration had been under fire from domestic critics on a number of fronts. The congressional elections of Nov. 1926 had not gone well for the Republican Party. Though the party held on to its majority in both houses its margin was reduced. Twelve House seats were lost to Democrats, and in the Senate the Republican majority fell from 16 to 2. A political coup in some area would be vitally important to help restore Republican futures before the 1928 election. Arms limitations was a peace issue which did have demonstrable popular appeal as the successful Washington Conference had shown. Coolidge and Kellogg were not resistant to the possibility of inheriting the peace-maker title from their predecessors Harding and Hughes and carrying it into the 1928 campaign. Though the "Big Navy" lobby had money and power in Congress they did not command much power at the polls. It was to Coolidge's advantage to find a way of securing public approval while not totally alienating his navalist backers. An American-sponsored naval conference, hopefully with the agenda in American control, and free of direct links with the League of Nations might achieve this goal.<sup>46</sup>

The year 1926 saw Coolidge caught between contending

forces. In that year statistics showed that the U.S. was well behind both Great Britain and Japan in cruiser strength. the British had 63, Japan 43, and the U.S. A. 40. More ominous was the fact that in new cruisers of the 10,000T class the U.S. was even farther behind with only 2 under construction and 6 approved. Great Britain had 11 under construction and 2 more authorized. Japan was building 6 and had 4 others authorized. In his budget message for 1927 President Coolidge omitted funds for construction of the last three of the eight big cruisers approved by congress in 1924. This was a bow toward advocates of limitation. At the same time he requested approval (but not actual funding) for ten additional cruisers. This was intended to be a nod to the big navy supporters. They were not to be so easily deceived and succeeded in getting Congress to insert the funds for the three cruisers the President wanted to drop. A few months later, in February 1927, the navalists in Congress introduced a bill for ten more large cruisers. From every point of view, therefore, it behooved the President to push forward the work of the preparatory commission in Geneva toward a new naval disarmament conference of the major powers.<sup>47</sup>

The British embassy in Washington was quick to reassure a somewhat alarmed Foreign Office that the Coolidge call for new naval construction was not a threat to future disarmament progress, but rather it should be seen as a part of American domestic politics. It gave Coolidge a way of satisfying the



naval lobby and the pressures from the Navy Department. The Foreign Office was advised that this action would probably herald a new call for a separate naval conference distinct from the current talks in Geneva.<sup>48</sup>

#### COOLIDGE CALLS A NEW NAVAL LIMITATIONS CONFERENCE

The expected call finally came on February 10, 1927 when President Coolidge sent a memo to the powers who were signatories to the Washington Conference agreements inviting them to participate in a conference at Geneva to open in June 1927 to discuss further naval limitations to supplement the agreements of the Washington Conference. The proposed venue for the conference is significant. It is doubtful whether the invited participants would have agreed to a return to Washington which would again have placed the practical direction of the talks too much under American auspices. The Navy Department and American domestic political opinion would have opposed a conference in London, for the same reasons they opposed a meeting there under British leadership in 1921. Having taken a step toward the League of Nations by participating in the Preparatory Commission Coolidge and Kellogg did not now wish to appear to be abandoning the League. It was also known in Washington that Lord Cecil, head of the British delegation to the League at Geneva and British chief representative at the 1925 and 1926 preparatory commission talks on disarmament, was strongly opposed to

moving the conference away from League associations. Cecil had been sympathetic to American objectives at the earlier talks and might be supportive of them at any forthcoming naval conference. It was made clear that any agreement reached at these new talks would be proposed later in the general disarmament talks which would continue in Geneva under League sponsorship. There was also the practical advantage that at Geneva there was already an American negotiation team in place. New appointments and elaborate preparations presumably would not be necessary. The talks of 1925 and 1926 in the Preparatory Commission had provided the technical preparation necessary for the new conference, and the delegation under Gibson's leadership could be left to carry on, but with a greater degree of freedom of agenda, separated from the official League auspices. However practical and economical in fact this decision may have been the subsequent history of the Geneva Conference of 1927 calls into question its wisdom if real results were hoped for by the State Department.

The British government was positive but cautious in its reply to the American invitation. Both the political leadership and the professional naval people knew very clearly what the problems would be, particularly in reaching any kind of agreement on cruiser strength. The Admiralty responded to the Cabinet that it favored naval reductions and economies in naval construction. It felt that the

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Preparatory Commission at Geneva was getting nowhere, mainly because some powers continued to insist on the total tonnage concept which was dangerous and could only lead to the building of large ships and more competition. The Admiralty proposed that the Cabinet consider calling a pre-Geneva conference with the United States and Japan to be held in London where the British government could put forward a set of proposals for discussion.<sup>49</sup> The Admiralty was clearly afraid of being caught off guard as had happened at the Washington Conference by being confronted with a specific set of American proposals. The complication of Italy and France at Geneva also worried them.

The British Cabinet approved a positive response to the Coolidge invitation on February 16, 1927. The draft of its response had been prepared by a Cabinet committee headed by Sir Austen Chamberlain. The Cabinet accepted the draft, subject to concurrence by the Dominion governments. Even here in its initial response to the American proposal the ominous question of cruiser strength was not ignored. Included was a statement that:

...the views of His Majesty's Government upon the special geographical position of the British Empire, the length of inter-imperial communications, the necessity of protection of its food supplies are well known, and together with the special conditions and requirements of the other countries invited to the Conference must be taken into account.<sup>50</sup>

The Committee on Imperial Defense two weeks later also approved Imperial participation in the new Geneva Conference.

The Committee stressed the relationship between this new meeting and the continuing work of the Preparatory Commission, expressing the hope that whether or not any general agreement should be reached in that body before the Coolidge conference met, the latter meeting should go forward and its conclusions incorporated into the final version of a disarmament convention.<sup>51</sup>

The Japanese government responded formally to the invitation to the conference on 19 February 1927. The letter of acceptance hoped that each country would act "guided by the spirit of mutual accommodations and helpfulness consistent with the defensive requirements of each nation." This was intended as a hint that the Japanese delegation would oppose extension of the Washington Treaty 5:5:3 ratio to all classes of ship. Although hopeful of gaining an increase in its ratio at Geneva the Japanese government was mainly concerned to convey an attitude of cooperation with the two western powers. Japan was aware of the very tentative negotiations between Great Britain and the United States and of the differences between them. The mid-1920's had seen a shift in Japanese policy toward China. Japan realized that it could never achieve its goals there in cooperation with the other powers and began a unilateral policy of expansion. It hoped that a cooperative attitude in other policy matters might win Japan a freer hand in China at least from Great Britain and possibly also from the United

States. After 1926 Japan was concentrating on internal economic reconstruction and needed new financial credits from the West to reintegrate its economy with that of the rest of the world. A search for understanding on issues such as naval limitation might hopefully assist this effort by the Japanese.<sup>52</sup>

Lord Cecil was to head the British delegation to the new Geneva Conference. The Admiralty's proposals were not finally approved by the Cabinet until May 1927, but they were already under discussion in March as Cecil was aware. His request to be allowed to let the Americans know what the British were thinking was denied by the Prime Minister on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to reveal to a foreign government the substance of Cabinet discussions not yet made public. Already in March Cecil was becoming worried about what he regarded as too much secrecy on the part of his own superiors and of an obstructive attitude by the Admiralty, who were still pressing for a London conference. Cecil complained about lack of Cabinet unity and lack of flexibility in the British policy as it appeared to him to be taking shape. He expressed this dismay at what he felt was an Admiralty desire to see the Geneva talks fail. Cecil was puzzled about their reasons for this attitude.<sup>53</sup>

The proposed Geneva Conference came close to failing before its opening when France and Italy declined invitations to take part. Italy insisted on discussing parity in all

classes of ships, to which France could not agree. Japan at this point questioned the value of the conference but was persuaded by both British and American pressure to maintain its acceptance of the invitation and to take part in what was now to be a tripartite conference. This actually was a happy development as far as the British Admiralty was concerned. The performance of the French and Italians in the Preparatory Commission had been a concern. Their insistence on the total tonnage concept seemed to match that of the Americans. In a larger conference Great Britain might have been voted down and been forced into the awkward position of refusing to sign new limitation agreements. In a tripartite conference perhaps an arrangement could be made with the Japanese over against the Americans, forcing the latter if necessary to bear the burden of rejecting the agreements of the conference.

In the United States preparation for the June Geneva Conference was left almost exclusively in the hands of the Navy Dept. Secretary of State Kellogg left himself virtually in the position of one awaiting "guidance from the experts."

In mid-March he wrote to Secretary of the Navy Wilbur:

...as you know, no instructions have been prepared for this Conference and I am glad to have your suggestions as to just what instructions we should give. I am prepared to cooperate with you at any time.<sup>54</sup>

Two weeks later Kellogg offered almost apologetically the political position of the Department of State in a letter to

Wilbur. He presented his views "as a help" to the Navy Department in its planning for the Geneva Conference. The goal of the State Department was to end the "spirit of competition" which generated suspicion. He saw a need to have parity with the British on all levels of vessel but with a statement about special situations which would allow a signatory to notify the others about a need to increase its numbers in order to allow the others to maintain the parity ratio. Kellogg concluded:

...the above seems to be about as concrete an agreement as would be possible under present condition. It would have many advantages from the political point of view, although perhaps certain disadvantages from the naval point of view....<sup>55</sup>

That the "disadvantages from the naval point of view" would be the controlling factor at the forthcoming conference became increasingly evident. The naval professionals on both sides took charge of conference preparations and planning formulations. There were no high-level contacts between the State Department and the Foreign Office during the spring of 1927 about the talks. On the other hand Admiral Hilary Jones, chairman of the U.S. Navy General Board, an American delegate to the Preparatory Commission sessions in 1925 and 1926, and soon to be named a principal delegate to the new Geneva conference, began his work early by going to London in March to confer with British naval authorities. His ideas about the crux of the British position were confirmed. He reported to the General Board about his meetings with British

admirals:

Admiral Field brought up the question for the British need for cruisers again, and rather intimated that they would desire an advantageous position as regards cruisers. I informed him again and warned him to take it into all their considerations, that we could not accept a position of inferiority in any category of vessel, and practically assured him that it would be sine qua non of any agreement to which we could ascribe. I hope I was correct in taking this stand with him, because I feel that it is the only one to take.<sup>56</sup>

The British Admiralty's position on cruisers was certainly not a secret. As early as October 1925 in a memo for the Committee on Imperial Defense the Admiralty had frankly stated:

...the question of cruisers in relation to the problem of limiting naval armaments is intimately connected with the defense of seaborne trade, upon which no other Power is so dependent...as Great Britain...the need for cruisers by the British empire is proportionately greater than is the case of any other Power....

The needs of Great Britain for an "adequate number" of cruisers to protect its trade routes would have to be recognized by the other naval powers as part of any new naval limitations agreement.<sup>57</sup> A year later Hugh Gibson, American minister in Switzerland and head of the American delegation to the Preparatory Commission, discussed the matter with Lord Cecil in Geneva. Cecil had warned Gibson that there were limits to how far the British government could go on naval reductions. Britain was prepared to reduce the size of cruisers but needed an absolute number for protection of communications. Gibson somewhat naively assured Cecil that



there would be no problem as long as the United States was granted the right to an equal number. Cecil, with equal naivete, told Gibson that this was acceptable to his government, which was only concerned with absolute strength, not strength relative to that of the United States.<sup>58</sup> Cecil's reassuring note that the British were only concerned about absolute numbers did not concur with the statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty, W.C. Bridgeman. In a speech before the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve widely reported in the British and American press, he stressed Britain's need for superiority in cruiser strength to safeguard its trade. The American press was quick to pick up on this denial of the parity principle.<sup>59</sup>

As the date for the opening of the Geneva Conference approached, the British Admiralty prepared and presented to the Cabinet a draft proposal as the basis for the British negotiating position at the talks. The stress on the need for a large number of cruisers was safely embodied in it. On May 25 the Cabinet approved the adoption of the Admiralty proposals as the basis for the British delegation position at Geneva "given a reasonable latitude in regard to details."<sup>60</sup>

In the United States Navy Department control of the American delegation and its positions at the conference was assured. Secretary of State Kellogg wrote to President Coolidge regarding the composition of the American delegation

to Geneva. Kellogg would have preferred his predecessor, Charles Evans Hughes, the hero of the Washington Conference, to head the delegation. The former Secretary was not available to go, which must have been a great relief to the Navy Department! Kellogg told the President that it was not necessary for Cabinet level people to go to these talks from the United States and Great Britain because the proximity and ease of contact with their capitals made consultation easy! The Secretary did not plan to go to Geneva unless some emergency arose. He felt his presence there would make the United States appear overly anxious to get an agreement, although he conceded the desirability of achieving an agreement. Kellogg recommended leaving Gibson as civilian head of the delegation and sending "good navy men" to support him, Admirals Jones, Long and Schofield, from the General Board. In his letter to the President, the Secretary of State noted that the United States was in a strong position for the conference because it could accept as low a number of cruisers as anyone else at the talks. The others would have to come down to meet the American offer. Kellogg, as a former senator himself and mindful of the criticism of the composition of Wilson's delegation to Paris, suggested that three senators might be included in the delegation.<sup>61</sup> In the end this suggestion was not followed. Hugh Gibson was nominal head of the delegation, but his lack of expertise in the technicalities of naval design and naval strategic policy

left him at a decided disadvantage. Also, Gibson had not been in direct personal contact with his superiors at the State Department in many months and had only general written instructions to guide him, mostly dating from the days of the Preparatory Commission of the previous year. Inevitably the forceful personality of Admiral Hilary Jones, armed with technical knowledge, fresh from talks in both Washington and London and supported by his associates from the Navy Department, was able to dominate the proceedings.

If the British position on cruiser strength was clear, the American position was equally clear. It was put forcefully in a report of the General Board to the Secretary of the Navy on the eve of the Geneva Conference.

It must be remembered that superiority in cruisers for guarding lines of communication means superiority for driving every commerce from the sea and controlling neutral commerce on the sea, and thus further war aims. Cruisers cannot justly be said to be of a greater necessity for these purposes for Great Britain than for the United States in case of war if we hope to succeed....

In the same report Stanley Baldwin and Leopold Amery were both quoted to show that the present British government did not support parity in cruisers, but that they instead favored consideration of a nation's "special defense" needs in this ship category.<sup>62</sup>

As the participating delegations prepared to assemble in Geneva in June 1927 there was already a sense of hopelessness to the enterprise. The political leadership in both London and Washington had lost real interest and enthusiasm for the

project and allowed the discussions to degenerate into essentially a set of technical talks by naval "experts." The broad political vision which lay behind the meetings at Paris in 1919 and at Washington in 1921 seemed to have sunk into a mere jockeying for strategic advantage for a hypothetical future conflict. The political leaders, while anxious to derive benefit from participation in a disarmament conference, were more anxious to be in a good position to blame the other participants for possible failure of the talks, rather than to take credit for success. For both the Washington and London governments the mere holding of the conference was a political "no lose" situation. The State Department was satisfied that by calling the conference the Coolidge administration had shown an interest in naval reductions in the interest of peace and economy. If reductions occurred so much the better. If not, at least it would be said that "American interests" had not been sacrificed. The Navy Department would be pleased if parity were agreed to, but if not, and the conference were unsuccessful, at least no weakening of naval strength would have occurred. In London the situation was parallel. By agreeing to attend, critics of the government would be pacified. If the conference failed because of American intransigence on cruisers then at least the hard-line Conservative supporters would be satisfied that the government had not weakened the British position in the

world.

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE: TECHNICAL DEBATES DISGUISE AND  
SUBMERGE POLICY ISSUES

It lies outside the scope and intent of this study to explore in detail the progress of the Geneva Conference of 1927. Many studies have already been done, both in the year immediately after the break-up of the meeting and more recently, of the various proposals made there by the participants, the course of the discussions and the numerous technical and strategic questions involved.

One of the earliest of these studies, Hugh Latimer's Naval Disarmament: a Brief Record from the Washington Conference to date (London, 1930) is still a useful and concise pathway through the intricacies of the Conference proposals and discussions. The author's goal is to provide the facts, not to attempt analysis of underlying factors. More recently the British naval historian Stephen Roskill in his monumental work Naval Policy between the wars (New York, 1968) again covers the facts of the conference as part of the larger story of the developing position of the Royal Navy in a changed post-war world and the new differing "threats" from the United States and Japan. Gerald Wheeler in Prelude to Pearl Harbor (Columbia, Mo., 1968) looks at the Geneva conference from an American point of view and stresses the failure to hold adequate pre-conference consultations as the main reason for its failure. Wheeler sees Japan as a key

player at Geneva, a looming threat which both Great Britain and the United States needed to take into the consideration of their relations with one another. A very recent book by B.J.C. McKercher, The Second Baldwin Government and the United States, 1924-29 (Cambridge, 1984) gives attention to the Geneva conference as part of the larger story of Anglo-U.S. relations. The author offers no specific analysis of the underlying factors producing failure at Geneva but offers a British perspective on the difficulty of negotiating with a low-level American delegation and the lack of real enthusiasm of these delegates for any settlement by compromise.

Doctoral research covering the conference for the most part has consisted of fairly detailed studies of the progress of the conference itself and the technical aspects of the proposals, e.g. William Timble, The U.S. Navy and the Geneva Conference (University of Colorado, 1944) and M.J. Brode, Anglo-American Relations and the Geneva Naval Conference (University of Alberta, 1972). Here the emphasis has been on the technical side of ship design and comparability as part of the debate. Another group of researchers have looked at Geneva as a part of broader studies, generally as the starting point of a process, either more directly related to future problems with Japan, such as George Fagan, Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1927-1937, (University of Pennsylvania, 1954) or of a wider range of international

tensions, such as Christine Newton, Anglo-American Relations and Bureaucratic Tensions, 1927-30 (University of Illinois, 1975) and James Mannock, Anglo-American Relations 1921-28, (Princeton, 1962). These dissertations have not had as goals the real underlying agenda at Geneva.

The concern of this paper is less what was said at Geneva than what was not said there! The conference marked the conclusion of an important and troublesome period of Anglo-American relations in which the surface issue of the sizes and numbers of certain types of ship was really only the tip of a much more dangerous iceberg of suspicion. The "hidden agenda" at Geneva is the major focus for this paper. Given the issues behind the conference agenda items, the personalities of the delegates and the political direction or lack of it behind those delegates, could any success have been achieved? That the conference itself failed and yet Anglo-American relations were not apparently any worse as a result of that failure shows that Geneva was only a "moment" and not a crisis in the changing relationship between two major world powers. The purpose of this section of the chapter is not to tell the story of the Geneva Conference but rather to reflect on some of the key elements of that story which have a bearing on the larger picture of relations between the United States and Great Britain.

On the eve of the convening of the naval conference at Geneva in June 1927 Ambassador Sir Esmé Howard wrote to the

Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, quoting George Bernard Shaw:

I was told today of Bernard Shaw's statement when asked for an opinion about Anglo-American relations. He said--the excellence of Anglo-American relations depends upon the capacity of either party to put up with the insults of the other. I am not sure that George Bernard Shaw didn't hit the nail on the head.<sup>63</sup>

In the summer of 1927, more than five years since the close of the Washington Conference, the governments in Washington and London plainly felt that they had received quite enough insults from the other and were in no mood to try hard to be pleasant! We have already noted that American and British attitudes toward the Geneva naval limitations talks existed on two levels, the political level represented by the State Department and the Foreign Office and the technical level represented by the Navy Department and the Admiralty. The two levels were not always compatible. Politically the American and British governments were more or less on the same wave length. Both wanted the economies to be gained by reduction in naval construction, an incentive more powerful than any pure dedication to disarmament ideals. The practical reasons for this are immediately clear when we consider the rise of cost in naval construction during the 1920's. By 1927 the cost of building a battle-cruiser was approximately £ 2100 per ton (given in 1980 British Pounds for comparison purposes), a rise from £ 1200 per ton in 1920. Thus one of the large cruisers of 10,000T would cost



£21,000,000 to build at the time of the Geneva Conference. American construction costs were generally higher, so we may assume in contemporary dollars that a large cruiser would cost more than \$40,000,000 to build.<sup>64</sup> On the technical level, the objectives of the two sides were in conflict. The United States wanted economy and offensive power linked with parity. Great Britain wanted economy and offensive power coupled with security. When the technical experts on both sides looked at elements of naval strength they could not agree on reduction to comparable numerical terms.<sup>65</sup> One man's parity is another's insecurity! For the Americans parity was a univocal concept. It meant equality in numbers. For the British parity was a more subtle and relative concept, not reducible to absolute numbers. This difference was the major stumbling block at Geneva.

The membership of the delegations and the nature and degree of their direction by the home governments was certainly a complicating factor for the conference. The personalities and personal relationships of the principal participants at any international conference are powerful factors contributing to success or failure. This is especially true in Anglo-American conferences! The difficulties at Paris and the success at Washington in no small measure flowed from the characters of the conference leaders as much as from strength or weakness of bargaining positions. On the American side President Coolidge, who had

called the Geneva Conference and who had a generalized interest in naval limitations leading to budget economies, took no direct interest in its proceedings. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, under whose departmental responsibility the conference naturally fell, professed to have a preoccupation with its activities, but in fact he exercised virtually no direct control over it, deferring policy matters chiefly to the Navy Department.<sup>66</sup> Hugh Gibson, the nominal head of the delegation and chairman of the conference, had, as we have seen, not been in direct contact with his superiors in Washington for some time and had been appointed largely because he was already "on site" and as minister in Berne had been U.S. representative in the preparatory commission talks. Gibson was genuinely interested in naval limitations and anxious for an agreement, but he lacked the prestige and personal authority to dominate the proceedings. The power vacuum in the American delegation was filled by Admiral Hilary Jones, a member of the General Board of the Navy, who perfectly reflected the U.S. Navy's suspicions of the British and its determination to concede nothing. His abrasive personality and determination to win at Geneva grated on the British sensibilities and won no friends among the Japanese. The British delegation even made efforts to get Washington to do something about Jones. Admiral Frank Schofield, the second most powerful member of the U.S. delegation, was also a member of the General Board. His

diaries of the Geneva conference reveal a determination "to fight it out" with the British over the cruiser issue. Schofield even felt that the State Department appointed legal counsel to the delegation, Allen Dulles, was too soft on the British and too anxious to get an agreement at any cost!<sup>67</sup>

There were equally severe difficulties on the British side. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, never a strong and dominant administrator, was not personally deeply committed to naval limitation, though of course interested in economies. He took little personal interest in Geneva. Baldwin presided over a Cabinet badly divided on the issues under discussion at Geneva. He failed to achieve real disciplined unity on policy formulation, and at a critical moment in the proceedings departed on a trip to Canada with the Prince of Wales. He left behind Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain, himself no firebrand, to try to hold together the Cabinet while policies already agreed to were attacked and unity undermined by Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer and a former first Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>68</sup> Lord Beatty, the First Sea Lord, did not attend the conference. Instead he was kept in London as a kind of personal advisor to Baldwin on matters under discussion at Geneva. The political head of the Admiralty, the First Lord, H.C. Bridgeman, was sent to Geneva as co-leader of the British delegation. Bridgeman was a close political associate of Baldwin. His basic assignment seems to have been to assure

that whatever else happened at Geneva the British did not appear to have backed down to the Americans. His official communications with London report with correct formality Bridgeman's sorrow over the intransigence of the American stance. His private letters to Baldwin show a real pleasure in "making the Americans squirm" and a more than easy acceptance of an unsuccessful conference.<sup>69</sup> Lord Cecil, the head of the British delegation to the League of Nations, was the other principal British negotiator at Geneva. Cecil was a well-known advocate of peace and disarmament, and he in a sense represented the Foreign Office viewpoint. He came more and more to believe that his government did not seriously mean to take the necessary steps toward a real agreement at Geneva and ultimately resigned his position. The points on the British spectrum regarding Geneva ranged, therefore, from the Cabinet, divided but increasingly anxious to stand firm against concessions of strength to American demands,<sup>70</sup> through Bridgeman, desirous of getting some naval reductions but mainly of coming out on top in the conference, to Cecil who was willing to make concessions for the sake of meaningful naval limitations.

The role at Geneva of the third participating power, Japan, was complicated but pivotal. The Japanese were caught between a former ally, Great Britain, and a potential enemy, the United States. They were courted by both, soothingly and positively by the British, aggressively by the Americans.

The Japanese had one technical advantage at Geneva. Viscount Ishii, as political head of the delegation and Minister of Marine in the Japanese Imperial Cabinet, was a real "plenipotentiary" and because the distance from Tokyo made continuous consultation difficult if not impossible he could make decisions on policy without fear of interference from home. This was something neither the British or American delegations could claim.

The Japanese government shared with the Americans a real desire to limit naval expenditures, especially at a time when the Japanese economy was not expanding and the government was facing enormous domestic expenditures following the severe earthquakes which had so badly damaged Japanese cities a few years before the opening of this conference. But the Japanese government was also confronted with a dominant "naval lobby" of its own which had a strong anti-U.S. prejudice. If the United States had been willing to accept some revision of the capital ships ratio established at Washington to allow the Japanese to save face the Japanese delegation would have strongly inclined to go along with the Americans in pursuing greatly reduced cruiser tonnage. Tentative explorations by the Japanese of American openness to a Japanese ratio of 3.5 to the British and American 5 on capital ships was quickly and sharply rebuffed by the American delegation in the early days of Geneva. Gibson assured the Japanese that the United States viewed the

Washington agreements as untouchable. Although the U.S. did not anticipate a war with Japan, it still felt that the maintenance of the existing balance would prevent public opinion from forcing any government into hasty action!<sup>71</sup>

Faced with this American attitude the Japanese drifted closer to the British, a development the Americans had somehow not expected. When Viscount Ishii told Gibson that his government would no longer object to the British call for discussion at Geneva of lower tonnage on capital ships and other revisions of the Washington agreements, Gibson replied that he very much regretted this decision. American public opinion had gotten the idea that Japan would side with the United States against the British on this question. America's "friendly" attitude toward Japan was now likely to change. Americans regarded the Washington agreements as sacred. If changed in any way the U.S. Government would necessarily have to insist on revision of its own position on Pacific bases and a strengthening of the American role in the region.<sup>72</sup>

It was the Japanese who proposed a solution to the cruiser issue which as a compromise between the British and American extremes came closest to providing a possible foundation for agreement. The idea of two classes of cruiser, with a number limit on the large variety and the rest of the permitted total tonnage of cruisers to be used as each nation saw fit was proposed by Japan on July 9, 1927.

The British Cabinet agreed to accept this proposal as a practical compromise.<sup>73</sup> The British Ambassador in Washington reported to London that the government in Washington was very worried about this British acceptance of the Japanese proposal and feared it could portend something like a new Anglo-Japanese entente, something which several members of the British Cabinet such as Churchill frankly desired.<sup>74</sup>

There is no doubt that the American delegation, particularly after the election of Gibson as chairman of the conference, expected the talks to follow their direction, more or less the way things had gone at Washington. But the British too had studied the proceedings at Washington. The bold British proposal presented by Bridgeman at the opening session calling for further reductions in the allowed tonnage for capital ships took the Americans by surprise and threw them off guard. It paralleled the dramatic proposals of Hughes at Washington in November 1921. The Americans had not been prepared at Geneva to consider revisions in the Washington agreements. The American determination to do nothing more about reduction of battle-ship tonnage was reinforced by surprise discoveries at Geneva on examining the actual existing naval tonnages as of 1927 submitted by the three naval powers. When Great Britain submitted its report on its naval tonnage in capital ships the Americans discovered that the British tonnage was greater than they had

supposed. It appeared that the British tonnages which were part of the Washington Conference calculations were "understatements" due to use of "legend tonnage" by Great Britain. In actual fact the British appeared to hold a 6:5 superiority over the United States in capital ships in 1927, not the parity both sides had professed devotion to since 1921.<sup>75</sup> The American delegation, somewhat panicked by this discovery, was all the more determined to build up U.S. capital strength to permitted but still unreachd limits, and to get real reductions and true parity in cruiser tonnage.

At the heart of all the difficulties at Geneva was a fundamental Anglo-American difference on the meaning of parity. For the Americans parity was a relative concept. There was no such thing as an absolute measurement of a nation's naval needs. Naval strength was something which related to the naval powers of one's competitors and possible enemies. Thus it was possible in the opinion of the American government and its delegates at Geneva for the leading naval powers to simply agree on their strength relative to one another and to set sufficiently low numbers either in ships or ship tonnage. National security and naval economy could be simultaneously and easily achieved.

Official British governmental opinion, formed largely by Admiralty views, took a decidedly different approach to parity. Basically for the British parity meant that each nation could have whatever size navy it needed to protect its



essential security. Nations differed in their length of seacoasts, in length of supply lines, of trade lanes, of overseas responsibilities and imperial defense establishments. As national needs differed, so necessarily the sizes of national navies would have to differ. For the British parity could be seen by an analogy to two or three glasses of different size. When all three are full, they are in that sense equal! Refinements of course could be and were made in the British policy. Numerical parity might be agreed to for ships with a primarily offensive purpose such as battle ships. This had been done at the Washington Conference. Also a naval power with an absolute naval advantage could concede the right to inferior powers to build up to her strength if they so desired. The practical and financial difficulties of doing this are obvious. At Geneva the British were quite willing to concede the right of parity to the United States if the absolute number of ships allowed were kept sufficiently high to meet British needs according to British definitions. The Americans could have parity but not economy!

Within the context of this basic divergence of approach it is easy to see that cruisers would be the issue on which efforts at agreement would founder. Was the cruiser an offensive or a defensive ship? Was such a distinction meaningful at all? Americans saw cruisers essentially as smaller units of a battle fleet, but also able to

independently attack commercial vessels. The British maintained an official position at least that cruisers were essentially defensive ships geared to protection of trade lanes and commerce. A "refinement" of their position appeared on this issue at Geneva, viz. that a distinction could be made between large cruisers (over 10,000 T) which had a fleet offensive orientation and the smaller traditional cruiser which had a trade protection purpose. The British were willing to accept numerical parity in the larger variety, as part of a Japanese proposal at Geneva already referred to, provided they could use the rest of a relatively high total permitted cruiser tonnage to build smaller cruisers as they saw fit.

Naturally, the British and Americans each had their own views about what kind and size of navy the other needed. This question of need was always a major theme in the talks at Geneva. The British could not see why the Americans needed to have a navy equal to their own, when American overseas commitments and trade were not equal to their own. The accusation was constantly made that the Americans only wanted a navy equal to the British for prestige purposes! The Americans on the other hand never agreed that the British really needed to have such a large number of cruisers for security purposes, but only to guarantee a dominant naval position. On the issue of the large 10,000T cruisers the United States insisted that its needs were different from

those of Great Britain. Precisely because it had fewer overseas naval bases for refueling and supply the American Navy needed cruisers with a larger cruising range and greater fire power. The Americans needed a smaller number of cruisers of larger tonnage and greater cruising capacity. The British needed a larger number of cruisers to protect trade routes but could be satisfied with cruisers of smaller size and less cruising range. They did not need the larger and more expensive variety, but their existence was a threat to British security and they could not agree to American superiority in this category of ships. British accused Americans of seeking expensive prestige. Americans accused British of seeking cheap power. In the end the two goals, real or alleged, could not be reconciled.

The members of the British and American delegations at Geneva had personal conflicts which accentuated the policy differences, but the real decisions affecting Geneva were not made there but in the capitals and within the home governments. The Ambassadors in London and Washington were both active in urging a course of action on their superiors at home. Ambassador Houghton in London warned Secretary of State Kellogg that the British had a firm and well developed plan for Geneva, that economy would not rule their desire for a large number of cruisers, and that every effort needed to be made by Washington to assure equal firmness by the Americans. The British should be told that Congress would

approve big naval spending if an agreement at Geneva was not reached. Gibson was urging a similar approach on the State Department at the same time.<sup>76</sup> Sir Esmé Howard in Washington repeatedly and strongly urged the Foreign Office not to play into the hands of the "big navy" lobby in the United States, which was active in conjunction with the American press at Geneva in trying to defeat any naval limitations. The British government, he advised, should do nothing to appear in opposition to full parity with the Americans. Howard again stated his conviction that President Coolidge and the Cabinet wanted reductions, but if the slightest British hostility was detected the President for domestic political reasons would be forced to give in to the big navy supporters. The British, by a friendly spirit and agreement to parity in all categories, was in a position to "spike the guns" of these lobbyists and prevent a big American naval build-up.<sup>77</sup>

At the conference itself Lord Cecil, the chief British delegate, represented a view close to that of Sir Esmé Howard and the Foreign Office in general. He continued to assure his American counterpart that the London government in no way opposed parity between the British and American navies in all categories of vessel. He was puzzled, he said, about American suspicions on this point. Ambassador Gibson pointed to the awkward questions already being raised in the first days of the conference by Bridgeman and Lord Jellicoe about

the need of the United States to be equal in strength to Great Britain. To talk of need was to question the principle of parity.<sup>78</sup>

Gibson was quite right to have raised the issue of what lay behind the assorted remarks of British naval delegates at Geneva. The Admiralty was far from reconciled internally over the issue of accepting parity. To accept parity was to surrender a principle of policy cherished for generations and considered crucial for survival of the British Empire. Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, represented this point of view forcefully in Cabinet debate. Within a week of the opening of the Geneva talks and two days after Bridgeman's report to the Prime Minister on the conference's first week Churchill circulated a lengthy memo to the Cabinet about the conference and its bearing on Anglo-American relations. He opposed the acceptance of parity, because as he said:

There can be no parity between a power whose Navy is its life and a power whose Navy is only for prestige. Parity for the former is supremacy for the latter....

Churchill seconded the opinion expressed in Cabinet by Lord Balfour that the British had not agreed to parity in all naval categories at the Washington Conference and that the British government should proceed along its own lines on naval construction other than battleships without any reference to the views or aspirations of the American government. Churchill was not at all convinced that the

Admiralty's stated need for 70 cruisers was sufficient.

Churchill's opinion about how to deal with the Americans was the direct opposite of the soft line favored by Howard and Cecil. His memo deserves to be quoted here at some length.

Above all we ought not to be disturbed by unjust American irritation, nor let them feel that we make haste to obey their will. All the concessions...at the Washington Conference in giving up naval supremacy...in parting with our faithful Japanese ally, and subsequently in paying these enormous sums, have only resulted in new assertions and demands on their part. It always seems to be assumed that it is our duty to humour the United States and minister to their vanity. They do nothing for us in return, but exact their last pound of flesh. On the other hand a little coolness on our part and readiness to assert our own independence in a perfectly courteous manner immediately arouses their solicitude on our account....<sup>79</sup>

Churchill's memo added new fuel to a smoldering Cabinet debate already underway. Before its circulation the Cabinet had already been discussing the question of whether a clear statement about parity should be made. Cecil and the Foreign Office were pressing for such a statement to relieve tension at Geneva. Sir William Tyrrell, acting for the absent Foreign Secretary, and Sir Esmé Howard in Washington were urging the British government to issue a statement saying that it had no problem with parity for the United States. It was noted in the discussion that the Admiralty was giving conflicting signals about this matter and had formerly definitely opposed it, though Bridgeman officially at least accepted it. After considerable debate the Cabinet agreed to

the statement to be sent to Cecil and Bridgeman:

For diplomatic reasons we think it most desirable to say publicly and at once what we believe to be your view, viz. that while we mean to build cruisers up to our needs, we lay down no conditions limiting America's cruisers to a smaller number. Do you see any objections?

The word "diplomatic" was substituted for the word "political" which appeared in a first draft of the statement.<sup>80</sup> The issue, however, was still not completely resolved. Churchill's memo had given new life to the hard-liners in the Cabinet against conceding parity. Churchill was joined in this rear-guard action within the Cabinet by Lord Beatty (1st Sea Lord), Lord Birkenhead, (the Indian Secretary), and W. Joynson-Hicks (the Home Secretary).<sup>81</sup> A telegram from the government to Sir Esmé Howard in Washington had been sent instructing him to communicate formally to the United States government the policy statement which had been sent to Geneva. Before Howard had been able to do this he received another cable from London rescinding the first and stating that at Admiralty request the statement should be held back for the time being. When the Cabinet met again on July 4, 1927 it had before it the Churchill memo. It also had to decide what, if anything, was to be officially communicated to the United States government. Lord Beatty (First Sea Lord) said that cruisers were the key issue in parity. He wondered whether Bridgeman had really meant to accept parity in cruisers. Consensus of the Cabinet was that he had. Beatty gave as the professional Admiralty opinion

that Great Britain should actually state a number of needed cruisers only if all other naval powers would state and justify the number they wanted. The United States would find it hard to justify demands for parity with Great Britain on strategic grounds. He accused the American press at Geneva of creating a "red herring" out of British cruiser needs. Beatty felt that no statement should be made to Washington. He pointed out that if Britain said it needed 70 cruisers, and then conceded 70 to the United States and 50 to Japan, in fact Britain would need more. If the United States gained numerical parity in cruisers in fact it would really achieve strategic superiority due to its freedom to concentrate its cruiser strength.

Opinions on both sides were argued, and there appeared to be no way out of the impasse. Finally the Prime Minister, Baldwin, summed up the discussion, saying it appeared desirable to tell Howard to give the note to the government in Washington with the same language used by Bridgeman at Geneva.<sup>82</sup> Two days later the Cabinet reviewed the latest reports from the delegation in Geneva which stressed the inflexibility of the Americans. The Cabinet again discussed thoroughly the use and classes of cruisers and restated its official (and final) position. The British government would agree to parity with the United States in the 10,000 T+ class of cruiser. Each nation should be free to decide for itself how many smaller cruisers it needed. The British had no



objection to the Americans building up to parity with them in this category, but they objected to a total tonnage limit on small cruisers. The continuing American insistence on a proposal for a total tonnage figure for cruisers would force the British to build numerous very small cruisers for trade protection and would be financially wasteful.<sup>83</sup>

Although the conference continued for another month it never really advanced any closer to an agreeable solution. Acrimony and suspicion among the principals at Geneva deepened. The United States delegation, adamant in its insistence on a lower total tonnage of cruisers and its need for larger cruisers seemed to make matters more complicated by a new demand that 8" guns be allowed on all categories of cruisers. Normally the smaller cruisers preferred by the British for "defensive" purposes carried only 6" guns. The British could not even accept the principle of allowing the United States numerical parity in smaller cruisers if these American cruisers carried heavier guns with longer range. The parity would be specious. Even on this point Lord Cecil urged the government in London to concede. He felt certain that unless full and sincere parity in all classes of vessel was agreed to the conference would break up with untold harm resulting from Anglo-American relations, the cause of disarmament, and the future of world peace.

A recess in the talks in mid-July to allow the British delegation to return to London for consultations with the

Cabinet produced no favorable turn of affairs. During the consultations Baldwin departed on the tour of Canada with the Prince of Wales, leaving Chamberlain in charge of the Cabinet discussions. The latter was not able to withstand new onslaughts against the parity principle by Churchill and Beatty. Even Bridgeman was incensed at the idea of returning to Geneva to say that he had exceeded his instructions in agreeing to parity. In the end Bridgeman and Cecil returned to Geneva with instructions enabling them to accept a slightly lower total tonnage in cruisers but standing fast on the requirement of 6" guns for secondary cruisers.<sup>84</sup> Cecil felt sufficiently strongly that his government's position was destructive of the goals of the conference that he warned the Cabinet that if the Geneva talks collapsed over British insistence on 6" guns for cruisers he might have to consider his resignation.<sup>85</sup>

In fact after the July recess the positions of both Great Britain and the United States had hardened. It was becoming clear to both London and Washington that a conclusion to the Geneva conference without an agreement was inevitable and probably not a totally bad thing. No agreement was preferable to an agreement which would arouse a new round of criticism and sniping by the hard-line "big navy" voices on both sides of the Atlantic. Both governments instructed their delegations to wind up the talks by restating their own positions. A final public plenary

session of the Geneva Conference was held on August 4, 1927. In their concluding remarks the heads of delegations touched on the heart of the problems which had blocked agreement. Gibson reiterated on behalf of the U.S. that his government recognized the need of Great Britain for a certain number of smaller cruisers because of her overseas bases and commitments. However, the geographical position of the United States made it necessary for the American Navy to have the larger type of cruiser with a longer cruising radius.<sup>86</sup> Bridgeman in his final statement summarized the British position as follows:

Although we stated our reason for wanting a number of small cruisers, we do not understand what are their (U.S.) reasons for demanding so many large cruisers or so many with weapons of such high offensive power as the 8" gun.<sup>87</sup>

These statements of Gibson and Bridgeman touch directly on the hidden agenda, the "great unspoken" element at Geneva. Why did the U.S. object to Great Britain's demand for a large number of cruisers? Why did Great Britain object to the U.S. desire for a more modest number of larger and more powerful cruisers? On the surface the reasons offered by both sides made perfectly good sense. But only if neither party had reason to fear the offensive power of the other. In fact the central issue of 1914-17 which could easily have led to American involvement in the war against Great Britain was still a live and unresolved issue. Under what circumstances was it permissible for one power to interfere with the trade

of another? What were the rights of belligerent and neutrals in war-time? The matter had been side-stepped at Paris and unmentioned at Washington in the interest of preserving a semblance of Anglo-American unity. At Geneva it had to surface in the form of the debate about cruisers. Both sides talked about parity, but since the real purpose of cruisers is either to protect or to destroy trade there could be no agreement about the instruments without an agreement on the policy. Each side, having omitted any real political discussion at Geneva, talked about parity, but each interpreted parity in a way most advantageous to itself. Complete naval estrangement resulted.<sup>88</sup>

The British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Esmé Howard, perhaps the best placed to sense the real American attitudes on the political level, was first to define the blockade issue as the crux of the problem at Geneva. In the final days of the conference he related to the Foreign Secretary a conversation he had held recently with Herbert Hoover, American Secretary of Commerce. At a dinner party at the home of Assistant Secretary of State William Castle the two men together with Secretary of State Frank Kellogg had been talking about the hypothetical possibility of a war between the United States and the British Empire. All regarded the idea as an "absurdity" and felt that steps should be taken on both sides to educate public opinion to realize the utter ruin, financial and economic, that such a war could bring to

both parties. Hoover followed up this conversation by a later meeting with Howard at which he outlined what he saw as the scenario for any Anglo-U.S. war. The plan's main points were:

- a) In any Anglo-U.S. war Canada would declare herself neutral.
- b) The U.S. would have to blockade Canada to prevent export of goods to Britain or Europe.
- c) The U.S. would also have to prevent Latin America from exporting to Great Britain.
- d) Great Britain would reciprocate by blockading continental Europe to prevent trade with the United States.
- e) The battle-fleets of both sides would not cross the Atlantic and would avoid conflict.
- f) The war would resolve itself into a long neutral blockade.

Howard in masterful understatement characterized these ideas of Hoover as "not without interest."<sup>89</sup>

To Chamberlain the idea not only had "interest" but it filled him with "considerable anxiety" and added that he earnestly hoped no more would ever be heard of the proposal! While the Foreign Secretary dismissed the very thought of one of His Majesty's Dominions remaining neutral in a war in which the King was involved, he drew the more important conclusion having bearing on the events at Geneva:

If the American propaganda is to be based on the hypothesis that the United States would blockade Canada and attack our food supplies everywhere...it would be taken to be the real but unavowed reason for the U.S. for demanding a number of cruisers for which they showed no necessity, and would, I imagine, create a first-class scare and lead to a demand for a cruiser fleet in excess of anything of which we have ever spoken....<sup>90</sup>

Howard replied to this letter from the Foreign Secretary a few weeks later noting that he would not follow up on this talk with Hoover for fear of stirring up "big navy" people on both sides. He added, however, that he knew that there were people within the British government (probably Churchill) who honestly believed that a war with the United States was possible and winnable by the British Empire in conjunction with Japan. On this subject he noted:

It would certainly be impossible to imagine anything more calculated to produce secession of Canada and South Africa--to say nothing of Australia--than a war against the United States carried on in alliance with Orientals.

As to the idea of a war between Great Britain and the United States Howard commented:

...it is no use our saying to ourselves that a war with America is impossible. It might come--if we allow ourselves to be taken unawares--in more than one way--e.g. owing to a conflict over "freedom of the seas" if we are again drawn into a European war, owing to League action in South America coming into conflict with the very strict interpretation the United States now places on the Monroe Doctrine....

As to Chamberlain's rejection of the thought of Canada or any Dominion not supporting the King in time of war, the ambassador offered some realism:

I can well understand that this cannot be done publicly but surely anyone who knows anything about the geographic, economic, financial and political position of Canada cannot "in petto" hold any other belief....<sup>91</sup>

Ambassador Howard called on Secretary of State Kellogg on the day the final session of the Geneva Conference was being held. He reported on that somewhat stormy interview to the Foreign Secretary two days later. Howard had drawn the definite conclusion from the Secretary of State's words that the American government had feared presenting to the Senate any naval treaty that did not guarantee parity in cruiser numbers and strength. The Senate would never accept American inferiority

...because they believe that some day--perhaps not far off--Great Britain will be involved in a European war either on account of League obligations or for some other reason, and that Great Britain will then have again to conduct a blockade. They are determined never again to allow American ships to be brought into British ports for examination or American goods to be subject to rationing systems. In fact they mean to be ready in the next naval war--unless of course they are engaged themselves--to protect 'neutral rights' to the uttermost....<sup>92</sup>

In virtually all of Howard's dispatches to the Foreign Office in July and August 1927 he emphasized the potential danger of war between the United States and Great Britain over neutral rights. Blockade was the real reason both sides wanted cruisers of a size and number to meet their needs--either to make or break blockade. Neither side was prepared yet to tackle so thorny a problem as blockade and neutral rights. That being the case the Geneva conference could never come to

agreement on parity or on cruisers.

Yet in one area related to neutral rights the U.S. and Great Britain had already come to an agreement, an agreement of significance in understanding the problems of the Geneva conference. The blockade claims of the U.S. against Great Britain dating from the pre-1917 period were an issue of potential difficulty. The full history of the resolution of those claims is outside the scope of this work, but the fact of resolution is important to know. During 1926 sub-cabinet level negotiations led by Spencer Phenix of the U.S. State Department and John J. Broderick, commercial counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington, conducted in London had reduced the original 3,500 cases to 95 worth considering. Assistant Secretary of State Alonzo Olds and Sir William Tyrrell of the Foreign Office joined the talks and succeeded in a spirit of cooperation in eliminating 83 of those cases. Only 12 cases of violations of neutral trading rights needed to be examined. Both governments were anxious to avoid renouncing any principles, yet hoped to get rid of the irritating cases. Treating these cases as bookkeeping matters essentially, the negotiators resolved all 12 cases.

The Navy Department had kept uncharacteristically quiet about these talks. We can only surmise why the General Board, normally quick to spur on any anti-British sentiment passed up the chance here. Perhaps what was at stake here was a realization that if the U.S. Navy was indeed to assume



the mantle of supreme naval force in the world from the Royal Navy it would also want to assume the British "high position" on the rights of belligerents over neutral shipping. Indeed Spencer Phenix in a report to Secretary Kellogg in November 1926 spelled this out:

There is one further aspect of the matter to which the Department should give attention and that is the position of the United States as a belligerent in the next war. We are one of the principal naval forces of the world and should we be involved in another war it would be to our interest to have our naval forces free to operate in any way which would render them most effective against the enemy. We shall undoubtedly find it necessary to restrict neutral maritime commerce with our enemy, and I think it can safely be said that our efforts in that direction might be wholly ineffectual if we limited ourselves to visit and search on the high seas. We shall unquestionably want to pursue very much the same procedure as that followed by the British. In these circumstances we should take no general position in our present discussions which might later hamper our freedom of action in case of emergency.<sup>93</sup>

If the next war were to prove to be a war of total blockade the U.S. would not want to tie its hands by principles more appropriate to a weaker and neutral power. The amicable settlement of this old pre-war issue showed that forward planning for a future war was a factor in the mind of the U.S. government, both State and Navy Departments. In this context the cruiser issue at Geneva becomes even clearer.

#### AFTERMATH OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

A criticism often made of the Geneva Conference of 1927 is that there was inadequate preparation, that there was

insufficient preliminary exploration of positions resulting in surprises at the Conference and inadequate time for reflection, consultation, and compromise. In view of what has been shown in the earlier parts of this chapter this hardly seems to be a valid criticism. The Americans had rejected the idea of formal preliminary talks. They always preferred conferences where the action really occurred rather than the type of talks toward which the British leaned, viz. formal conferences where signatures and smiles sealed agreements already made out of the public eye. But in the case of Geneva, both sides knew the basic positions of the other, principally as a result of the Geneva preparatory commission talks in 1925 and 1926, which really served as the exploratory talks for the Geneva Conference of 1927. In hindsight the principals felt that better preparation might have produced better results.<sup>94</sup> Certainly if the starting positions of both sides had not been kept secret so long the talks might have begun less acrimoniously, but it is doubtful that anything would have helped significantly.

The unsuccessful conclusion of the Geneva talks in August 1927 seemed almost to bring a sigh of relief to both the British and American governments. While there had been the most dire predictions of the negative effect on Anglo-American relations which a break-up of the conference would produce this surprisingly did not happen. Both governments were apprehensive about the effect a treaty which limited

their naval power would have on domestic bodies. Both delegations felt a sense of satisfaction that they had "stood up for principle" and refused to compromise national security and could easily blame the other side for the failure of the conference.

W.C. Bridgeman, head of the British delegation at Geneva and a First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote to the Foreign Secretary a few days after the close of the conference. His letter is almost gleeful that the Americans had been shown up as poseurs. Their delegation was described as "a terrible lot of people to deal with," their sole goal being "to twist the lion's tail." The Americans had been proven to have "no reason but conceit" for their call for large cruisers. The most positive outcome of Geneva in Bridgeman's opinion was the now improved relations between Great Britain and Japan as a result of American intransigence. The United States attitude had also disillusioned the Dominion delegates, who previously were leaning toward American positions. They now saw that they could not depend on the United States and would contribute more themselves toward an Imperial Navy. Bridgeman was willing to accept reproaches from press and some politicians about lack of preparation for Geneva and for not revealing earlier the plan of the British delegation. If he had done so "the opportunity would have been missed of exposing the impostures of the American designs and of improving our relations with the Japs...."<sup>95</sup>

The American government had symbolic endorsement of its own denunciation of the British as authors of the Geneva failure in the resignation of Lord Cecil from the British government after the failure of the conference. Cecil had always been one of the favorites of Americans, despite his close association with the League of Nations. He had been the member of the British delegation most open to the concept of full and complete parity. Chamberlain fully realized the propaganda value a Cecil departure would have for the Americans. He urged Cecil "not to take a course that would appear as a censure on the British Empire attitude and as a justification of the American delegation whose attitude and inspiration you have condemned as strongly as any of us...."<sup>96</sup> Cecil, nevertheless, persevered in his intention to resign, pointing out to Chamberlain that the conference had simply brought out the profound differences in policy toward disarmament between himself and others in the Cabinet, notably Winston Churchill. The latter had been victorious in getting the Cabinet to oppose compromise. Cecil complained that the delegation at Geneva had in effect been instructed "to manoeuvre so that the odium of the rejection of the suggestion should fall on the Americans...."<sup>97</sup> In reply the Foreign Secretary reinforced his belief that Cecil was justifying U.S. propaganda:

...by censuring your own government you by implication justify the Americans; you play straight into the hands of the Big Navy-Steel Trust gang. ...I confess that I was surprised to

find in you an advocate of the large cruiser and the big gun merely because the Americans proposed it when you would certainly have resigned had we insisted on the bigger ship and gun and the Americans taken the more reasonable position which we adopted...."

Ambassador Howard reported to the Foreign Office several times during the weeks after Geneva on American press reactions to Cecil's departure from the government. American press reports generally as expected saw Cecil's resignation as a justification of the American position at Geneva. President Coolidge had indicated that he had been hopeful even after the conference failure that a solution could be reached to Anglo-American disagreements on naval policy, but he had lost all hope now that Cecil had left the British government."

In general the public reaction on both sides of the Atlantic to the failure of the Geneva conference was muted. Public opinion in Britain had never been involved in great expectations for the conference, reflecting the limited enthusiasm of the government. Anti-American feeling on the grass roots level was running fairly high as a result of the debt settlement issue and other examples of "American high-handedness" during the mid-1920's. That no further concessions had been made to the United States at Geneva was far from a disappointment. In America Sir Esmé Howard was able to report in the first week after Geneva that press and public seemed surprisingly calm. The press had been moderate. Public opinion was not much caught up in the naval

issue. "Twisting the lion's tail" was not the fun it once had been. In the ambassador's opinion Anglo-American relations had not been seriously damaged. The worry for the future would be a revival of the issue of neutral rights.<sup>100</sup> Official American governmental reaction to the failure at Geneva came in December 1927 with President Coolidge's proposal to Congress for a massive ship building program. The "71 Ship Bill" in its original form shocked economy-minded legislators. It was probably intended more as a dramatic presidential gesture toward the big navy lobby and a sign of Coolidge's annoyance with British refusal to go along with the Geneva goal of naval economy. He also clearly wanted a bargaining chip for the 1931 naval conference (called for by the Washington agreements). In fact by February 1928 the "71 Ship Bill" had been replaced by a more modest "15 Cruiser Bill" and even that only passed Congress a year later.<sup>101</sup>

There was in fact "quiet after the storm" following the end of the Geneva Conference. In its conception, its construction, its personnel, its lack of enthusiastic backing from the home governments, the conference never had serious possibility for success. The "storm" itself had never really been that serious. It had the effect, perhaps unintended and certainly unexpected, of clearing the air in Anglo-American relations regarding naval policy. The tensions of the mid-1920's had masked the underlying issue of the competing

commercial powers and the relationship of naval power to economic power. Technical arguments about size and numbers of ships, lip-service to the principle of parity, were not getting to the heart of the matter. It took actual talk of a war scenario to awaken both sides to the realities of a new world situation which could not be hidden by niceties of "hands across the sea" rhetoric nor solved by the belligerence of big navy advocates. The calm after Geneva was a sign of maturing relations between the two world powers. The Foreign Secretary in August 1927 had closed his ears to talk of an Anglo-U.S. war. In November the Foreign Office circulated a memo to the Cabinet as a basis for discussion of the future relations between the United States and the British Empire based on an appraisal of the after-effects of Geneva, positive and negative, and realistically looking at the possibilities of future conflict.<sup>102</sup> A change in attitude together with a change of personalities in leadership in the two countries would provide a chance for a new rapprochement.

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     Modern post-war light cruisers - Britain 29, U.S. 11  
     Destroyers - Britain 193, U.S. 295  
     Submarines - Britain 65, U.S. 126  
     Pre-war heavy cruisers - Britain 0, U.S. 11  
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90. Letter - 10 August 1927, Chamberlain to Howard (private and personal): DBFP, series IA, Vol. III, #502.
91. Letter - 1 September 1927, Howard to Chamberlain (private and confidential): FO 800/261, p. 304.
92. Letter - 3 August 1927, Howard to Chamberlain: FO 414/260/9.
93. Letter - 9 Nov. 1926, Spencer Phenix to Sec. of State: F.R.U.S., 1926, Vol. II, p. 287.  
For British Foreign Office reaction to the American decision to accept the blockade claims settlement and its reactions to the issue of neutral rights see foreign Office internal correspondence in FO 115/3146/p. 301-375.
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96. Letter - 8 August 1927, Chamberlain to Cecil, Ibid.
97. Letter - 10 Aug. 1927, Cecil to Chamberlain, Ibid.
98. Letter - 14 August 1927, Chamberlain to Cecil: Baldwin Papers, Vol. 131, p. 21.
99. Memo - 11 Oct. 1927, Cabinet to Foreign Secretary, CP 244(27): CAB 24/188, p. 267.
100. Letter - 12 August 1927, Howard to Chamberlain: FO 115/3160/p. 83 ff.
101. Letter - 15 December 1927, Howard to Foreign Office: FO 115/3213/p. 108; Wheeler, Prelude to Pearl Harbor, p. 151-153.
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## CHAPTER FIVE

FROM GENEVA TO LONDON, 1927-1930: THE NEW REALISM AND  
ANGLO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT

In November 1927, three months after the close of the Geneva Conference, a prophetic memorandum was circulated within the British Foreign Office. That note analyzed the basic problem in Anglo-American relations and set the tone for the change in those relations which followed during the next two and a half years, which culminated in the London Naval Conference of 1930. George Locker-Lampson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote in November 1927 as follows:

Hitherto, so it seems to me, we have been inclined to deal with the United States from a wrong angle. We have treated them too much as blood relations, not sufficiently as a foreign country; and meeting them as blood relations we have been surprised, disappointed, and irritated by the differences that exist between us...and this has created antagonisms on their side and ours. If we had met them and dealt with them more in the ordinary way as foreigners...we should have expected dissimilarities and found them, but we should also have observed and felt approximations, and the result would have been that our relations with them would have been better and on a more friendly footing than they are today. For jealousies and differences are apt to be all the sharper between members of the same family and sects of the same creed....<sup>1</sup>

The Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, minuted this memo with the words "Very true!"

Just one year later, in November 1928, another significant memo was circulated in the Foreign Office and became the catalyst for extended debate. This memo came from

Robert Craigie, head of the American department of the Foreign Office. Craigie had recently returned from a fact finding trip to Washington at the request of the Cabinet. The specific contents of the memo need to be discussed later in this chapter, but at this point it is necessary to note that Craigie accepted and even further extended the attitudes of George Locker-Lampson. He called for a thorough reevaluation by the British government of its attitudes and policies toward the United States and the acceptance of the reality of an "American world" in which Great Britain needed to accept its altered position and the economic and strategic necessity for good relations with an awkward "ally."<sup>2</sup> The events which occurred in the year after the Geneva Conference need to be viewed in this context. It was a transitional time, full of tensions but always those tensions overlaid a growing search for some sort of accommodation between the two powers in which both were to play new roles with which neither were completely comfortable. In London especially fundamental foreign policy principles and formerly taboo subjects would have to be examined realistically and reappraised. Chamberlain and his subordinates came to be convinced that the possibility for harm from the continued tensions between the two powers was so real and so great that the Foreign Office would have to take strong initiative to overcome the opposition of other government departments and to lead the British and the American governments into a new



era of cooperation.

#### THE BLOCKADE ISSUE

Within weeks after the close of the Geneva conference discussions were held within the British Foreign Office about the root cause of the failure of those talks. The "hidden agenda" of the conference was quickly brought to the surface. Robert C. Craigie of the Foreign Office staff circulated a memo within the department which stimulated a round of discussions. The memo stated the view that behind all the American agitation over parity at Geneva lay a fundamental concern about freedom of the seas and the blockade issue. This issue, which had so bedeviled Anglo-American relations for over a century, was still very much alive. The Paris Conference after World War I had revealed a continuing serious rift between the two allies on the matter. The Washington Conference had consciously side-stepped the issue in the interest of general agreement. Geneva had failed because neither side had been ready to discuss it openly.

Craigie noted that the possibility of British involvement in a war with a third party arising out of League of Nations commitments could seriously jeopardize relations with the United States because of the likely use of blockade. He felt that due to the changed conditions of war Great Britain and the United States were probably now not so very far apart on the blockade issue. A solution could probably

be found. Craigie realized the problem the Admiralty could present. The Admiralty view would be likely to prevail, and he saw that "no doubt their present state of mind in regard to the United States is not such as to facilitate a dispassionate approach to the problem...." He believed both sides could come to an agreement and yet preserve blockade as a weapon of war. Craigie felt that little could be done while the Coolidge-Kellogg administration was in power in Washington, but the election of 1928 might open new hope.<sup>3</sup>

Correspondence between Sir Esmé Howard, Ambassador in Washington, and Sir William Tyrrell at the Foreign Office expanded on the need to resolve the blockade issue in order to resolve most other problems. Howard passed on the opinions of such American friends of Great Britain as Col. House and General Preston Brown that war was not "unthinkable" between the United States and the British Empire if the latter attempted to use full blockade in a war with a third party.<sup>4</sup> In October Craigie prepared and circulated within the Foreign Office a secret memo "respecting the possibilities of an Anglo-American agreement regulating the exercise by either Power of its belligerent right to intercept private property at sea." Attached was a 25 page analysis of present blockade practice, on the basis of which he felt an agreement could be reached with the United States. The big question was whether Washington would

ever discuss the issue, or would insist from the start on absolute renunciation of all use of the blockade. The growing opinion was that the Americans would not so insist, especially since their naval supremacy in the future seemed assured. As the United States was about to replace Great Britain as "mistress of the seas," the American government in the future would tend to take a "high position" on the use of blockade, as Britain always had in the past. Minutes from department heads attached to the Craigie memo show almost universal approval of its contents and recommended that it be sent on to Ambassador Howard. There was hesitation about any official talks yet with Washington, at least until the position of the British government in the blockade issue had been fully explored and clarified. Private channels to United States opinion might well be utilized, such as Col. House or Elihu Root.<sup>5</sup>

The discussion within the Foreign Office had a significant effect on the Foreign Secretary. Sir Austen Chamberlain in a letter to Sir William Tyrrell and later in a memo to the Cabinet expressed the clear conviction that neutral trade and the role of the cruiser was at the heart of Anglo-American tensions and the cause of the failure at Geneva.<sup>6</sup> British naval officials, he maintained, are so mindful of the defensive role of cruisers in protecting food supplies that they tend to overlook the offensive potential of cruisers. American naval authorities did not forget this.

Americans would never again submit to blockade enforcement such as they experienced in 1914-17. Chamberlain maintained that a high view of British rights in time of war would simply have to give way before a threat of war with the United States.

A committee of the C.I.D. was set up at Chamberlain's urging to study the matter of blockade policy. Although there was certainly not unanimity of opinion within the Foreign Office on how to approach the Americans on this issue there was agreement that a bilateral approach was strongly preferable to any larger international conference on the issue of maritime code. Chamberlain was anxious for a full and careful Cabinet enquiry.<sup>7</sup>

RECURRING TIDES OF TENSION: THE ISSUES OF 1928--

ARBITRATION, KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT, ANGLO-FRENCH ACCORD

The clearer thinking within the British Foreign Office about the root cause of Anglo-American friction in the area of naval policy led to an openness in the Cabinet to taking a fresh look at the problems. This new willingness to explore previously closed avenues to possible accord did not lead immediately to solutions. The year which followed the Geneva debacle produced a range of issues, old and new, which tended to cloud the new vision which Foreign Office optimists thought they had in the weeks immediately after the

conference. Each of these issues needs to be touched on briefly because each relates to the larger issue of the underlying search for a new Anglo-U.S. naval agreement. Each of them could be the subject of developed monographs in themselves, and most have been treated at length in other works. It is important for purposes of this dissertation to keep the larger goal in focus. The inability of the participants in the story to do this at the time prolonged the process of finding a basis for accord on naval policy. The always prickly nature of relations between the governments in London and Washington allowed essentially peripheral issues at times to become major ones. Hopefully in the treatment of these issues here that tendency can be avoided!

Urged on by Lord Cushendun, the successor to Lord Cecil as British representative to the League of Nations in Geneva, Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, moved for further study by the Cabinet and the C.I.D. of the belligerent rights policy as this related to relations with the U.S.<sup>8</sup> Chamberlain's action was taken in spite of strong opposition from the influential Cabinet and C.I.D. Secretary Sir Maurice Hankey, who blamed many of Great Britain's diplomatic problems on the Foreign Office. One of the anti-Americans within the cabinet circle, he waged a determined behind-the-scenes effort to hold off any concessions to the United States on the issue of freedom of the seas.<sup>9</sup> British

discussion of this issue continued through the fall of 1927. The year ended with an unfortunate flurry of cross-accusations by the London and Washington governments about alleged illegal modifications on capital ships in gun elevations in contravention of the Washington treaties. This was a strange replay of the controversy of 1924 on the same matter treated in Chapter III. In this case Secretary Kellogg had apparently allowed the charges against the British to become public while knowing full well that the U.S. Navy was engaged in exactly the same kind of modifications of some of its own ships. A potentially explosive escalation of tensions was quickly diffused. The British revealed their own secret information about American "violations" about which they had kept silent. This produced a more conciliatory tone in the Department of State, so that by January 1928 the State and Navy Departments produced a statement prepared in conjunction with the British Embassy in Washington expressing full satisfaction that, contrary to press reports, no British violations of the Washington agreements had taken place. The British in turn raised no objections to alterations Americans were engaged in on their ships.<sup>10</sup>

To the American government, peaceful relations with Great Britain in the area of naval policy were directly and simply reducible to sizes of the respective navies and the sacred principle of parity. The British government saw the

question as more complex, a goal entwined within three policy issues, viz. naval reductions, belligerent rights, and arbitration. By successfully breaking through on at least one of these issues the others would fall in place or disappear as real matters of contention. Which one would yield? The Geneva breakdown indicated little hope for advance on the naval reductions front. Strong opposition elements within both the London and Washington governments threatened progress on belligerent rights. In early 1928 the British government was beginning to hope that a new arbitration treaty might in fact be a relatively painless way of achieving naval accord.

The Bryan-Spring-Rice Treaty of 1914 was a 15-year arbitration treaty entered into by the U.S. and Great Britain whereby they agreed to submit all disputes between them which could not be settled through normal diplomatic channels to a special conciliation board and to observe a one-year cooling off period. This was one of many such bilateral agreements generated by the pacifist fervor of William Jennings Bryan, Wilson's first Secretary of State, and based on his experience as a labor negotiator. Though neither signatory had paid much attention to this treaty in the wake of World War I the British Foreign Office began to take a new interest. Renewal of an already existing and U.S. inspired treaty would not, the British assumed, raise fears in the U.S. If both sides could agree to include belligerent

rights disputes as subject to this agreement and open to conciliation perhaps a new accord could be achieved relatively painlessly without new negotiations or problems of congressional ratification.<sup>11</sup>

Unexpected developments in American domestic politics complicated matters before much progress could be made on the matter of a new arbitration agreement. Senator William Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, in February 1928 proposed a call for a new international conference on the codification of maritime law. Such a conference was the last thing the British Admiralty and Foreign Office wanted at this point. On this certainly the Kellogg State Department agreed. The administration in Washington was not pleased by this new Senate foray into formulation of foreign policy. The British government dispatched a special emissary to Washington to consult with their ambassador Sir Esmé Howard, and to provide a "second opinion" to the Foreign Office on precisely where Washington seemed to be moving in the whole area of belligerent rights and related maritime law. Robert Craigie, head of the American section of the Foreign Office, arrived in Washington in February 1928 with instructions to try to dissuade the State Department from supporting a large international conference on maritime law, or at least not to hold such a conference without prior consultations with the British government. The Cabinet wanted to win time to more clearly



formulate the British position on belligerent rights and blockade. British officials also suspected that as the U.S. had become a major naval power the American position on blockade might be very close to their own.<sup>12</sup>

Craigie arrived in Washington to find to his surprise an atmosphere in which issues of belligerence had no place! The preoccupation of the Secretary of State and the State Department was with Kellogg's proposal for an international pact renouncing war. Craigie did not even succeed in getting an interview with the Secretary of State. Based on his talks with Assistant Secretary Alonzo J. Olds, Craigie was able to report to the Foreign Office that there was no likelihood of the U.S. government calling a conference on maritime law and that there was no interest in opening up the issue of belligerent rights. He warned that this situation would not continue indefinitely and advised that unofficial approaches to Washington on this issue should continue.<sup>13</sup>

The story of the Kellogg-Briand Pact is outside the scope of this dissertation in all of its details. It has been the subject of fairly extensive analysis.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this study the Pact is mainly of interest for what it might have accomplished from the British point of view, rather than for the actual goals in the mind of Secretary Kellogg. At first the Foreign Office was both confused and amused by the proposal. A multi-lateral pact whereby the signatory states renounced war as an instrument

of national policy seemed to be a classic case of the American approach to foreign policy--impressive statements of high moral principle devoid of practical significance. Within the British government it began to be viewed as a possible way out of the belligerent rights issue. If war was to be renounced as a means of bringing pressure on an aggressor nation, surely the U.S. could not oppose economic blockade as a means of supporting verbal admonitions. The Admiralty strongly backed the Cabinet's acceptance of the Kellogg pact. Their position was simple. Each nation would renounce war and provide for its own naval needs without reference to anyone else.<sup>15</sup> In July 1928 the Cabinet approved British adherence to the Pact as a means of showing British good-will toward the Americans in the direction of world peace. Sir Austen Chamberlain in his reply to Washington noted carefully that verbal reproofs to aggressors would be useless. Refusal to aid an aggressor by trade would be a true contribution to the peace of the world.<sup>16</sup>

Although some within the Foreign Office hoped that the Kellogg Pact had created a way out of the belligerent rights problem, not all agreed. Robert Craigie, reporting to the Foreign Secretary after his return from his fact-finding mission in Washington, felt just the opposite. He believed a belligerent rights agreement with Washington was even more critical as a result of the Kellogg Pact. The Americans would now need a definite statement about the limits of

permissible maritime pressure. Craigie felt that talks could be initiated at any time now.<sup>17</sup>

The final event of the summer of 1928 which further complicated Anglo-U.S. naval agreement was the Anglo-French "naval accord" reached in July. The members of the disarmament conference preparatory commission at Geneva had been encouraged by the League to continue bi-lateral or multi-lateral talks informally even after the breakdown of the Geneva Conference in July 1927 in order to explore possible new avenues of agreement which could be discussed at another preparatory commission meeting in late 1928. During the early spring of 1928 such informal talks had gone on intermittently between professional navy men of Great Britain, France and the U.S. Unfortunately the talks never included all three nations simultaneously! Many of the points of possible agreement which these navy men discovered and exchanged never had (or needed at this early stage) the official approbation of their political superiors. The British had their own European commitments to consider always in addition to their imperial responsibilities and special relationship with the United States. France had not participated in the 1927 Geneva talks. The French believed that the Americans were open to their own position on cruisers, viz. two cruiser categories and transferable tonnage. On hearing this from the French the British naval representatives saw a chance of striking a naval accord with

France as part of a larger European defense package while at the same time evidently showing a positive approach to a policy the Americans could accept. The British feared that the United States and France might come to a separate agreement of their own.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately on July 30, 1928 Sir Austen Chamberlain was able to announce in the House of Commons a new naval accord with France. Surface vessels of 10,000 T or under if armed with no more than 6 inch guns were subject to no limitations. Cruisers over 10,000 T and any ship with 8 inch guns would be subject to limitations. This of course was precisely the point on which Anglo-U.S. talks at Geneva in 1927 had foundered.

The Anglo-French naval accord was neither a real treaty nor even a firm commitment by either party to actually do anything. It was intended as the establishment of a new talking point on which the other naval powers were invited to comment. In fact the British Cabinet in giving its approval had emphasized that no report should be given to the League preparatory commission until the reactions of foreign governments were received.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless American reactions, official and press, were quick and predictable. It appeared that the British were preparing the ground for any future naval conference by gaining allies in their attempt to put limits on the design of cruisers preferred by the Americans and to leave their own preferred smaller design unlimited. The badly handled British announcement, the delay

in publishing the full text of the accord, the premature press leaks and attitude of secrecy, all tended to confirm Americans in their suspicions of the British.<sup>20</sup>

American reaction reached the highest levels of government. Secretary Kellogg was decidedly annoyed. He was on the verge of a great diplomatic coup in the signing of his beloved Peace Pact, scheduled for August in Paris. This new wrinkle threatened his moment of glory, and perhaps might end it altogether. President Coolidge was so uncharacteristically aroused by the suspected duplicity of the British that he threatened to forbid the Secretary of State to even go to Paris for the meeting with other national representatives. The Secretary hinted at resignation in such an event, and Coolidge relented, satisfying his ire by refusing to allow Kellogg to go to Britain and Ireland as planned after the Paris signing.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of all the bungling and hasty conclusions of the political leadership in London and Washington over the Anglo-French naval accord of 1928 tensions quickly levelled off rather than escalating further. The professionals in the Foreign Office and the State Department were anxious not to let things get out of hand. Matters were greatly smoothed by the departure of Sir Austen Chamberlain from the Foreign Office on sick leave from August 1927 until November of that year and his replacement by Lord Cushendun, a man who had always gone out of his way to smooth things with the

Americans and who was evidently much trusted in American diplomatic circles.<sup>22</sup> Sir Esme Howard and his embassy staff in Washington acted quickly to try to dispel the air of secrecy around the Anglo-French accord and conveyed Foreign Office assurances that the British desired American comments on it. Although Kellogg's own trip to London was cancelled on presidential insistence the Secretary dispatched Assistant Secretary Theodore Marriner on an "unofficial visit" to London after the Paris meeting. Marriner and Cushendun held extensive talks which appear to have satisfied the American representative that the British were not "up to something." Cushendun urged Marriner to consider the start of conversations between their two governments to determine whether the difficulties at Geneva were not new "susceptible of removal." Marriner replied that the U.S. government was not opposed to some preliminary talks but felt that a full-scale conference should wait until 1931 when a new conference was called for under the 1922 Washington agreements.<sup>23</sup>

The official American reply to the British note announcing the Anglo-French accord was in fact measured and moderate. Secretary Kellogg and even the President in his more reflective moments had no desire to see their stewardship of U.S. foreign policy end on a note of alienation and bitterness toward Great Britain. The Kellogg Peace Pact established the spirit by which its author wished to be remembered by history. The Foreign Office picked up

the clues. Craigie pointed out, in a memo circulated within the Foreign Office, the clear moderation of the response from Washington, free of any of the press-inspired allegations of collusion with France. The American reply forthrightly stated the well-known American opposition to the two categories of cruiser with limits only on the larger variety. Craigie felt that for the moment little should be done with the Anglo-French accord and that a new effort at private (and probably secret) talks at the ambassadorial level at least between Great Britain and the U.S. on the related naval issues should be started before the end of the Coolidge presidency. Craigie's view as the 1928 presidential election drew nearer was that Herbert Hoover would be the likely successor to Coolidge and would also likely be harder to deal with.<sup>24</sup> Sir Esme Howard from Washington in his letters to the Foreign Office largely supported the ideas expressed by Craigie, and he further warned that Admiralty ideas about their ability to win a war against the United States could and would block successful negotiations. He emphasized that the Admiralty could not be allowed to continue to direct British foreign policy! In fact the summer and autumn of 1928 had seen the Foreign Office under increasing pressure from the Admiralty and its hard-line supporters within the Cabinet over control of the government's American policy. The crisis over the Anglo-French naval accord had brought it to a head. The First Lord of the Admiralty, W.H. Bridgeman,

had seized the opportunity of the temporary absence of the more moderate Austen Chamberlain from the Foreign Office to urge Baldwin to remain firm on a "no compromise" approach to the Americans.<sup>25</sup>

WASHINGTON AND LONDON TAKE A NEW LOOK AT BASIC ISSUES--

1929

By November 1928 the crisis over the Anglo-French naval accord had subsided. It had triggered considerable thought among the foreign policy makers on both sides about the deeper issues affecting Anglo-American relations. The election of Commerce Secretary Herbert C. Hoover to the presidency of the United States in November was a catalyst for further exploration by British diplomatic professionals of the roots of disagreement and of ways of resolving these problems. Mr. Hoover's advent contained an element of uncertainty. Some in the Foreign Office hoped that during the interregnum before his inauguration foundations could be laid for future negotiations which would provide the kind of momentum which would not be easily reversed by new political leadership at the State Department and in the White House.

These discussions within the Foreign Office had produced feeling that these problems were now matters requiring the highest level of attention even by the Prime Minister himself. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Office had to lead the way to solution and overcome the foot-dragging



objections from the Admiralty and the naval professionals. The various Cabinet committees on arbitration treaties, belligerent rights, and naval limitations could not do their work properly without a clear direction from the top about the future of Anglo-American relations.<sup>26</sup>

President Coolidge gave an address on 11 November 1928, the tenth anniversary of the Armistice and one week after the election of his successor. In it the President took a very strong anti-European line in which he blasted European use of economic recovery for military rearmament. He gave a strong push to the 15-cruiser naval construction bill before the House of Representatives, advocated the large cruiser for U.S. security and denounced foreign governments for agreements aimed at restricting classes of vessel necessary for the United States. The speech had been crafted in part by the Navy Department and the General Board, although it was a genuine expression of the President's exasperation following the Geneva Conference and Anglo-French accord. It was Coolidge's "farewell speech" and indicated that if he had failed to become a peace-maker he would at least be known in history as a leading proponent of American strength and security. The State Department had dissuaded the President from making such a speech earlier for fear of damaging the improving relations with London, but freed now from political responsibility Coolidge wanted at last to "speak his mind." The State Department comments and most American press

reaction to the Coolidge speech were mildly defensive and apologetic. Ambassador Howard reported to London that the speech should not be taken as indicative of real U.S. attitudes. It was something Coolidge just had to get off his chest!<sup>27</sup>

Assurances from the State Department that the remarks of the out-going President did not in fact represent the views of the Department supported the resolve of individuals within the British Foreign Office to go forward with a thorough re-evaluation of the complex problems of Anglo-American relations. On November 12th, Craigie circulated a memorandum within the Foreign Office entitled "Outstanding Problems Affecting Anglo-American Relations."<sup>28</sup> It was a lengthy (12 pages) and complete analysis of the interlocking problems, all maritime related, and its tone was set by its opening sentence: "It is safe to say that at no time since 1920 have Anglo-American relations been in so unsatisfactory a state as at the present moment." The Author stated plainly that war was not unthinkable between Great Britain and the United States. On the contrary there existed in 1928 all the factors which in the past had led to war between states. things could not be allowed to drift from bad to worse. The principal items of contention were: a naval limitations agreement, the belligerent rights issue, the conclusion of an arbitration treaty, and the possible Senate objections to British reservations to the Kellogg Pact. Craigie referred

also to the war reparations issue as a related but secondary matter. The matter of British war debts to the U.S., a burning issue in the immediate post-war years, had been amicably settled by negotiations in 1923 handled in part by Stanley Baldwin, then chancellor of the exchequer, and by Chamberlain who had preceded him in the post. The reparations question had reemerged more recently with German efforts to get an early end to the Rhineland occupation. Craigie felt this matter was not purely an Anglo-American concern.<sup>29</sup> Concerning the interrelatedness of the other issues, Craigie commented:

So interconnected are these problems that a failure to solve one of them may result in all being left in a state of suspended animation. Conversely, the solution of one tends to smooth the way for the settlement of the next....<sup>30</sup>

Factors which dictated a policy of good relations with the United States were summarized as follows:

- a.) the close parallel of interests between the two countries coupled with the overwhelming superiority of the U.S. in every way;
- b.) the strain on imperial relations resulting from estrangement from the United States;
- c.) popular support within Great Britain for good relations with the U.S.;
- d.) the need for good relations with U.S. to provide foundation for greater influence in European circles;
- e.) absolute necessity for financial good relations;

f.) U.S. and Great Britain are each other's best customers for exports;

g.) the need for Great Britain to take the "steadier view" and open initiatives for improvement of relations, even though the U.S. stood to gain as much as Great Britain from improvement.<sup>31</sup>

Craigie went on to attack the notion, currently popular in Cabinet circles, that Great Britain should seek "settlement without the United States" to issues of disarmament, security, and European affairs. While he noted that firmness was always necessary in negotiating with the Americans and that a "quid pro quo" should always be sought, political considerations always needed to be kept to the fore.

...in dealing with matters such as naval limitation, belligerent rights, and the arbitration treaty, it seems important to weigh carefully the political implications against technical considerations before allowing the latter to stand in the way of a settlement....<sup>32</sup>

Craigie's memo went on to explore the urgent question of naval disarmament, the most immediate problem and the most promising area for breaking open the vicious circle of closely related issues. He concluded that fear of competition and of a British "foreign menace" is what kept American naval expansion alive.

Remove that fear by the conclusion of a naval agreement and the movement in favour of a fleet 'second to none' will lose momentum. There must be parity on paper, but this does not necessarily involve parity on the seas, because the United States will most certainly not 'build up' to the full limits sanctioned by a treaty....<sup>33</sup>

He warned that Great Britain would have to concede mathematical parity to the United States. No other definition of parity would ever be acceptable to the Americans. Craigie was convinced that President Coolidge would still be open in these final weeks of his administration to rectify the Geneva failure with a new agreement. He felt that the "notoriously difficult" Hoover would be likely to take a resolutely "nationalist" attitude when he took office.<sup>34</sup>

A few days after submitting this significant memorandum Craigie held talks in London with American Assistant Secretary of State William Castle. The two men agreed that now was the time for informal talks between London and Washington at which expert opinion would not be allowed to predominate. Castle assured Craigie that approaches by the British government would be met in a conciliatory way by Washington. Even President Coolidge at a press conference about this time expressed willingness to discuss any new naval limitations proposals the British might be prepared to make.<sup>35</sup>

The Craigie memorandum on the future of Anglo-American relations had the effects its author had desired. Discussions in the Cabinet were spirited and revealed in the final weeks of 1928 a lack of real unity of approach within the government. The Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, had been impressed with the clarity of the

presentation which was helping him to re-think his own feelings about American policy. He urged the Cabinet to take the suggestions seriously. Chamberlain wanted to make new proposals to Washington, but he feared that there could never be a program of naval limitations acceptable to the Americans which would be also acceptable to the Admiralty.

Concrete proposals for a new scheme for naval limitations were emerging on both sides. Allen Dulles, the State Department political advisor to the American delegation at the Geneva Conference of 1927, proposed in an article in Foreign Affairs, which appeared in late November 1928, a new plan for flexibility in evaluating "strategic parity" of ships. Craigie was quick to seize on this American suggestion by circulating a proposal of his own embodying major ideas taken from the Dulles article. It included a limit of 15 of the 10,000T big cruisers. There would be two categories of light cruisers, 8000T and 6000T with a total limit of 250,000T. There would be compensating arrangements for powers preferring the smaller cruisers with transferral of a percentage of cruiser tonnage between categories. The Admiralty was asked for its comments on the Dulles and Craigie plans.<sup>36</sup>

The Craigie memo of November 12th on Anglo-American policy was strongly attacked in the Cabinet at its meeting on November 21 by Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and defended by Chamberlain. Churchill followed

his usual line opposing any concessions to the American and any further naval limitations in the interest of Anglo-American harmony. A "get tough" policy was the only policy to follow in dealing with the fickle and undependable Americans.<sup>37</sup> The Cabinet meeting of December 7 was set aside for a wide-ranging discussion of British policy toward the United States. In preparation for it the Cabinet had received a collection of documents on the whole subject. The Foreign Secretary discussed each of the component parts of the problems existing between London and Washington: the Anglo-French accord, arbitration treaty renewal, limitation of naval armaments, belligerent rights at sea. Chamberlain at this point summarized his view that belligerent rights policy was the root of all the other problems, and he made certain proposals on the topic. Discussion lasted the whole day with Chamberlain advocating a new approach to the United States through a revised stand on belligerent rights and naval limits. Churchill was joined in vocal opposition by Lord Salisbury (Lord Privy Seal) and W.H. Bridgeman (Admiralty). The discussion was adjourned until after the Foreign Secretary's return from the Lugano talks and the next session of the League of Nations Council in Geneva.<sup>38</sup>

Chamberlain and the Foreign Office were further disheartened about the prospects for a new British approach to relations with the United States by another response of a negative kind. The C.I.D. sub-committee chaired by Lord

Salisbury studying belligerent rights policy had indicated its intention to report out a proposal advocating retention of a high position on belligerent rights and opposition to any conferences on the subject. A few weeks later the Admiralty responded negatively to the Dulles plan for naval limitations, following the recommendations of the professional Naval Staff. The Admiralty saw no way of achieving parity between the large 8" gun cruisers and the smaller cruisers with 6" guns. Chamberlain replied to the Admiralty, expressing his disappointment about the response. Bridgeman had recently given a speech in which he said that Great Britain should pay no attention to U.S. naval building plans. Chamberlain agreed but pointed to the inconsistency of this view with the Admiralty's obvious concern about maintaining British comparability to U.S. strength.<sup>39</sup>

BRITISH ANXIETY ABOUT THE ADVENT OF THE HOOVER  
ADMINISTRATION ON DEVELOPING ACCORD WITH THE UNITED  
STATES

There was considerable anxiety in the British Foreign Office in the early weeks of 1929 prior to the inauguration of Herbert Hoover to the American presidency. A new accommodation with the United States government was strongly desired. There was some feeling that the departure of President Coolidge and Secretary Kellogg could reduce chances of success. Both men had at times been vociferously anti-



British in public statements, but it was felt that real policy was not their strong point. Their "bark was worse than their bite." Herbert Hoover on the other hand seemed to have a clear policy about American economic power. As Secretary of Commerce he had been an outspoken proponent of an aggressive search for foreign markets and opposition to monopolies and international cartels which closed off trade areas. Specifically Hoover had irked British officials in the 1924-26 period by his denunciation of British monopoly of crude rubber production. Hoover's lead had inspired an American-funded propaganda campaign against British control of sources of rubber. The President-elect had been described in one Foreign Office memo as "nothing less than a cold, aggressive nationalist--an efficient calculating machine who will push commercial and maritime competition with the country to the utmost."<sup>40</sup> Could an accommodation ever be reached with such a "bete noir"? This was a concern of the Foreign Office, recognizing as it did the problem of its own "nationalists" in the Cabinet.

It was generally agreed that the issue of belligerent rights was at the bottom of all the other areas of conflict: Craigie in his earlier memo on the future of Anglo-American relations had recommended naval limitations as the most promising side from which to attack the triangle. His opinion changed. In early January he began to urge an approach to a new arbitration treaty with the United States

without any British reservations about issues arising out of belligerent rights. In his view the Kellogg Pact made such reservations no longer necessary. The arbitration treaty would be a favorable step toward a later settlement of belligerent rights and might make the latter a dead issue. The Foreign Secretary was not absolutely convinced and felt that his professional advisors were now contradicting their earlier advice, but he was willing to explore new avenues.<sup>41</sup>

One month later Sir Austen Chamberlain had been converted to the new approach. In a "strictly private, personal, and confidential" letter to Sir Esmé Howard in Washington the Foreign Secretary Chamberlain revealed that at last he had a policy! He noted the triad of problems: naval strength, arbitration treaty, and belligerent rights. Previously he had felt along with most people at the Foreign Office that the third was the one on which to concentrate. Now he felt certain it was the second. He wrote:

What worries me in the conduct of foreign affairs, as in other things is when I myself do not know what I want--in short when I have not got a policy. This has been my position ever since the break-down of the Geneva Conference, and it has caused me more anxiety than anything else in our foreign relations. Now at last I see the light....

Actually Chamberlain's "light" was not all that new. As noted earlier in this chapter the Foreign Secretary had shown great interest in using a revision of the 1914 Bryan-Spring Rice arbitration treaty, an American-initiated agreement, as a way out of the dilemma. Pursuit of this line had been

ended by American concentration of energy on the Kellogg Pact in 1928. Chamberlain did not know how many of the Cabinet he could count on in this matter, but he was convinced that contrary to the policy of all previous British governments disputes arising out of belligerent rights should be included under any new arbitration treaty with the United States. He proposed now a three-point program: 1.) acceptance of a slightly revised version of the arbitration treaty proposed by Secretary Kellogg but never acted on in London; 2.) abandonment of the search for a paper parity formula. Let the U.S. build whatever large cruisers it wanted provided Great Britain could build as many small cruisers as it wanted; 3.) strong representation to the government in Washington to give up the idea of an international conference on belligerent rights, unless the goal was merely codification of existing practice as accepted by the U.S. Navy Manual. Such a policy, Chamberlain felt, would "cut the knot in which we have been entangled and would place our relations with American on a wholly new and what should be a very friendly basis."<sup>42</sup> Chamberlain's feeling that his earlier hope for settlement of the belligerents rights issue had to be abandoned was further confirmed by discussions in Cabinet where a "high" position was agreed on. He warned the American Ambassador about the grave difficulties in any international conference on maritime law, so far apart were the American, British, and European views. Ambassador

Houghton agreed and replied that the new Hoover administration would want time to consider its own position.<sup>43</sup>

HERBERT HOOVER AS PRESIDENT -- POLICY REEVALUATION IN  
WASHINGTON AND NEW TALKS IN GENEVA

The inauguration of Herbert Clark Hoover as president of the United States in March 1929 opened a new stage in Anglo-American relations. The British government had been fearful of the effect of his advent on efforts at naval limitations and settlement of belligerent rights issues. As Secretary of Commerce, Hoover had spearheaded an aggressive policy for expansion of American commerce in overseas markets. British industry saw this growth of American trade overseas as a direct challenge to British commercial dominance. Through the Commerce Department's Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce with its commercial agents in overseas capitals, Hoover had been in a position to conduct a semi-independent foreign policy not always appreciated by the professional diplomatists at the State Department. The British Foreign Office was anticipating, as has been shown, the launching of an aggressive trade war vigorously pursued under a Hoover presidency.<sup>44</sup> In Fact Hoover, while a strong advocate of American business expansion, saw the success of this policy to be closely linked with an atmosphere of international cooperation. Hoover was the most international minded

president in a decade, and he was determined to bring the United States into the forefront of the movement for peace and disarmament. High on the list of foreign policy priorities for his administration was the elimination of friction with Great Britain especially in the area of naval competition.<sup>45</sup> His appointments to the offices which related to the key issues in Anglo-U.S. policy were promising for possible improvement in those relations. Henry L. Stimson, the new Secretary of State, and Charles Francis Adams III, the new Secretary of the Navy, were open-minded men with positive attitudes, well-liked by their British counterparts. In his appointment of Admiral William V. Pratt as chief of Naval Operations early in 1930 Hoover brought into that key position the most forward looking member of the General Board.<sup>46</sup>

The principal officials at the State Department in the early years of the Hoover administration formed a cohesive and cooperative team with a sufficiently internationalist outlook to provide a stable foundation for new openings to the world. Hoover had for political reasons offered the State Department to Senator Borah who refused it, probably to Hoover's relief. Henry L. Stimson had long experience in government and politics and a broad knowledge of the world. He was a relaxed and affable individual, highly intelligent but with a sense of humor. He provided a contrast to the more intense and rather aloof and humorless Hoover, but the

two men liked and trusted one another. Stimson's Undersecretary and frequent "stand-in" was Joseph P. Cotton, a State Department professional known as a "liberal" on international questions. William R. Castle, who had served in the department since 1919 and was an acknowledged expert on European affairs was Assistant Secretary. J. Theodore Marriner, involved with British negotiations during the 1920's, continued as Chief of the Division of Western European affairs.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike his predecessor in office Hoover had a personal interest in foreign policy, an ability to master details while keeping sight of the broader issues, and a business man's determination to run a unified administration under his personal control. The independent and often conflicting policies of executive departments were to be brought under central direction. Supremely confident of the rightness of his own ideas and of his ability to carry them out Hoover had no intention of being blocked by the "professionals" of any department.

Hoover still believed in the old spirit of "Anglo-Saxon" unity, although with the United States now in the role of senior partner in the relationship. He felt that positive association rather than competition was the key to the future for the two powers. Hoover had consistently favored a "loose associationalism" in foreign affairs comparable to the kind of associationalism he advocated for economic development in

domestic policy. He preferred this kind of voluntary and positive cooperation between nations to any institutional structures of a permanent or semi-permanent kind. International financial consortia of the type promoted in China, multi-national corporations, shared markets--these types of international relationships would deter ruthless and wasteful competition of the sort that traditionally led to wars. Hoover always believed that limited and carefully considered naval and political involvement with other nations, particularly those with very similar interests such as Great Britain was good and fostered economic growth and international peace. He opposed both the extremes of a "self-righteous" internationalism of Wilson and of the kind of nationalism represented by Senator Borah.<sup>48</sup> Naval competition was wasteful of the economic resources of both countries, and the efficiency loving Hoover was determined to break through the old deadlocks and find a solution to naval limitations and related naval issues which for a decade had bedeviled Anglo-American relations. This change in attitude was the absolutely essential foundation for change in policy. Old problems could now be looked at in a new light.

The League of Nations preparatory commission on disarmament was scheduled to resume its discussions in Geneva in April 1929. Within weeks of the inauguration of the Hoover administration it appeared that the preparatory commission might be the forum in which the break-through in

Anglo-U.S. discussions could occur. Already in March Secretary of State Stimson issued new instructions to Hugh Gibson, once again head of the American delegation in Geneva. The Secretary told the Ambassador that while the United States favored limitation by tonnage the government in Washington was open to other ideas, including the French proposal of combining total tonnage with tonnage by category. The United States would be prepared to accept this as a basis for discussion, provided all types of vessels were included for limitation. Stimson emphasized that the general American goal for future conferences was not just limitations in sizes of ships but actual reduction in numbers of ships as well.<sup>49</sup> The President himself, in commentary to the American press on hopes for the forthcoming Geneva talks, brought forward the concept of the "yardstick" for measuring comparative strengths of naval forces. Hoover said:

One of the biggest problems in naval limitation is to find a method of valuation of fighting strength. This is not merely a matter of tonnage but also of speed and age. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding regarding this. If the coming conference can find a system of evaluating fighting strength it will have made a major contribution to naval limitation. The U.S. looks forward to its success....<sup>50</sup>

These new American ideas made their official public appearance in Ambassador Gibson's opening address to the preparatory commission in Geneva on April 9th in which he expressed American willingness to discuss naval limitation along category lines proposed earlier by the French. He also



noted that the U.S. government would not insist on mathematical parity in all classes of ship. A formula could be developed that would make it possible for some nations to have more tonnage than others, yet with equality of power.<sup>51</sup> The new "smiling face" of the United States at the Geneva talks was welcome, but the real advances were made behind the scenes of the official discussions. Informal talks took place during April and May 1929 between the heads of the British and American delegations as well as between the naval advisors to the two delegations, Admiral Horace Kelly of the Royal Navy and Admiral Hillary Jones of the U.S. Navy General Board. Admiral Jones had been a principal American delegate at the stalemated Geneva Conference of 1927. His general intransigence and his suspicions of the British during these talks had been regarded by the British as a principal cause of the failure of that conference. His suspicions were by no means gone, but his new openmindedness of approach reflected the change in attitude and the new control of the professionals by the civilian leadership in Washington. The Kelly-Jones conversations were frank ones between two straight-forward naval men during which their concerns were laid out clearly. Jones stated his reasons for opposing British suggestions for further reductions in battleships and carriers and his disbelief in the British need for so many cruisers to protect food supply lines. Kelly reassured Jones about the total absence of any Admiralty plans for possible

war with the United States. Jones in turn clarified American fears about a conflict between the two powers arising out of a war between either and another power where issues of neutral trade and commerce might arise. Nevertheless Jones gave his backing and that of his government for the idea of a new Anglo-U.S. naval agreement coterminous with the life of the Washington Treaty, and one which would be based on a naval freeze at present levels. The British Cabinet, though cautious about reacting to these encouraging signs at Geneva, was sufficiently hopeful to consider a renewal of the recessed Cabinet talks on Anglo-American relations.<sup>52</sup>

The State Department and the Foreign Office gave strong and definite leads to their representatives in Geneva. Both governments were anxious to stay "private" in their exchanges until the proper moment. A fear of any premature press comment was based on the unfortunate role of the American press at Geneva in 1927. Both sides wanted to subordinate "expert" opinion to broader political considerations which might underlie so-called "special needs" of the other power. The British were becoming aware that the government in Washington was not anxious to take up the thorny matter of belligerent rights until after a meaningful naval reduction agreement had been reached and perhaps not even then.<sup>53</sup> Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British Foreign Secretary, was particularly happy to know from the private talks at Geneva about President Hoover's earnest desire to place Anglo-

American relations on a friendly footing. He felt certain that Hoover understood Great Britain's need for small cruisers. He also sensed that Hoover was no more interested than the British government in attacking the issue of belligerent rights through any conference on maritime law. The Foreign Secretary felt that the moment for talks between a British Cabinet minister and the new President was near and that these talks should take place soon after the forthcoming British parliamentary election.<sup>54</sup>

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN LONDON IN 1929 AND ITS EFFECT ON  
NEW ANGLO-AMERICAN DISCUSSIONS

The outcome of the election in May 1929 was not what Sir Austen had expected, and it added a new and potentially positive element toward resolution of Anglo-American difficulties. The Conservatives lost their majority in the House of Commons in the elections of May 30th. The Labor Party, though lacking an absolute majority, became the single largest party. Baldwin hesitated briefly, then resigned. By June 2, Ramsay MacDonald and the Laborites had been invited by the King to form a new government. With new administrations in place in both Washington and London could the "heritage" of misunderstanding dating from the abortive 3-Power Geneva Conference of 1927 now be totally swept away? MacDonald had been critical of the previous government's approach to disarmament. The Labor Party's traditional

pacifist stance would further assure that a hard line from London on naval policy would no longer be a stumbling block to effective negotiations. MacDonald did not retain the office of Foreign Secretary himself as he had done in his 1924 government. Although Arthur Henderson filled that position, MacDonald as Prime Minister was to be active in the foreign policy field and intended to take an active and directing role in any negotiations with Washington. This assured that he would take an active and directing role in any negotiations with Washington.

Almost simultaneous with the advent of the new Labor government a new American ambassador arrived in London, Charles Gates Dawes, Vice President under President Coolidge, had been appointed by President Hoover in April to be Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Dawes was a practical, direct, no-nonsense, business type like the President himself. He had a genial personality, a gift for negotiation, and like Hoover, a genuine desire to cut through the know of naval problems and arrive at a new understanding. A MacDonald-Dawes combination seemed to bode well for diplomatic and political success in London, which would be communicated to Washington. It would be far different from the always touchy Chamberlain-Houghton relationship.

However great the potential for cordial relations in London between the new Prime Minister and the new American ambassador the relationship also had its possible dangers.

MacDonald and Dawes were both frank, open-minded men, who refused to let details get in the way of grand schemes! But broad agreements can often be wrecked by the specifics on which they ultimately have to rest. This was especially true in the case of the prickly business of Anglo-American relations in the field of naval policy. Both men were very clear that they did not intend to let the "experts" get in the way of a new naval agreement. Their public statements on this point were quite candid and quite alarming to the "experts" of the Royal Navy, the Admiralty Board and the General Board of the U.S. Navy.<sup>55</sup>

In the final analysis both men would have to deal with their respective naval and diplomatic professionals. The memories, experience, and consequent caution of the Foreign Office and Admiralty in London and of the State Department and Navy Department in Washington would inevitably be brought to bear on the exuberance of the two new arrivals on the scene. Political and intra-governmental issues in both London and Washington would as always complicate matters. In the months between June 1929 when MacDonald came into office and January 1930 when the London Naval Conference opened, the differences in constitutional structure of the British and American governments had a great deal to do with the creation of problems which the personalities on both sides sought to avoid.

Ramsay MacDonald was a head of government as well as

chief foreign policy formulator. As Prime Minister he was the chief of a collective executive who had to carry his Cabinet colleagues with him in developing and carrying through a policy. Once a policy was agreed on its legislative enactment was not a problem. But reaching a policy agreement involved debate among ministers who were advised and influenced to some degree by their civil servants and professional staff. MacDonald would finally have to come to terms with the Admiralty.

Hoover's problem was different. As President he commanded the executive. His Cabinet were not equals but subordinates, who had to accept his policies and carry them out, however slowly and reluctantly. But Hoover would have to deal with an independent legislative body with ideas of its own on policy. Hoover might be able to control his Navy Department but he would have to develop a policy which was acceptable to congress. The Admiralty wanted maximum security even at the risk of accepting parity. Congress (and the President) wanted economy through reductions in the navy. Finding a common ground would not be easy, not nearly as MacDonald and Dawes thought in June 1929.<sup>56</sup>

#### EARLY TALKS AND PRELIMINARY PROBLEMS IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW ANGLO-AMERICAN NAVAL CONFERENCE

The British and American governments had reached a point of mutual agreement by June 1929 that a three-power or a

five-power naval conference should be held as soon as practicable, either conjointly or separately from the sessions of the preparatory commission in Geneva. Prior to such a conference there should be a high level meeting (either ministerial or heads of government) between representatives of the United States and Great Britain. It was left to the ambassador in London, Charles G. Dawes, to do the preparatory work for this meeting to determine its location, and to clarify the areas of agreement and existing difference in policy.

The "talks about talks" between Dawes and MacDonald proceeded very smoothly. At their various meetings both in London and at the Prime Minister's home in Scotland during June and July 1929 Dawes was joined in the discussions by Ambassador Gibson from Geneva. MacDonald was assisted by Craigie and others from the Foreign Office. Naval personnel were never included in the talks. Craigie and Gibson also held separate private talks. MacDonald and Craigie were anxious to move as swiftly as possible to the official formal conference and to let the Americans take the lead in determining location and agenda. It was even suggested that Washington might be the best site in order to lessen American congressional suspicions about the conference and to more directly involve President Hoover in the proceedings. The Americans were clear that the call to the conference should come from London--and that the talks should take place there.

The Japanese government would be much more favorably disposed to participate under those conditions.

Dawes and especially Gibson were anxious to have preliminary agreement on major points even before the proposed visit of the Prime Minister to the United States in the autumn and certainly before the official conference began. The apparent British desire to skip the preliminaries was a reversal of their normal policy about international conferences, as seen in the earlier section of this paper dealing with the Washington Conference of 1921. The Americans, however, had learned from their experiences at Geneva in 1927 and were unwilling to risk a highly publicized formal conference if agreement had not already been assured.<sup>57</sup> By July 18th Dawes was able to inform Secretary of State Stimson that conversations had produced basic agreement on major points. The British had agreed to parity with the United States even in cruisers, although the hint of a problem was dropped. Dawes noted regarding cruiser parity: "We have agreed, however, that the somewhat differing situations of our two countries will be resolved by the construction of a yardstick and I am waiting for your proposals regarding this...."<sup>58</sup> Measurement of the "differing needs" of Great Britain and the United States and how to balance them, the critical issue at Geneva, was not yet a dead issue. The ambassador pressed the State Department to produce the "yardstick" on which everyone's



hopes seemed to depend.

On July 24th the British government made public its agreement to the principle of naval parity with the United States even in the cruiser category. Prime Minister MacDonald in a speech in the House of Commons announced this momentous step.

We have agreed upon the principle of parity. We have agreed that without in any way departing from the conditions of parity, a measure of elasticity can be allowed so as to meet the peace requirements of the two nations, and we have determined that we shall not allow technical points to over-ride the great public issues involved in our being able to come to a settlement....<sup>59</sup>

This announcement from London was welcomed, if cautiously, from Washington. The Secretary of State referred to parity as "this beneficent principle" the only doctrine by which "two proud nations...could agree to be friends and eliminate the thought of war between them." President Hoover described MacDonald's statement as a secure basis for future Anglo-American cooperation. He noted, however, that the British at present were in a position of superiority and that the U.S. would postpone construction of new ships until the full meaning of parity had been explored.<sup>60</sup>

This restrained euphoria over parity in principle quickly turned to disappointment over parity in practice. The matter of tonnage and numbers of ships had now to be settled, and attention to this matter revived the old issues of absolute vs. relative naval needs, cruiser categories, and

all the ghosts of Geneva 1927. The Admiralty in its most recent statement about general needs had specified that cruiser strength should be sufficient "to ensure adequate security for British territory, together with freedom of sea passage to and from all parts of the Empire...." This "sufficient number" of cruisers was set at 70.<sup>61</sup> Only a few days after MacDonald's statement in the House of Commons conceding parity the State Department summarized its understanding of the status of the preliminary talks going on in London. The department reports noted that one of the still unsettled issues was how to reduce naval building and proposed an upper limit of 250,000 tons for cruisers.<sup>62</sup> The British wanted parity with security; the Americans wanted parity with economy. Security Americans felt, could be provided for both sides at lower numbers!

The British government fully realized that the 70 figure was not realistic as a basis for discussion with the Americans. MacDonald was able to tell Dawes on July 29 that the British would be satisfied with 60 cruisers, 15 of the larger 8" gun variety and 45 of the smaller 6" type. The British were willing to concede 18 of the large type to the Americans and to allow the U.S. to build ten new 6" cruisers. The Prime Minister explained that he thought he could get these figures down further in the context of a general conference where limits for all nations could be lowered. Dawes was obviously satisfied with this definition of parity

and communicated it with some pleasure to the State Department.<sup>63</sup>

This news hit Washington like a bombshell. Reaction was swift and withering. Within hours after the Dawes telegram was circulated within the State Department the Division of Western European Affairs sent a memo to the Secretary of State pointing out that:

If the British proposals were put into practice, they would result in a marked increase in the cruiser fleets of the two countries, both as to numbers and to tonnage, instead of the hoped for reduction. Moreover, the British would have 22 units and about 80,000T more than the United States....<sup>64</sup>

Secretary of State Stimson hastened to notify Dawes and through him the government in London of the dismay felt in Washington over this latest British proposal. He noted "insurmountable obstacles" to agreement with the proposals because:

- 1.) the principle of decrease in naval armament is totally abdicated.
- 2.) the principle of parity and equality between the navies of Great Britain and the United States, the crux of which rests in the cruiser class, is abandoned.

A few hours after his first telegram Stimson cabled Dawes with a more lengthy and reflective piece, in a more private and political vein. The Secretary felt that MacDonald had been won over by the Admiralty which had gone back to all their old demands. He also noted that MacDonald was departing from the fundamental concept that naval needs of nations are relative, "the whole basis of our efforts to

reach an agreement."<sup>65</sup> The British and Americans appeared to be reversing their respective positions at Geneva in 1927 on absolute vs. relative naval needs. In addition the British seemed to be moving back to the idea of two cruiser categories, an idea the Americans had rejected at Geneva, preferring to set limits on total cruiser tonnage to be used as each nation preferred. The U.S. still objected to being forced to have parity by building a type of cruiser it did not want.<sup>66</sup> Ambassador Dawes was clearly shocked and disappointed at the strong reaction from Washington to the MacDonald proposal on parity definition. Both he and Gibson who had participated in the discussions were sympathetic to the Prime Minister's situation and believed in the genuineness of his commitment to naval disarmament. While obediently passing on to the British government the replies from Washington Dawes privately urged Stimson to consider carefully MacDonald's domestic political situation. He described the Prime Minister as a "statesman who is ground between the millstones of his own Admiralty propositions and the American proposals." Dawes felt that if the American government could be cooperative at this point MacDonald would be able to meet the test of a showdown with the Admiralty. MacDonald too was disappointed at Washington's reaction, but he and Dawes resolved not to discontinue their consultations. Stimson in turn agreed that talks should continue, while pointing out that the "yardstick" which the U.S. had proposed

was intended to measure steps to reduction not increase in naval power.<sup>67</sup>

During August and September 1929 there occurred a kind of replay of the Geneva argumentation of 1927. Why did the U.S. want 23 large cruisers? Why did the British need 45 small cruisers? What really constituted need? Were naval needs absolute in number or relative to naval power of potential enemies? Agreement on parity in cruisers had not solved anything it seemed. But in fact that agreement had solved a great deal. It had shifted the debate from the realm of national emotion to the area of mathematics, naval engineering, and cost efficiency. These were areas where men of good will and practical knowledge could eventually come to compromises which would be politically acceptable. All the political actors in the 1929 debate wanted a solution. The arguments were carried out on a relatively high plane of political civility and personal respect, which had been absent at Geneva in 1927. The professional naval personnel were very much under wraps as public exponents of government positions. The two heads of government were directly involved in the negotiations. Washington preferred to work through its own ambassador in London, Dawes, who had direct access to the Prime Minister rather than through the British Ambassador in Washington, still Sir Esmé Howard, whose personal links to MacDonald were tenuous and who of necessity had to communicate through a Foreign Office bureaucracy.

Both sides wanted significant naval reductions. Both sides wanted parity which actually looked like parity and could be defended before their political constituents. This had in some way to be linked to quantitative definitions.<sup>68</sup> A "yardstick" for comparing naval strength which would take into account not only ship tonnage but also gun calibre, age, and other factors, was an essential need in determining parity if actual ship numbers were not to be equal. The determination of the "yardstick" was an assignment which Hoover and Stimson had given to the Navy Department and specifically to the General Board. It was in fact the only role they wanted the Navy to play in these new negotiations between the American and British governments. Dawes and MacDonald in London had both agreed that any future formal talks should be conducted by the civilian departments free of influence from the "naval experts." Hoover was very much in accord with this idea. The navy men were to be confined to providing requested information on technical matters. The President soon discovered that exclusion of the Navy from the preliminary talks would have repercussions. The General Board delayed and used all manner of obstructions when asked to produce a "yardstick formula." Ultimately a frustrated Stimson produced his own "yardstick" proposal, which of course the General Board rejected.<sup>69</sup>

MacDonald continued to repeat the British lack of concern about the size of the U.S. Navy as such. He noted

though that to allow the U.S. to have even 21 of the larger cruisers produced a danger of Japanese insistence on a proportional increase in the number of large cruisers in the Japanese Imperial Navy, a development which would genuinely alarm the British government. Only in this sense would Great Britain be affected by American naval building.<sup>70</sup>

The Prime Minister was a firm believer in face to face diplomacy. He was anxious for a personal meeting with President Hoover during which he was convinced a way through the maze of statistics could be found. Ambassador Hugh Gibson was inclined to agree, and he urged Secretary Stimson to facilitate such a meeting. Dawes on the other hand, now greatly experienced in relating to MacDonald for whom he had a strong affection and respect, was against such a meeting of government heads as yet. He advised the Secretary of State to hold off. MacDonald tended to act spontaneously and to make well-intended promises from which he frequently later had to backtrack. It was better to tie down all details before any personal meeting.<sup>71</sup>

As negotiations continued both sides began to give ground in the hopes of a reasonable solution. The British provided the first significant new breakthrough when MacDonald succeeded in getting the Admiralty to lower its demand for a minimum number of cruisers from 60 to 50, 15 of the large 8" variety and 35 of the smaller type, with a total cruiser tonnage of 339,000T. For some time the Secretary of

State had been holding private personal meetings with individual Admirals on the General Board of the U.S. Navy in the vain hope of creating a consensus for a new American response. Finally President Hoover summoned a meeting at the White House on September 11th attended by the Secretaries of State and Navy and the full General Board at which he lectured the Navy men about the need for a broader vision and an openness to the development of a yardstick to effectively compare the American and British navies. As a result the General Board under presidential pressure agreed to accept as parity with the proposed British fleet an American cruiser fleet of 315,000T made up of 21 large 8" cruisers and 15 of the smaller cruisers including 5 new ones. On the following day this news was conveyed to the Prime Minister by Ambassador Dawes adding the President's comments on the advantages of having a proposal which carried the "enthusiastic and candid support of our Naval Board" and which he presumed would have the support of the Admiralty as well. The only remaining point of friction was the 21 large cruisers requested by the Americans. The British would concede only 18 large cruisers. with 8" guns. On this the President through Dawes commented:

...out of our perfected settlements concerning all categories perhaps 1,200,000T in each of our respective fleets, we are down to this small difference..... The President thinks that when we consider all these things and realize 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, and when we realize how strongly the people behind us desire disarmament and peace, he



feels sure that we could, between the two governments, compromise these small differences. The President earnestly wishes Mr. MacDonald to visit the United States....<sup>72</sup>

On the following day the Prime Minister reported to the full Cabinet on these latest developments. He noted gratefully the Admiralty's cooperative spirit in reducing its cruiser demands to 50. The problem was still the U.S. desire for 23 large cruisers with a willingness to accept a reduction to 21. The British government was still forced to oppose more than 18 because of likely Japanese demands for 3.5 ratio to the United States, giving Japan power in the Pacific far in excess of the British ability to balance it. The Prime Minister felt that the margin of difference now between British and American negotiation positions was such that he would now go to the United States and work out final details with Hoover personally. Furthermore he now proposed to issue formal invitations to the five Naval powers to a conference in London to meet in January 1930. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Albert V. Alexander, reminded the Prime Minister that in his negotiations with President Hoover he would be going beyond his brief to concede to the United States any more than 18 of the 8" cruisers.<sup>73</sup>

#### THE HOOVER-MACDONALD TALKS, OCTOBER 1929

As he prepared to set out for the United States MacDonald realized that he would not have smooth sailing on the political front, foreign or domestic. The margin between

Admiralty and American demands on cruiser parity was narrowed but still very real. On September 17th he received via Secretary Stimson a long letter from President Hoover urging him before his arrival in Washington to reduce even further the British cruiser tonnage demands--to something closer to 300,000T. Hoover pressed the illogicality of pursuing a building program in order to reach a particular level by 1935 at which time further scrapping of vessels would be begun. Parity had to look real to the people, and it would not look real with the British having a commanding lead in numbers of ships as well as in total tonnage. A few days later the Admiralty supplied the Prime Minister with notes for his study during his voyage to America. These renewed the old charge that the U.S. wanted 21 big cruisers for aggressive purposes, for which reason their claim had to be rejected. Japan would accordingly raise her demands and force Great Britain into a big building program. If the U.S. had 18 large cruisers they would have parity in power if not in numbers to the British cruiser fleet of 350,000T.<sup>74</sup> A frustrated MacDonald ignored his Admiralty for the moment and replied to President Hoover with a statement of the fundamental reality confronting any British government. Great Britain, said the Prime Minister, was not just dealing with the United States alone. The British government always had to keep in mind its European and imperial roles as well. It had other commitments that could not be ignored.

MacDonald noted that his government could not lower British naval strength to the "breaking point" and thus lose all public confidence. On the question of cruisers MacDonald urged Hoover to remember that "the narrow margin which divides us does not really lie between you and us but between both of us and the rest of the world...." He could not overlook the possibility of wars of defense, not between Great Britain and the United States but between great Britain and other nations. If the United States insisted on 21 8" cruisers expansion of British naval building programs would be demanded in view of the hostile reception of that idea by both the Japanese and the French.<sup>75</sup>

Prime Minister MacDonald arrived in the United States in early October. His meetings in Washington with President Hoover and Secretary Stimson extended from October 4th to 10th. The most important of the meetings and the one which attracted most public interest was the highly informal one to one meeting on October 6 between the President and the Prime Minister "sitting on a log" at the President's fishing camp on the Rapidan River in rural Virginia.

It is outside the scope of this study to give a detailed analysis of the Hoover-MacDonald conference. Full treatments of the talks have been done elsewhere.<sup>76</sup> The high hopes of both of the principals for a resolution of remaining areas of disagreement prior to the opening of the formal conference on naval disarmament proved to be too optimistic, but the talks

were definitely a public relations success. Friendship replaced suspicion and latent hostility. Press photos of the two leaders in informal discussions went a long way to dispel public fears and to create a positive atmosphere for future formal talks. Official fears remained in London that the Prime Minister in his enthusiasm for personal diplomacy might give away too much while in the United States. As mentioned earlier the negotiating positions of the two men were quite different, reflecting their differing constitutional positions within their own governments. Hoover had wide freedom of manoeuver. He had a mastery of detail in the technicalities of naval construction which gave him an advantage over the more generalized thinking of MacDonald. Hoover had his own naval men under control, helped in fact by their own lack of unanimity about U.S. naval needs. The Navy Department knew next to nothing about these talks or what the President intended to say. The Prime Minister had a definite brief to follow. He was constricted by cabinet instructions, by the need to carry his Admiralty with him, and by the harsher realities of the British imperial and defense needs as these affected the Royal Navy.<sup>77</sup>

A basis for agreement on reductions in all ship categories other than cruisers was arrived at relatively easily. Cruisers remained the stumbling block. The British still insisted the American demands for large cruisers be reduced from 21 to 18. MacDonald sensed that Hoover desired

this too but could see no way of doing this as long as the British insisted on 339,000T cruiser tonnage. Both agreed to continue working on ways to eliminate the 30,000T difference between Great Britain and the U.S. in cruisers. Although their respective naval departments disagreed Hoover and MacDonald took a position which could be roughly described as "what's three large cruisers between friends"! In that spirit the formal call to a naval conference to meet in London in January 1930 was made and invitations were issued to the major naval powers.

Although the tentative agreements reached between Hoover and MacDonald were not known in detail by those outside the circle of advisors of both leaders, the very fact of a process of joint planning between Great Britain and the United States was a matter of interest and concern to other nations. Efforts had been made in general to keep Japan, Italy, and France informed of the progress of discussions, but Japan especially was concerned about the bearing of these talks on Japanese hopes for an improved naval ratio at a future naval conference. The worries of Japan were manifested in requests by her ambassadors in London and Washington for bi-lateral conversations between Japan and these governments. When at last Japan accepted the invitation to the London Conference the Tokyo government suggested preliminary talks in London similar to those conducted between Hoover and MacDonald.<sup>78</sup>

MacDonald realized, in a way that his Cabinet colleagues could not, that any success in bridging the cruiser gap and coming to a naval agreement hinged almost totally on keeping President Hoover in a positive and conciliatory frame of mind. For this reason he felt he could not refuse to listen to Hoover's ideas on subjects related to the sensitive topic of freedom of the seas, particularly regarding exemption of food ships from search and seizure in time of war. Hoover was just as opposed to an international conference on the codification of maritime law as was MacDonald, but he had problems with Senator Borah and the Senate Foreign Relations committee. Senator William E. Borah represented the progressive wing of the Republican party and frequently was at odds with the conservative leadership of the party during the 1920's. He strongly favored arms limitations programs leading in the direction of disarmament. Borah saw British naval power and its potential threat to American and world trade as the greatest obstacle to disarmament and peace. Since November 1928 Borah had been pushing the administrations of Coolidge and Hoover to call an international conference on the codification of maritime law. Borah correctly saw the "freedom of the seas" issue as the crux of the problem both to Anglo-American relations and to naval reductions. A resolution introduced by Borah, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, calling on the President to summon a conference on maritime law and

belligerent rights had still not been voted on when MacDonald began his American visit. Both Hoover and MacDonald could agree on wanting to avoid such a potentially divisive conference at this point.<sup>79</sup> The President pointed out to the Prime Minister that an agreement leading to an ultimate treaty rendering food ships immune to capture would make it probably unnecessary to proceed further into the complex problem of the rights of neutrals and belligerents. The Cabinet in London was alarmed at the news that belligerent rights had been allowed to arise at all in the discussions at Washington. A Cabinet memo was sent to MacDonald strongly objecting to any reference in the final communique to such discussions of this issue, however tentative. The Prime Minister was told that the chiefs of staff were opposed to even a partial surrender of a "high position" on belligerent rights and reminded him of the position taken by a C.I.D. committee under the previous government to which the present Labor administration was still bound.<sup>80</sup> With this strong expression of Cabinet opinion in mind MacDonald was forced to tell Hoover and Stimson that the section of the draft communique dealing with food ships would have to be dropped. The Americans were chagrined and disappointed by the decision in view of the almost certain leaks about the talks which would occur, but as politicians themselves they appreciated MacDonald's situation and agreed with reasonably good grace to omit the references. In his report to the Cabinet on his

return to London MacDonald vehemently defended his conduct during the Hoover talks, noting that he had indeed followed his brief. He had not brought up the question of belligerent rights, but having discovered that Hoover was determined to raise it in some form he felt that the best course, and one well within the guidelines of the C.I.D. report, was to proceed with this "preliminary exchange of views." He warned the Cabinet that he felt their decision was an error and that the issue, which in American opinion was closely bound up with naval limitations policy, had to be faced.<sup>81</sup> Although no change was made MacDonald did receive some support within the Cabinet. Lord Parmoor, President of the Council, circulated a memo to his colleagues calling for review of the earlier C.I.D. committee report on belligerent rights prepared under a Tory government. He felt the report was based on assumptions and principles which were not in accord with Labor Party policy and the attitudes appropriate for a Labor government. Parmoor felt that the whole matter should be reconsidered by a new committee. He emphasized that service representatives should only be advisors on this committee and have no responsibility for its report.<sup>82</sup>

#### FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE LONDON CONFERENCE

The final months of 1929 further cemented the new closeness between the British and American governments and focussed their attention on adopting a common position toward



Japan at the forthcoming London conference. Both governments expected a Japanese request to raise the Japanese ratio from 5:3 to 10:7. The Japanese were uncomfortably aware of the recent talks which had been going on between Great Britain and the United States. The Japanese government, feeling isolated, requested but did not receive similar talks with either the British or the Americans. As early as November 1929 Japanese press comment was urging its government to be prepared to return home from the London talks without a treaty.<sup>83</sup> As a modest move to placate the increasingly suspicious Japanese the American government agreed to informal talks in Washington between the State Department and the Japanese delegates to the London Conference when the latter passed through Washington en route to London in December 1929. The British government was kept fully informed about the substance of these conversations. The chairman of the Japanese delegation, the Hon. Reijiro Wakatsuki, informed Secretary Stimson that the Japanese government had no desire to alter the 5:5:3 ratio for battleships and agreed with the American desire to reduce further the size of the capital fleet. However, it was the strong belief of his government that for defense purposes the ratio for cruisers should be 10:10:7. Stimson was cordial but firm in his reply that the American government and public would take a very dim view of an increase in Japanese naval power at a time when no obvious threat to Japan existed.

Indeed the American government was already concerned about the significance of recent increases in Japanese cruiser and destroyer construction. All Stimson could promise was to give "sympathy and fair consideration" to the Japanese request.<sup>84</sup>

Both the American State Department and the British Foreign Office were determined that the London Conference would be a success. Although the British as hosts had the right to set the agenda and outline procedures these were carefully checked with Washington, and the preferences of the Americans were deferred to. Secretary Stimson objected to the Foreign Office plan to have the British delegation lead off at the opening public session with a statement of the British position embodied in a plan. Each nation would then respond with its own plan. To Stimson's mind this is precisely what had been unwisely done at Geneva in 1927. The public nature of the proceedings and the statement of "official positions" had led to intransigence all around and a fear of political repercussions at home from any sign of "backing down" from these stated positions. The new British Ambassador in Washington, Ronald I. Campbell, concurred in the American view and advised the Foreign Secretary to accept the American opinion about the avoidance of opening statements in the interest of fostering flexibility and a spirit of compromise.<sup>85</sup>

The composition of the United States delegation to the

London Conference reflected the determination of the Hoover administration to keep the proceedings in the hands of the civilians. Chief of delegation was Secretary of State Henry Stimson himself. The other delegates were Navy Secretary Charles Francis Adams, Ambassador to Great Britain Charles G. Dawes, United States Senators Joseph Robinson and David Reed, Ambassadors Hugh Gibson and Dwight Morrow. The advisers to the delegation included only two professional navy men, Admiral William V. Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, and retired Admiral Hilary Jones, who had been a principal delegate at Geneva in 1927. All others were State Department and embassy personnel.<sup>86</sup> On the level of organization and attitude the mistakes of Geneva were to be avoided. The State department was to exercise direct and full control of proceedings in London. Although Stimson was in effect a plenipotentiary he kept in constant touch with President Hoover through Undersecretary (and Acting Secretary) Cotton. It was a politically shrewd step to include a bipartisan Senate element in the delegation. Senator Robinson, a Democrat, was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Reed, a Republican, was the ranking minority member of that Committee. These two men would be instrumental in obtaining Senate ratification for any treaty which might emerge from the conference. By directly associating them with the work of the conference Hoover and Stimson were defusing potential Senate opposition. Hoover

had been careful to avoid the political error which his predecessor Woodrow Wilson had made in assembling the delegation to the Paris Conference of 1919. In a similar spirit of political balance Admiral Hilary Jones, a darling of the "big navy" lobby and a principal architect of the 1927 debacle at Geneva, was not excluded from the list of advisers, but he was balanced by Admiral Pratt, known to be a "modernist" in his approach to naval limitation.

In a speech made on the eve of his departure for London Secretary Stimson gave as the objectives of the conference the further delay in battleship construction and the search for a way of limiting the building of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. In his diary, however, Stimson saw these concrete reductions only as a by-product of the talks. He wrote as follows:

...economy is only an important by-product of such an end. Our real aim is to remove the secrecy, the rivalry, the mutual irritation which inevitably attends the process of competition in armament and to leave each nation free to have an adequate national defense which yet will not be a source of worry and suspicion to its neighbors.... If any one of us leaves this conference feeling that his country has been coerced into an unfavorable agreement, our chief purpose will not have been attained....<sup>87</sup>

#### THE LONDON NAVAL CONFERENCE - JANUARY - APRIL, 1930

As has been the case with the Paris, Washington and Geneva Conferences treated in the earlier chapters the details of the conference proceedings at London from January 30 to April 22, 1930 are not part of the general purpose of

the study. The conference as an entity in itself has been the subject of other detailed studies, most notably by Raymond G. O'Connor in his book Perilous Equilibrium.<sup>88</sup>

O'Connor's book is the most recent thorough study of the conference and gives complete coverage to the post-Geneva period, the conference itself, and the ratification battle. He is only concerned with the conference in the framework of American foreign policy, and he too refrains from detailed technical naval analyses which would confuse the lay reader. O'Connor sees the London conference as both the result of and possible foundation for balance between the three powers. Their governments renounced the naval capability of offensive war in favor of maintaining the status quo and defense of fundamental interests. He believes that "wishing made it so" to a large degree in producing the Treaty rather than real changes of heart. He appraises its results as only an illusory success, because it put weapons control in the wrong sequence on the road to security. It is the attitude of the British and American governments toward the conference and its potential outcome which is the concern of the present study.

Secretary Stimson's goal as he entered the London Conference was the reduction of naval construction and competition among the major naval powers. Even more important than reduction of naval strength was the reduction of naval friction among the powers participating in the

conference. There were three separate but interrelated sets of frictions involved in the negotiations about to open in London. First, there were the problems remaining between Great Britain and the United States especially over cruiser strength. Second, there was the problem resulting from Japan's growing insistence on an increase in her naval ratio with Great Britain and the United States. Third, there was the thorny problem posed by France regarding her own naval security and refusal to allow parity to Italy. If all three sets of frictions could be resolved a five-power naval treaty could be achieved, by far the happiest outcome. Such an agreement would be a worthy successor to the Washington Treaty of 1922. The American delegation viewed this as the least likely scenario for London. Resolution of only the first two sets of frictions could produce a three-power treaty which would be a "satisfactory" outcome in that all the really major concerns of the United States would thereby be resolved. The least desirable result, but still one with which the government in Washington could live, would be the solution only of the first set resulting in a bi-lateral treaty between Great Britain and the United States. This at least would achieve a major goal of the Hoover administration's foreign policy. Secretary Stimson was prepared to lead the American delegation to make concessions in the direction of achieving the basic goal of the two-power treaty. He was less willing to make concessions to Japan.

He saw the American negotiating position regarding Japan as one of strength, which could still produce a three power agreement. He did not see the U.S. as a major player at all in the European stakes leading to a possible five-power treaty, but rather as an interested observer and friendly arbiter if necessary.

These priorities are reflected in Stimson's notes based on one of his earliest conversations with Prime Minister MacDonald after his arrival in London, notes which were cabled in summary form to the President. The Secretary reported on the cordial tone of his talks with MacDonald and his strong feeling that the American delegation would have a "full measure of cooperation" from the British delegation. They understood and accepted one another's problems on reduction of size and number of battleships. Stimson reported that he believed the Japanese would not hold to their current demand for a new 10:10:7 ratio in cruisers. The Japanese needed to economize, and they were afraid of provoking an Anglo-U.S. two-power treaty. He felt that MacDonald was prepared to offer France a consultative pact similar to that embodied in the Washington Treaty of 1922 which would alleviate French concerns about Italian naval parity.<sup>89</sup> On the whole he entered the Conference in an optimistic mood.

On the eve of the formal opening of the talks Stimson spoke idealistically to the heads of the other delegations

about the need to escape from the whole structure of ratios which so easily became embroiled with national prestige. He proposed that the honest thing to do was for each nation to set forth openly to the other powers its proposals for its own present naval needs and future building plans. Then each nation would agree not to depart from this stated program without a one-year notice to the other powers. If in turn these other powers could not accept the reasons for this change as justified by circumstances they would be freed from their own program commitment.<sup>90</sup> Although polite interest was expressed in this proposal neither Stimson himself nor anyone else seriously thought of doing more than extending as far as possible the basically successful structures of the Washington Treaty to changed situations and other categories of ship.

The primary objective of the London Conference from the American point of view was the achievement of an agreement with the British. Parity had always been and continued to be the sacred principle on which any agreement acceptable to American public and congressional opinion would have to rest. Although the American delegation had in fact already agreed to certain concessions to British opinion during the course of their informal discussions on board ship bound for England, Stimson realized the political importance of a strong assertion about this most fundamental of American naval principles. He warned President Hoover that strong



statements might have to be made before real negotiations began. Stimson wrote the President:

In my opinion one of the most important factors at present is to convince Conservatives and the British public that our demand for parity is real and will be insisted on; and I hope you will bear this in mind in case I find it necessary to make some emphatic statement to that effect....<sup>91</sup>

Stimson made what appears to have been his final pitch to the British on the subject of parity at a meeting on February 3 with MacDonald and the British delegates. He strongly insisted on parity in cruiser strength. The Prime Minister, while questioning the Secretary's constant expressions of concern about "security," went on to re-state his own acceptance of the parity principle, viz. that parity had to be expressed in terms comprehensible to the ordinary man. Statesmen and not naval professionals would have to produce a yardstick for comparing naval strength to realistically determine parity. He still insisted on holding the United States to 15 of the large 8" cruisers, freely granting more 6" cruisers and agreeing that both nations had the right to build up to numerical parity if they so desired.<sup>92</sup>

Hoover and Stimson continued to hope that actual reduction in naval tonnage would be a result of the conference, but they had reached the conclusion that reduction was a less important goal than the establishment of essential parity with the British and the establishment of cordial relations with Great Britain in naval matters. If an atmosphere of genuine good will could at long last be

achieved it would be a tremendous diplomatic plus for the Hoover administration and would lay the groundwork for mutual desire for further real reductions after all suspicion had been removed.<sup>93</sup> Parity, though granted in principle by the British government, was still effectively blocked as a practical program by the issue of the big 8" cruisers. MacDonald could never sell a treaty to his Cabinet or to the general British public in which the U.S. was granted 21 such cruisers as compared to the British 15. The General Board of the U.S. Navy still rested all its hopes for U.S. Naval power on the big cruisers. It really wanted 25 and only with much reluctance and White House pressure had they been brought down in their demands to 23 and then to 21. In the discussions within the American delegation prior to the formal opening of the conference the naval advisors generally but not unanimously held out for 21 big cruisers. The political representatives were prepared to accept a lower number. Stimson saw that without a break-through on this point London was doomed to be a repeat of Geneva.

At the opening of the conference the American delegation did not present a program and only reiterated its commitment to the goal of naval parity between the U.S. and Great Britain. On February 4 after several days of private talks within the U.S. delegation and with British delegates Stimson wired Hoover giving him the plan which the U.S. delegation would propose to the conference. It called for a U.S. fleet

of only 18 big cruisers. The State Department replied on the following day that the plan was "heartily approved by the President."<sup>94</sup>

On the following day, Feb. 6, Secretary Stimson unveiled the American proposal before the full conference. It called for immediate parity in every class of ship between Great Britain and the United States with a gross tonnage for each of 1,200,000T. In large 8" cruisers the U.S. would have 18 and Great Britain 15 with a tonnage advantage. Thus the difference between the two powers in total cruiser tonnage was reduced to 12,000T. Each power was given the option of exact duplication of the other's cruiser fleet. Parity in all other categories was agreed to with no difficulty.<sup>95</sup> The American proposal had the unanimous backing of the civilian members of the delegation. More significant, however, was the split within the naval advisors. Admiral Hilary Jones continued to hold out for 21 big cruisers and sent a memo to Stimson on the eve of the public announcement opposing the plan. However, Admiral W.V. Pratt came out strongly in favor of the plan. He put his views on record in a "very confidential" memo to the Secretary a few days later in which he approved the flexibility of the plan and rejected the idea that U.S. security was diminished. He told the Secretary:

If, however, there is any one thing which this analysis tends to prove it is, I believe, this-- viz. that the discussion as to whether we have three more 8", 10,000T cruisers or an adequate

number of the 8" gun type to offset these three ships is not worthy of the discussion it has raised. I consider it to be a very minor detail in the whole scheme, and I have no hesitation in saying so. Our sea power has not been jeopardized by the adjustment made....

Pratt's position had been effectively supported by Captain S. H. Van Keuren, the only naval architect attached to the delegation. Van Keuren actually preferred fewer than 18 of the large cruisers which he described as monstrosities of naval architecture and bad risks in combat.<sup>96</sup>

With the presentation of the American proposal containing its significant compromise on large cruisers, essential agreement with the British had been assured. Stimson's primary objective had been achieved and at least a bi-lateral treaty as a result of the London conference was a certainty. Stimson was politically sensitive to domestic support in the U.S. and possible repercussions within the Congress from the "big navy" lobby over the reduction to 18 big cruisers, against the advice of the General Board. Senators Reed and Robinson were quickly mobilized to contact their respective seconds in the U.S. Senate to assure them of the wisdom of the plan even before its public unveiling, to assure them of their own backing for the plan and to reassure the other senators that senatorial ideas and suggestions had been carefully taken into account.<sup>97</sup>

The achievement of Stimson's second goal, an agreement with Japan which could be embodied in a three-power treaty, proved more difficult to reach, because the American

delegation had not already agreed on concessions, was less concerned about the need for them, and the Japanese were proving very intractable. In spite of all early warning from the American government to the Japanese of a complete aversion to raising the Japanese ratio, the Tokyo government appeared to be sticking to its demands. The British government was concerned about the Japanese demand for more large 8" cruisers. In fact their objection to the American figures of 21 was chiefly because of the corresponding increase this would allow to Japan. Nevertheless the British delegation left negotiations with the Japanese to the American delegation while they concentrated their efforts on the French in the hope of settling the Mediterranean issues. The task of dealing with the Japanese was left almost exclusively to Senator David Reed who worked patiently with his opposite number of the Tokyo delegation Ambassador Tsuneo Matsuura for two months. Negotiations with the Japanese were greatly hampered by domestic political difficulties in Japan where a moderate government was under strong pressure from militarist elements inside and outside of the Diet to get an increase in Japan's ratio. Any changes from the rigid instructions given to the delegation at the London conference required consultation and approval from Tokyo, a process which often took up to two weeks.<sup>98</sup>

Stimson and Prime Minister MacDonald prior to the opening of the London talks had been in full agreement that

no concessions could be made to the Japanese. Stimson had stated that a treaty which allowed a 10:10:7 ratio increase to Japan could never be approved by the U.S. Senate.<sup>99</sup> With this problem in mind it was politically appropriate that Senator Reed should have undertaken the task of handling direct bargaining with the Japanese. Nevertheless the way soon was found for concessions to the Japanese demand for the principle of a 70% ratio. Acting Secretary of State Cotton had advised Stimson that if the delegation came to consider such a ratio increase as necessary to get an agreement, a way should be found of putting off the actual construction of the additional ships for a few years until the eve of the next naval conference scheduled for 1935.<sup>100</sup> This idea in fact became the basis of the "Reed-Matsuraïda Compromise" which finally won the approval of the Japanese government on April 1. This agreement, like the earlier agreement with the British, was essentially a political compromise emanating from the State department and having the support of the civilian delegates at London. It went against the judgement of the General Board and the Navy Department. The Reed-Matsuraïda compromise in effect gave Japan a 70% ratio in all auxiliary ships. It also gave 70% in big 8" cruisers during the life of the current treaty, i.e. until 1935. However, the United States agreed to put off beginning construction of its three new big cruisers until 1933, 1934, and 1935 respectively. Thus none of these would be in service before

1935. and the Japanese would not be entitled to increase their large cruiser fleet beyond its present 12 until after that time. Japan was allowed to increase its small cruiser fleet, thereby enabling (and requiring) the U.S. to build more of the smaller cruisers, a development which most of the American delegates and Admiral Pratt considered useful.<sup>101</sup> With the acceptance of the Reed-Matsuraيدا Compromise by the two countries involved and by the conference as a whole Stimson's second goal had been achieved. A three-power naval treaty would become a reality. Tensions were reduced, it appeared at least, between the United States and the two maritime powers whose interests most closely touched her own.

A solution to the third set of frictions, those specifically European, was not so easily to be obtained. The United States was not in a position to greatly influence any outcome in this area without involving itself in potentially dangerous political agreements. The problems involving Great Britain, France, and Italy in an ironic way paralleled the basic problem which had confronted Great Britain and the United States before the London conference, viz. how to get naval reductions while insisting on parity. France wished to increase its number of large cruisers, which Britain opposed because of its bearing on her own cruiser level and the bearing that had on an agreement with the United States. France also objected to Italian insistence on parity with France in all naval categories. Italy felt that this

principle had been agreed on by the Washington Conference.

France would only be brought to accept naval reductions and parity for Italy by new guarantees of security in the Mediterranean by Great Britain. At various times extensions of the Locarno agreements, amendments to the Kellogg Pact, or new consultative or guaranty pacts were suggested. The McDonald government was consistent in its rejection of new military or naval guarantees to France.

As early as December 1929 the British government had raised in Washington the possibility of a new Mediterranean pact which France had proposed and which the French had suggested had the support of the United States. Ambassador Sir Esmé Howard let it be known that while his government had officially rejected the idea they would back it if initiative in that direction came from Washington. The response from the Secretary of State had been very clear. The United States would not be a party to any such pact because it had no interests in that region. The situation was quite different from that of the Pacific consultative pact embodied in the Washington Treaty of 1922. The United States was directly involved in the security of the Pacific region. The Secretary said that the American government would certainly endorse the idea of such a pact among the Mediterranean powers themselves.<sup>102</sup>

The British delegation at the conference carried on its protracted negotiations with the French, hampered by changes



within the French government which often required long absences in Paris by M. Tardieu, the French Prime Minister.<sup>103</sup> No real progress could be made, because MacDonald would not agree to anything more than a restatement of the existing security guarantees provided by the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact. The United States was anxious to avoid a French withdrawal and a collapse of the conference even though a three-power treaty could be salvaged. President Hoover himself intervened by making certain proposals which might satisfy France. He suggested parity for all naval powers in destroyers and submarines, on the theory that weaker powers needed more submarines. His hope was that France and Italy would be flattered by the idea of parity in any category with major naval powers. If France rejected the idea responsibility for breaking up the conference would be squarely hers.<sup>104</sup> This idea was not accepted but discussions continued.

Stimson in his eagerness to avoid a collapse of the conference continued to try to play the role of the friendly arbiter in talks with the British separately and with the French and British delegations together. In fact he urged MacDonald to reconsider the idea of a security pact for the Mediterranean. The Secretary appeared momentarily to be weakening the official American stance in opposition to U.S. participation in any pact when he told MacDonald that if a real mutual assistance and arms reduction pact could be

worked out by the powers directly involved the U.S. would consider carefully its own attitude to a consultative pact.<sup>105</sup> The report of this talk caused some alarm in the State Department in Washington and in the White House itself. Stimson was reminded of the President's strong opposition to any political agreements becoming involved in the outcome of the London Conference. Senatorial opposition to any shadow of the appearance of a promise of U.S. commitments in Europe was clear, and the ratification of the future treaty would definitely be at risk. It is not clear whether the Secretary in the heat of negotiation and as an enthusiastic last leap toward a five-power treaty had indeed actually moved away from the official policy, but if so the admonition from Washington quickly brought him to heel. Stimson clarified the American position to the other delegations. In general, he said, the United States was not opposed to consultative pacts. Indeed the U.S. had entered one as a result of the Washington Conference. In the case presently under discussion, however, it would appear that France was seeking such a pact as a "quid pro quo" for lowering its own demands for security. This gave security implications to the proposed consultative pact which made it objectionable to the United States.<sup>106</sup>

There was no further possibility of resolving the stalemate. Even a last minute appeal by letter directly from President Hoover to the French government urging them to

reconsider their position in the light of already existing commitments to peace and security failed to get results.<sup>107</sup> A substantive five-power treaty was not to be.

With the good news about Japanese government approval of the three-power portion of a treaty on April 1 a wave of diplomatic good cheer appeared to lift the spirits of all participants, and a way of getting an official five-power treaty was agreed on. Stimson was able to cable Washington on April 10:

In order to forestall any acrimonious termination of the Conference, we took up...the proposition for the conclusion of a composite treaty on general basis outlined...yesterday. The British, Japanese, French, and Italians have given their assent to that method and it now appears as though the situation of closing in a friendly spirit was well in hand....<sup>108</sup>

The Treaty was made up of five sections of which the principal ones were parts I and III accepted only by the three major naval powers, the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. Part I included a moratorium on replacement of capital ships from 1931 to 1936. It provided for the scrapping of specific existing capital ships by all three powers. It also covered definitions of aircraft carriers and various rules to govern their design, replacement, and operation. Part III was the real crux of the Treaty. By it the three powers agreed to limits on all combattant vessels and defined the various cruiser and destroyer categories. Tonnage limits in the cruiser and destroyer categories for all three powers were set to be achieved by 1936. The U.S.

was given a slight edge in large cruisers; Great Britain a slight edge in the smaller category. Part III allowed a 10% tonnage exchange between small cruisers and destroyers. The U.S. agreed to postpone construction of its allowed large cruisers until 1933, 1936, and 1938. The powers agreed to notify one another if some international development necessitated an increase in its own tonnage in order that the others might also increase if wished.

Parts II, IV, and V adhered to by all five of the London Conference participants dealt mainly with submarines and their future limits on size and activity. Part II exempted various ship categories, auxiliary to fleets or under 600 tons from limitation, and included rules about replacement of vessels under 10,000 Tons.

Officially, therefore, a five-power treaty could be initialed and was done on April 22, 1930. A happy Stimson was able to cable President Hoover on that day:

I am happy to tell you that the Naval Treaty which is the result of movement initiated by you last Spring is signed. The Form is satisfactory and the spirit of the occasion excellent.<sup>109</sup>

#### THE RATIFICATION OF THE LONDON AGREEMENTS AND AFTERMATH OF THE CONFERENCE

President Hoover, Secretary Stimson, and the American delegates were enormously pleased and satisfied with the work of the London conference. Yet they knew their job was not yet over. The treaty would have to be "sold" to the American public and of course to the U.S. Senate. The State

Department knew that a public relations victory was crucial to a successful outcome in the Senate. Even before the official close of the Conference Stimson seized the opportunity to make a short-wave radio address to the American people on the benefits to be derived from the London Treaty. The press reception to the talk was so favorable that Acting Secretary Cotton wired Stimson urging him to get Navy Secretary Adams to make a similar broadcast.

The professional navy and the "Big Navy" lobby felt that a battle had been lost in London, and they were determined to win when the battle shifted to Washington and the debate in the Senate on ratification. The President was anxious to move quickly and rejected any advice to postpone submission of the Treaty to the Senate until December. He sensed that Senator Borah, whose voice would be powerful, was at least sympathetic if not enthusiastic at this point and might be persuaded negatively over the summer recess. Hoover transmitted the Treaty to the Senate on May 1, 1930.

Although Borah's Foreign Relations committee was ultimately responsible for a report to the Senate on the Treaty the Naval affairs committee under Senator Hale announced its intention also to hold hearings. The various witnesses, therefore, normally gave testimony twice before the two groups. Criticism of the treaty came from both ends of the political spectrum. Pacifists complained about its failure to really reduce naval armaments. The "Big Navy"

people objected to its limits on new naval construction. Chastened by the congressional exposure of the activities of William Shearer at Geneva the Navy League was uncharacteristically quiet during the debate over the London treaty.

The hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were the forum for both sides to muster their "biggest guns" and most popular heroes. The threat from a strengthened Japan and the weakening of the Navy's potential as protector of U.S. commerce were heard again. Numerous and vocal opponents were not sufficient to overcome the mixture of enthusiasm communicated by the President and the Secretary of State and the more considered but professional support offered by Secretary of the Navy Adams and Admiral Pratt. There was a strange mixture of apathy and pro-Hoover feeling in the Senate. The supporters of the treaty had not offered compelling arguments, but many felt that the president should be allowed to have the Treaty. Senator Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, perhaps summed up a general Senatorial attitude when he wrote: "I have been unable to see any real merit to the Naval Treaty. I have no enthusiasm for it and yet I doubt if it would be helpful to defeat it."<sup>110</sup> Senators Reed and Robinson, themselves delegates at London, were effective in rebutting many of the more obvious criticisms offered by admirals and the other senators who were not privy to the negotiations. The

President was determined to have the treaty. When the Senate adjourned in June without completing action, President Hoover called it into special session in July to deal with the Treaty. On June 23 the Foreign Relations committee reported favorably to the Senate on the Treaty recommending ratification, though a minority report opposing it was filed by Senators Hiram Johnson and George Moses. The debate in the full Senate brought forward little that was new, aside from the flurry caused by Hoover's refusal to turn over documents of the London Conference delegation, insisting that the text of the Treaty be the sole subject of scrutiny. Delaying tactics by Treaty opponents did not prevail and finally on July 21, 1930 by a vote of 58-9 the Treaty was ratified. Ratifications were completed by the other signatory powers during the fall, and the President was able to proclaim the treaty in effect on January 1, 1931.<sup>111</sup>

The British ambassador in Washington, writing during the weeks after final ratification, reflected the basic attitude on both sides of the Atlantic about the treaty. He wrote to Sir William Jowitt who was to give a speech in the U.S., urging him to mention the London Treaty but to avoid "overkill" by excessive praise. Both sides know, Ambassador Lindsay said, that the treaty is not all that people have claimed it to be, but it has averted serious quarrels and can be a useful basis for cooperation toward peace. The treaty should be played up as an example of the Anglo-Saxon "spirit

of democratic compromise." A year before there had been major quarrels between Great Britain and the United States and poor prospects for resolving them. Now the two governments had managed to work out a satisfactory arrangement without any resort to force.<sup>112</sup>

The successful conclusion of the London Conference and the subsequent ratification of the treaty which it produced is a case of victory of mind over matter. Virtually nothing had changed since the Geneva Conference of 1927 in terms of size and disposition of fleets or the geopolitical positions of Great Britain and the United States. Those immediately responsible for the material side of national policy and the practicalities of defense entwined to have the same concerns about their rivals on the opposite side of the Atlantic. But the minds behind national policy on both sides had indeed changed. MacDonald and Hoover were both political centrists, although they had arrived at the center from opposite poles, Hoover as progressive conservative, MacDonald as conservative progressive. Both were nationalists with the practical ability to see beyond the limits of immediate "national goals" to the high ground of international cooperation.

Both leaders realized that the London treaties did not in fact change much on a practical level, and certainly did not achieve the naval reductions both desired. It is clear though from Secretary Stimson's earliest remarks as he left for London that ship size and number were not the essential



issue. The conjunction of MacDonald's traditional socialist desire for peace and the Foreign Office desire for accommodation with the Americans brought about a working consensus on the British side. The London Conference produced a treaty which both sides could feel good about, and feelings matter in international relations. The participants were right in their assumption that a relaxation of tensions would facilitate reduction of armaments. The refusal of Congress in 1931 to pass a bill calling for full American Naval build up to the allowed limits of the London Treaty seems to confirm this.

The London Treaty produced a practical kind of amity within which the unresolved issues of belligerent rights etc. might be settled--or better still never arise. It also produced an Anglo-American cooperation and the diplomatic isolation of Japan which set the stage for new challenges to peace and world order.

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## CONCLUSION

The term "special relationship" was coined in the 1950's to describe the unique bond between the United States and Great Britain in the post-World War II international pattern. In fact, though the term is recent, the reality has existed at least since the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 and possibly from the end of the Revolution in 1783. The political ties between these two English-speaking states were severed, but cultural, linguistic, and commercial bonds remained. Although formal diplomatic alliances were never a political possibility between them, there was an unspoken community of interests and ideals shared by American and British leaders. They had similar views about how the world should be, a generally progressive view of a liberal international pattern both politically and commercially. British attitudes toward "foreign" powers on the continent were decidedly different from their feelings about the Americans who were at once more distant, yet "distant cousins." Likewise British relationships with the other English-speaking communities spawned since the end of the 18th century were not the same because of their political and symbolic links with the government in London, links the United States had definitely rejected.

In spite of the community of interests the relationship between Great Britain as the industrial and commercial giant of the 19th century and the United States, an economically aggressive and energetic developing nation anxious for success and the recognition

of its power, could never be easy. The early 20th century brought a realistic if condescending recognition by British authorities of American power and of an accepted sphere of American political and commercial activity. The First World War changed all the realities of international relations and power balance.

The decade we have examined in this dissertation and the specific issues concentrated on showing the shifting of the "special relationship" between the United States and Great Britain within the context of a new world order. Great Britain simply could no longer hold its position as the commercial-industrial leader of the world, nor was the United States any longer willing to accept a junior role in an "Anglo-Saxon partnership", acquiescing in British rules for the world economy.

A nation's weaponry always plays a dual role in its life. Weapons have a practical purpose as instruments of war to achieve national goals. They also have a larger and more symbolic role. Weapons, their power and number, symbolize a nation's position in the world order, whether they are used in fact or even seriously intended for use. In the first third of the 20th century the navy was the principal "weapon" for world powers. Classes, sizes, numbers of ships determined a nation's international importance. Between the United States and Great Britain there were in the 1920's no territorial or real defensive issues which were likely to lead to war and the use of a naval arsenal. Great Britain as a dominant but declining commercial power did not wish to yield its ability to control world trade. The United States as a rising

commercial power wanted to guarantee free access to world markets and raw materials. Neither state seriously feared attack by the other. Both realized the potential for commercial conflict and the degree of interrelatedness of the world economy which could make any war everyone's war. At the same time both powers were acutely aware of the cost of maintaining a competitive navy in the modern world. Both had concerns and differing approaches to another aggressive and expanding empire in the Pacific, the Japanese.

The naval issues of the 1920's, the conferences, the "crises", the debates over parity, the concerns about classes and sizes of ships, of gun power and cruising speed were therefore a mixture of practical political concerns and of highly emotional symbolic struggles for recognition of position in the international order. The participants at the time could hardly have distinguished these two elements, and it is just as difficult for us to do so, so closely are they interwoven.

Certainly a great change in attitude and relationship is evident when we compare Anglo-American feelings at the close of the Paris conference in 1919 and the end of the London Conference in 1930. In Paris there was a Great Britain, weakened but self-assured and more than a little arrogant, and a United States with a defensive mixture of self-righteousness and cynicism, prickly and anxious for recognition. Compromise was not possible on divisive naval issues, issues which could not even be openly faced. At London in 1930 there was a Great Britain anxious to please and a United States with a calm self-assurance and a mature sense of

equality. Both sides were ready for an agreement, one assured even before the meeting. The world of 1919 was still essentially a European world, dominated by Great Britain. The world of 1930 saw a genuine community of interests on both sides of the Atlantic. At Paris military power was the guiding force; at London diplomatic compromise embraced power realities.

The Washington Conference of 1921-22 paved the way for change. The British had come to see the changed world. British policy itself was no longer made only in London. Britain deferred to American initiative at the Conference. The success of the conference in large part stemmed from the personalities there. Hughes and Balfour were practical men of politics with limited goals and open to compromise. Wilson and Lloyd George had not been. The Geneva Conference of 1927 revealed what happens when political vision give way to professional technical debate. Neither power really wanted an agreement in 1927, and thus no compromise was possible. The significance of Geneva, however, was limited, and its effects were contained and quickly reversed. Lessons were learned on both sides about how two equal powers should prepare for such conferences, how to formulate realistic goals, and how vision should dominate expertise. The London Conference of 1930 again showed the power of positive leadership. Both the British and American governments wanted an agreement. The specifics were less important than the agreement itself. The treaty which resulted was decidedly limited as far as real naval limitations were concerned. It symbolized the end of a process and

the achievement of symbolic "parity" between the two powers in their continuing "special relationship". Politics and diplomacy are always as much about symbolism as about practical realities. In domestic and international politics symbols shape thought and guide actions for unity or destruction.

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