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MORE LIGHT ON THE ABROGATION OF THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

THE FOLLOWING article which attempts to interpret the British and Australasian attitudes toward the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and its modification or abrogation on the expiration date of July 13, 1921, broadens and modifies considerably the previously accepted view of J. Bartlet Brebner, as expounded in the March 1935 issue of the *POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*, that the Canadian prime minister, Arthur Meighen, led the campaign for the abrogation of the agreement, that he urged an international conference on Pacific affairs, and that thereby the Dominion of Canada formulated a policy for the British Empire.

Resumé of the Alliance and Its Operation to 1921

On January 30, 1902, Great Britain abandoned her splendid isolation and entered into an alliance with Japan. While both Powers pledged themselves to uphold the independence and territorial integrity of China and Korea and to secure equal opportunities in those countries for the commerce and industry of all nations, Japan recognized the special interests of Great Britain in China, and Britain recognized those of Japan, political as well as industrial, in China and Korea. The treaty, which was to remain in force for at least five years,¹ was directed against a mutual enemy—Russia. The alliance was popular in both nations. Japan welcomed the prestige it afforded her; the treaty was “a sort of ticket of admission to the great international game.”² England prized the Japanese commitment as security against Russia—if she should threaten British interests in China or India—or against Germany and Russia in the event those two Powers should turn on France in Europe and involve Great Britain.³ The alliance was reframed during the Russo-Japanese

¹ G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London, 1927), vol. II, ch. xi, final text, pp. 115-120. Hereafter cited as *British Documents*.

² Alfred L. P. Dennis, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance* (Berkeley, 1923), p. 65.

³ Taraknath Das, *Foreign Policy in the Far East* (New York and Toronto, 1926), pp. 259, 261, quoting extracts from a memorandum of Sir Francis Bertie of the British Foreign Office, F. O. China 1501, March 11, 1901.

peace negotiations and, as renewed for ten years, on August 12, 1905, included India in its scope.⁴

At the beginning of World War I, Sir Edward Grey, hoping to keep Japan out of Shantung and the Pacific islands, attempted to limit her belligerent actions to a naval campaign against German armed vessels in the China Seas, and to the protection of Japanese shipping lines in the Pacific;⁵ but strategic requirements, military necessity, and Japan's eagerness to extend her field of operations to Shantung and to islands in the Pacific prevented the foreign secretary from achieving his aim.⁶

Throughout the war Japan proved a faithful and efficient ally. Her navy patrolled Australian waters and the Indian Ocean. Great Britain's fleet, having to guard the North Sea, the Atlantic, and, to a large extent, the Mediterranean, "was strained to the very last ship, new and old." It was impossible for that fleet, immense as it was, to guarantee safe passage for Pacific dominion forces. A real test for the alliance arose. Japanese battle cruisers convoyed or escorted 500,000 to 600,000 ANZAC forces and 1,000,000 Indian troops for protection against German cruisers still raiding the Pacific and Indian Oceans.⁷ By a secret Anglo-Japanese accord of 1915 Great Britain recognized her ally's claim to the Marianas, Caroline, and Marshall Islands. At the height of the German submarine campaign of 1917 the British government approached Japan for a destroyer flotilla for operations in the Mediterranean. Japan agreed for a price, the compensation being pledges in a secret exchange of notes by which not only Great Britain but France, Italy and Russia engaged themselves to "support Japan's claims in regard to the disposal of Germany's rights in Shantung and possessions in the islands north of the equator on the occasion of the Peace Conference." At the same time the British understood that the Japanese

⁴ For official material concerning the renewal of the alliance, see *British Documents*, IV, 120-183. Text of agreement, pp. 128-113.

⁵ Memorandum of the British Chargé d'Affaires Barclay to the Secretary of State, Aug. 18, 1914, U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914*, Supplement, *The World War*, p. 171.

⁶ For Japan's entrance into the war and her stated reasons, see Charles N. Spink, "Japan in the World War", *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. V (Dec. 1936), pp. 297-311.

⁷ Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, vol. CXLVI, col. 1710, Lloyd George speaking.

government would "treat in the same spirit Great Britain's claims to the German islands south of the equator."⁸

Japan emerged from the war in a position of entrenched hegemony in the Orient. With Germany eliminated and Russia demoted to a second place in the Far East, Japan took possession of all the former's holdings in Shantung as well as her islands north of the equator, gained predominant influence in Manchuria, and became more aggressive than either of her predecessors. The destruction of Tsarist Russia left Japan supreme on the shores of the Sea of Japan and in the waters of the North Pacific. The "Island Empire of the Pacific" was now one of the world's great Powers. British assistance was no longer needed for guaranteeing its integrity. Japan's danger was from militarism at home rather than from any combination of predatory nations.

At the Peace Conference in Paris, Australia's attitude toward Japan was a curious compound of apprehension and conciliation. Prime Minister William Hughes led the opposition to the Japanese request for a recognition of racial equality, fearing that it was a veiled demand for a revision of immigration legislation. He disapproved of Japan's mandate over the former German islands in the North Pacific, and ardently advocated Australia's claims, recognition of which would have required the invalidation of the 1915 and 1917 British agreements with Japan.

The political and territorial changes produced by the war altered the power balance and alignments. After the collapse of imperial Russia and Germany, Great Britain no longer needed help from Japan in maintaining the integrity of her empire. The threats to its stability were internal rather than external. In all the world there was but one Power—the United States—which could challenge Britain to combat with the remotest possibility of success. But war between these two English-speaking nations was unthinkable, considered outside the realm of possibility. Therefore, neither Japan nor Britain needed the protection of an alliance for defensive purposes. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty no longer served a vital British interest, yet the agreement threatened amicable relations not only between the United Kingdom and the United States but between the mother country and the Dominion of Canada which was in accord with the

⁸ John V. A. MacMurray, comp. and ed., *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919* (New York, 1921), II, 1168.

United States attitude toward Japan. Moreover, the League of Nations as an instrument for the maintenance of peace was intended to supplant alliances and secret diplomacy as means of ensuring security. Consequently, Britain persuaded Japan to make a joint statement to the League of Nations concerning the treaty. On July 8, 1920, Foreign Minister Curzon and the Japanese Ambassador in London, Baron Chinda, signed and communicated to Geneva a note to the effect that their governments had come to "the conclusion that the Anglo-Japanese Agreement of July 13th, 1911 . . . though in harmony with the spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations," was "not entirely consistent with the letter of that Covenant." They accordingly informed the League that they recognized "the principle that if the said agreement be continued after July, 1921, it must be in a form not inconsistent with the Covenant."⁹

Dominion Views of the Alliance

Australia, New Zealand and Canada were directly concerned over the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The tendency in Australasia was to regard the treaty as a protection against Japanese expansion in the South Pacific; even Japan understood that the agreement would not stand the stress of a vigorous immigration policy directed toward that area. Such an attempt by her would threaten to drive Australia and New Zealand, and perhaps even Canada, away from Great Britain as a partner of Japan. On the other hand, neither Australia nor New Zealand was anxious to contribute heavily to the maintenance of a military and naval force sufficient to protect her completely against a possible Japanese advance. True, a successful war by Japan against the United States would deal a serious blow to the safety of the Pacific dominions, but to antagonize Japan would be to expose Australasia to the revival of the immigration question and would thus make imperative large expenditures for the military and naval defense of the "White Australia" program. Consequently, the better policy from the point of view of these two dominions was, on the one hand, to support the renewal of the alliance in such fashion as to avoid friction with the United States, and, on the other hand, to prevent the race question from rising in an awkward or provocative way. Thus the renewed

⁹ Bell to Secretary of State, July 26, 1920, USDS, *Foreign Relations, 1920*, II, 685-686.

treaty might become a sort of insurance or guarantee against war in the Pacific. If it were not renewed, the Pacific dominions would ask those responsible for its abrogation what guarantee could be offered as a substitute for the alliance.¹⁰

Prime Minister William Hughes of Australia favored the continuance of the alliance with such modifications as would make it acceptable to Great Britain, to the United States and to his country. After World War I, the Commonwealth, resentful of "White Australia's" dependence on Japan, had welcomed President Woodrow Wilson's naval program as a balance-of-power device in the Pacific. When the post-war fall in commodity prices nearly ruined Australia, at the same time that Britain's economic distress afforded no relief from the depression and indebtedness, and the Singapore naval base did not materialize, Australia felt that she could not depend on Great Britain to win in a naval race in the Pacific. Only two potential allies were available, the United States and Japan. Remembering how the Japanese government had aided the empire's cause during the war, and aware of the withdrawal of the United States from participation in plans for world security, the Pacific Commonwealth elected to stand by the alliance.

The reason for Australia's action was certainly not a desire to assist Japanese expansion in the Pacific, but the sure knowledge that the treaty was her safeguard if or when Japan and the United States sprang at each other's throats. Otherwise, the first rush of the Oriental onset, taking the Philippines and Guam in its stride, would fall on Australia. The United States was far away and American battleships, for strategic reasons, would be almost powerless to help at the beginning.

Hughes outlined his policy and enunciated Australia's position regarding the alliance in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives on April 7, 1921, which contained the following:

What is the hope of the world? As I see it, it is an alliance, an understanding, call it what you will, between the two great branches of the English-speaking peoples. Now here is our dilemma. Our interest lies in a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty. Yet that Treaty is anathema to the Americans. We read almost every day of disturbing rumors of great navies, the world longing for peace resounds with the clanging of hammers, nations fervently building more and more war ships, and there is rivalry openly expressed between those two great nations, the United States of America and

¹⁰ Cf. Dennis, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

Japan. America has said she must have the greatest navy in the world; that she must have a navy sufficiently strong to defend herself. To defend herself against whom? She has left the world in no doubt, or in very little, as to whom on this point. All these things concern and disturb us greatly. For we not only have no quarrel with America, but we have no quarrel with Japan. We have our ideals; Japan has hers. There is room in the world for both of us. We want to live on terms of amity with all the nations of the earth.

. . . I am in favour of renewing the Treaty in any form that is satisfactory to Britain, America, and ourselves.¹¹

In an interview with a *Times* correspondent on May 25, 1921, Premier William F. Massey of New Zealand said:

As to the Japanese Treaty, so long as we insist on, and maintain, our right to choose our fellow-citizens in this country we have much to gain, and nothing to lose by the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty. The Japanese were perfectly loyal to us during the war. When we were sending away our main body of the Expeditionary Force the presence of the big Japanese cruiser with the British cruiser made their going, as far as the sea voyage was concerned, perfectly safe. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and it is well to remember this fact, and to endeavour to repay them when opportunity offers.

The prime minister's view was that

. . . so far at least as New Zealand is concerned, the old dread of yellow immigration, though still as real and deep-seated as ever, is for the present rather latent than active. Though the proposed renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance raises issues of the profoundest possible concern to Australasia, it can not be said that the people of New Zealand are at all seriously exercised about it. . . . New Zealand has no objection whatever to the renewal of the Japanese treaty in its present form, nor is she in the least excited by the alleged endeavours of Japan to remove the bar against Asiatic immigration into Australasia. And the reason is that she is fully satisfied that they will not succeed.¹²

The position of the dominion had been ably and succinctly stated by her high commissioner, Sir James Allen, in a single sentence: "New Zealand has no quarrel with or fear of Japan, and views the Treaty as an ample safeguard of her good faith."¹³

¹¹ Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. XCIV, p. 7267. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. CXVII, p. 11635; *The Times* (London), Supplement, Empire Number, May 24, 1921.

¹² *The Times*, May 27, 1921.

¹³ *Ibid.*

The press of Canada generally came out against renewal, the outstanding exception to general disapproval of the treaty being the *Montreal Star*, an ultraconservative paper.¹⁴ British Columbia, a province facing the Pacific, was inclined to favor renewal of the alliance if Canada specifically retained control of immigration. As early as December 28, 1920, the *Toronto Globe* expressed its opposition to the treaty. An editorial of that date emphasized that neither Japan nor Britain needed the protection of an alliance for defensive purposes. That should be sufficient reason for ending it. Under the circumstances the *Globe* believed

the interests of world-peace would be advanced by the cancellation of the alliance between Britain and Japan. There could be no doubt then as to the intention of the Britannic peoples throughout the world to preserve absolute neutrality in the remote but possible event of the friction between Japan and the United States leading eventually to hostilities. Canada assuredly—treaty or no treaty—would feel under no obligation to come to the help of Japan against the United States and so open her own borders to invasion and to all the horrors of modern war. The statesmen of the British Empire who are engaged in the work of safeguarding Britain's interest in the Far East doubtless understand that Canada can be no party to any international agreement which involves even remotely a risk so great.¹⁵

The Alliance and the Conference of Prime Ministers, 1921

In June 1921, an Imperial Conference of all the prime ministers of the British Empire convened in London. Of the three principal topics discussed therein—foreign policy, imperial defense, and the Anglo-Japanese Treaty—the commitments under the alliance were considered the most pressing by Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The ministers were concerned with evolving a policy of peace for the Pacific. The discussion of tranquillity and security in that ocean centered on the alliance and a limitation of naval armaments in the area. The conference had been forewarned that the treaty would come to an end on July 13, 1921, on the ground that the Anglo-Japanese memorandum of July 8, 1920, addressed to the League of Nations,

¹⁴ J. Bartlet Brebner, "Canada, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Washington Conference", *POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*, vol. L (March 1935), pp. 49-50.

¹⁵ *Toronto Globe*, Dec. 28, 1920.

concerning the alliance's incompatibility with the League Covenant amounted to a denunciation. The three months' extension requested by the British government was intended to afford the conference an opportunity of considering the question of renewal; but the assumption on June 20, the first day of the conference, was that in three weeks the alliance would expire if the prime ministers did not arrange for its renewal.¹⁶

The notification was regarded by British legal experts as constituting a denunciation of the treaty as provided in clause 6, which stipulated that twelve months' notice should be given for termination. The question before the conference when it turned to the discussion of the treaty was whether it should be renewed in a form consistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations or be allowed to lapse.

In his opening speech before the conference, Prime Minister David Lloyd George referred briefly "to one of the most urgent and important of foreign questions—the relations of the Empire with the United States and Japan," and asserted:

there is no quarter of the world where we desire more greatly to maintain peace and fair play for all nations and to avoid a competition of armaments than in the Pacific and in the Far East. Our Alliance with Japan has been a valuable factor in that direction in the past. We have found Japan a faithful Ally, who rendered us valuable assistance in an hour of serious and very critical need. . . . We desire to preserve that well-tried friendship which has stood us both in good stead, and to apply it to the solution of all questions in the Far East, where Japan has special interests, and where we ourselves, like the United States, desire equal opportunities and the open door.¹⁷

The British cabinet, including Foreign Secretary Curzon, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, and Arthur J. Balfour, representative for League of Nations Affairs, publicly favored renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

In the second meeting of the conference, June 21, Prime Minister Hughes delivered his first speech, in which he took occasion to set forth the attitude of Australia toward the Anglo-

¹⁶ Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. XCVII, p. 11635. Cf. *The Times*, July 26, 1921, p. 10.

¹⁷ Great Britain, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1921, vol. XIV, Cmd. 1474, *Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India held in June, July and August, 1921*, p. 13. Hereafter cited as *Conference of Prime Ministers*.

Japanese Alliance. He pointed out, "we have not a clean slate before us. If we had to consider for the first time whether we should have a treaty with Japan, the position might be very different. We have not." The treaty, though modified, had been in existence for many years. It could not be renewed precisely in its present form, for it must conform to the requirements of the League of Nations. "But the case for renewal is very strong, if not indeed overwhelming. To Australia . . . this treaty with Japan has special significance." Hughes continued:

Speaking broadly, we are in favour of its renewal. But there are certain difficulties which must be faced. One of these arises out of the attitude of America towards this Treaty. I am sure I state the opinion of Australia when I say the people have a very warm corner in their hearts for America. They see in America today what they themselves hope to be in the future. We have a country very similar in extent and resources, and it may be laid down as a *sine qua non* that any future Treaty with Japan, to be satisfactory to Australia, must specifically exclude the possibility of a war with the United States of America. It ought to do this specifically, but if not specifically then by implication so clear and unmistakable that he who runs may read. It is perfectly true that the present Treaty does this by implication, but not so plainly as to preclude misinterpretation. In any future Treaty we must guard against even the suspicion of hostility or unfriendliness to the United States.¹⁸

The Australian prime minister suggested a conference to include the United States and Japan.¹⁹ He indicated that disarmament was related to the renewal or nonrenewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, but stated,

in any case we must have such naval defense as is necessary for our security. The War and the Panama Canal have shifted the world's stage from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to the Pacific. The stage upon which the great world drama is to be played in the future is in the Pacific. The American Navy is now in those waters. Peace in the Pacific means peace for this Empire and for the world.²⁰

William Massey considered the Anglo-Japanese Treaty as one of the most important subjects on the agenda of the conference. With whatever modifications might be necessary, he was quite prepared to support its renewal. In saying this he was guided by Japan's coöperation during the war, when the Pacific and Indian Oceans were not safe, and at a time when there were twenty-eight

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

or more Australian and New Zealand ships in the latter ocean carrying twenty-eight thousand troops. Massey observed:

But supposing Japan had been on the enemy side, one result would have been quite certain, that neither Australia nor New Zealand would have been able to send troops to the front, neither could we have sent food or equipment—equipment for the soldiers and sailors or food for the civil population of Britain. It would not have been possible. These things have all to be remembered in connexion with the renewal of the Treaty. I am prepared to take the American view into consideration. I do not want to leave any wrong impression on that point.²¹

The prime minister, however, made clear that his support of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty did “not in the very slightest affect the fact that in New Zealand we stand by our right to choose our future fellow-citizens.”²²

Thus Massey's views were similar to those of Hughes, his *alter ego*, with whom he generally agreed. But behind the scenes before the conference convened, Sir John Findlay, a distinguished New Zealander who, with Sir John Ward, had represented the dominion at the Imperial Conference of 1911 and had again returned to London on February 6, 1921, took a radically different position. The visitor had made a special study of the problems of imperial policy in the Pacific Ocean and was experienced in framing the legislation of the young country. During the premiership of Richard Seddon there was scarcely an important act placed on the statute books which was not drafted by Findlay, who, though not a member of the government, was treated by Mr. Seddon as an unofficial counselor. After the premier's death, Sir John was not only appointed attorney general and minister of justice, but was also made leader of the Legislative Council, or upper chamber of the New Zealand legislature. According to the *Times*:

Whether in or out of office, Sir John Findlay, the leading K. C. in the Dominion, has been the *deus ex machina* whose intervention has often turned the course of events into new channels, sometimes with far reaching consequences not only for New Zealand, but for the Empire. He it was, for instance, who inspired the dramatic offer of a Dreadnought from the Dominion to the Imperial Government in 1912, at the time of the trouble with Germany over the Agadir incident in Morocco.²³

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *The Times*, Feb. 7, 1921.

Findlay remained true to form in London. In an article of February 10, 1921, which was in reality an interview, he was reported to have asserted that

New Zealand and Australia, while appreciating Japan's assistance in the war, have resolved to remain white men's countries. They had prepared plans for a big scheme, firstly of Imperial, and secondly of European immigration, barring Germans and Russians. The scheme will presently be launched. They object emphatically to a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, which is unjustified, since the German and Russian menaces have been removed, and America is ready to make common cause in the event of a Japanese peril. The question must be properly thrashed out at the coming Imperial Conference.²⁴

Thus William Massey and Sir John Findlay were in open disagreement over the alliance before the conference assembled. The premier in his May 26 interview stated that neither the original nor the amended statements made by Findlay on February 10 and 24 on the subject of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty "really fit the facts."²⁵

According to an article in the October 6, 1921 issue of the *Daily Express*,²⁶ Findlay came to London to acquaint the British government with the position of the New Zealand people. The attorney general informed the writer of the article that just prior to the Imperial Conference "the feeling in New Zealand was so strong against the Anglo-Japanese treaty that unless England showed herself as determined to resist all Japanese demands, the people of New Zealand were in favor of separating themselves from the British Empire and asking the United States to assume a protectorate." He added: "This will not be printed in the British newspapers and it will not be liked by the British government, but that is the way we feel."²⁷

However, the prime ministers of Australia and Canada respec-

²⁴ *Wellington Evening Post*, Feb. 25, 1921.

²⁵ *The Times*, May 27, 1921.

²⁶ The *Daily Express*, London, owing to Lord Beaverbrook's close personal relations with Lloyd George, might be credited with having access to some authentic information on important political proceedings.

²⁷ Enclosure in confidential letter of N. C. Twining, naval attaché to the American Embassy in London, to the Secretary of the Navy, Oct. 12, 1921, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, RG 45, Office of Naval Intelligence File, Register no. 14865-A, Subject File 1911-1927, OY Limitation of Armament Conference, declassified Feb. 1948, Navy Dept., Archives of the United States. Hereafter cited as Naval Intelligence File.

tively led the fight in the conference for and against the retention of the alliance. On June 29 the Canadian minister expressed his government's opposition to the renewal of the treaty in any form on the grounds that the reason for its existence had expired, that such entanglements were incompatible with the League of Nations' principles, and that both the United States and China regarded the alliance with mistrust as implying benevolent neutrality toward Japanese aggression. The preceding February Arthur Meighen had urged Lloyd George to invite the United States, Japan, China, and the empire to a conference on Pacific affairs to settle outstanding issues. Canada feared her own involvement in an American-Japanese conflict which was contrary to the basic principle of her foreign policy—maintenance of the best possible relations between Great Britain and the United States. Therefore Meighen resisted the renewal of the alliance for he feared it threatened amicable Anglo-American and Canadian-American relations, upon both of which Canada depended for her security. He reminded the delegates that good Anglo-American relations were the cornerstone of British policy and the hope of the world.²⁸ The Canadian people half-consciously shared their minister's feelings, and a majority of the press believed he expressed the opinion of his countrymen.²⁹

William Hughes's retort to Meighen that "The British Empire must have a reliable friend in the Pacific" set off a series of sharp exchanges. Lloyd George sensing the fervor of the two ministers and their unyielding positions calmed the tense atmosphere by declaring that the July 8, 1920 joint Anglo-Japanese note to the League of Nations did not constitute a valid denunciation of the treaty, which, therefore, would continue in force until it was really denounced. This was the prediction that had been made

²⁸ Brebner, *loc. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

²⁹ Cf. *The Times*, May 24, 1921, Supplement, Empire Number, p. vi, "Canada and the U. S. A.—Ideals in Common". *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1921, p. 13, Nov. 11, p. 12. However, in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, signed "Canuck", Trochu, Alberta, Dec. 8, 1921, the view was expressed that Meighen did not speak for Canada nor have a mandate from the Canadian people to act on their behalf, that he not only played to the gallery and to the United States in denouncing the treaty, but also created a false impression abroad to the effect that the dominions were so slightly joined to the mother country that anything advocated by them which ran counter to England's wishes would result in their breaking away altogether and setting themselves up as independent states on the idea of self-determination of small nations. *New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1921, VII, 10:5.

over a year earlier by the *Peking and Tientsin Times* which had carried on a consistent campaign against the continuance of the alliance and had declared that the treaty would not be renewed in July 1921, but that a *laissez faire* policy would be adopted.³⁰

By July 1 the Canadian minister had convinced Jan Smuts, Curzon and Lloyd George of the importance of taking a chance on American willingness to collaborate on a Pacific agreement. The Marquess Curzon then surprised the conference by outlining a procedure for a Pacific conference which would include the United States as a party to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as proposed by Arthur Meighen. This action, according to J. Bartlet Brebner, represented the first notable occasion of a British dominion formulating a policy of the empire.³¹

The proposal was now put to the test. Tokyo was noncommittal;³² Washington expressed disapproval of the treaty's renewal but interest in an agreement on Pacific affairs. As early as August 1914 the United States had discreetly sounded the attitude of the belligerents upon the question of maintenance of the *status quo* in the Far East and throughout the Pacific generally. Great Britain then found such a suggestion impractical for she had already launched operations against Germany in the Pacific.³³ Historically, the United States took no exception to the alliance and only after the World War was it seriously regarded in Washington as constituting a potential danger to the country. The United States government, however, made no authoritative declaration in regard to the treaty. American distrust of the alliance centered on its relation to Japanese imperialism on the continent of Asia rather than on the possibility that it might involve England in a war with the United States. The State Department looked upon the treaty as a political instrument harmful to its policies in Eastern Asia.³⁴

³⁰ *Peking and Tientsin Times*, June 24, 1920; Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

³¹ Brebner, *loc. cit.*, p. 56.

³² For Japanese opinion toward the renewal of the alliance, see Dennis, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-68, 91-93; A. Whitney Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York, 1938), pp. 278, 288, 298; *The Times*, July 26, 1921, p. 10, "The Pacific—Plain Words from Japan", and Aug. 16, p. 8, "Japan Doubts—Public Dislike of Conference".

³³ USDS, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, pp. 162, 165-166.

³⁴ For the attitude of the United States toward the treaty and its renewal, see Griswold, *op. cit.*, pp. 275 *et seq.*, and *The Times*, Sept. 16, 1921, p. 8.

During the course of the Imperial Conference, on July 21, Mr. Hughes addressed the American Luncheon Club, and among other things said that "unless, and until, the Pacific problem is settled, it is obvious that the prospect of the great naval powers coming to an agreement on a practicable scheme is remote." Therefore, he advocated a preliminary conference or meeting to discuss Pacific questions at which Australia and New Zealand should be represented.³⁵

The prime ministers at London neither renewed nor abrogated the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, but the proposal to hold a Pacific conference received their unanimous support and was considered at great length. On July 11, Lord Curzon suggested that a preliminary meeting on Pacific and Far Eastern affairs be held in London during the first part of August. The American Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, objected because China, Japan and the United States could not make suitable preparations by that time, and he felt that postponement of the conference on the limitation of armaments would create an unfavorable American public reaction.³⁶ The Conference of Prime Ministers closed on August 5 and six days later President Warren G. Harding issued formal invitations to the Conference on the Limitation of Armament and Far Eastern Affairs to convene at Washington on November 1, 1921. Secretary Hughes remained adamant on the question of a preliminary meeting—even one at Bar Harbor, Maine—to prepare the agenda on Pacific and Far Eastern affairs, not because he was unwilling to consult with the dominion premiers, but because in his solicitude for the success of the conference he did not wish to have freedom of discussion limited by any preliminary deliberations on the part of a particular group.³⁷

Prime Minister Hughes, after returning home, reviewed Australia's position before and at the Conference of Prime Ministers in a lengthy speech delivered to the House of Representatives on September 30. He warned: "If we cannot secure a satisfactory Treaty, then it is obvious that any adequate scheme of naval defence will involve us in much greater expenditure, and at a

³⁵ Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. XCVII, p. 11639.

³⁶ Secretary Hughes to Ambassador Harvey, July 13, 1921, USDS, *Foreign Relations, 1921*, I, 28-29.

³⁷ Harvey to Hughes, July 27, 1921, in *ibid.*, pp. 46-47; Merze Tate, *The United States and Armaments* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 125. See pp. 122-126 on the genesis of the Washington Conference.

time when our resources are strained to the uttermost.”³⁸ The prime minister was for an immediate declaration of intention to renew the alliance upon terms that would at once be compatible with the League of Nations Covenant, which would give the United States ample opportunity to be consulted officially, and which would “exclude specifically, and in set terms, the possibility of our being ranged in hostile array against America by virtue of that Treaty.” That was his position, and he ventured “to say that a further postponement will, and can, place us in no better position than we are today.”³⁹

Meanwhile, on August 18, Lloyd George reported to the House of Commons on the Conference of Prime Ministers. Referring to the Japanese treaty he said: “The Alliance is an existing Alliance, and until 12 months’ notice is given that Alliance continues.” He reviewed the operation of the agreement during the war and asserted that no man could “come to any other conclusion than that it was loyally and faithfully interpreted and carried out by our Japanese Allies.”⁴⁰ Then he asked:

Is it to be suggested that we should now turn round and say to them, “You stood by us in trouble, but we do not need you any longer, so goodbye”? Would anyone behave like that in business? The British Empire must behave like a gentleman, and when you come to deal with a country that has stood by you in trouble—stood well by you—are you to bring the alliance to an end when the trouble is over? I say that would not be becoming of the British Empire in dealing with a faithful Ally. And let me say this: I do not believe there is any country in the world, whether it likes the Japanese Alliance or does not like it, that would think any better of the British Empire if we broke off the alliance—not one. They might appear to be glad at the moment that we had done it, but in their hearts they would despise us for doing it.⁴¹

Instead of abrogating the alliance, the prime minister suggested a new combination of Britain, Japan and the United States, emphasizing particularly that the “cardinal principle of British policy” must be to “act in as complete accord with the United States of America as any two countries can.” The idea of such a triple entente was not novel, for it had come up in the discussions in the Imperial Conference and had been voiced in

³⁸ Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. XCVII, p. 11635.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11636.

⁴⁰ Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, vol. CXLVI, col. 1710.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, col. 1711.

the British press and in the House of Commons. In reporting Lloyd George's speech, the *Times* concluded: "If the Alliance with Japan could merge in a greater understanding with Japan and the United States of America in all the problems of the Pacific that would be a great event which would be a gallant deed for the peace of the world."⁴²

Between London and Washington

During the summer and early autumn of 1921 there was a noticeable change of attitude in the United Kingdom toward the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. A year earlier, in the summer of 1920, when the *Peking and Tientsin Times* was predicting nonrenewal of the agreement,⁴³ the (London) *Times* correspondent in Tokyo was reporting that it was taken for granted that the alliance would be renewed.⁴⁴ Throughout the winter of 1920-1921 there was comparatively little in the British press regarding the subject. This was not the case, however, by the following autumn. Rear Admiral Nathan C. Twining,⁴⁵ naval attaché to the American Embassy in London, reported that the history of the psychology of the situation in regard to the alliance was remarkable. When the treaty first came up for renewal "the whole atmosphere was apparently calm and clear, no tangible opposition appeared, and it seemed to be taken as a matter of course, in default of any better way out, that the Anglo-Japanese treaty would be renewed, with the understanding that it did not apply in case of trouble between the United States and Japan."⁴⁶

During the Conference of Prime Ministers the British government had heard strong and plain language from the representatives of Canada and New Zealand. In the meantime sentiment had developed in the United States, and the press generally expressed the opinion, that renewal of the Anglo-Japanese pact would be considered a distinctly unfriendly act toward the United States. Press extracts conveying this idea were taken

⁴² *The Times*, Aug. 19, 1921.

⁴³ *Peking and Tientsin Times*, June 24, 1920.

⁴⁴ Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Rear Admiral Nathan Crook Twining, Jr., served as Chief of Staff to Admiral William S. Sims during World War I. He was the uncle of General Nathan Farragut Twining, Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force in the first Eisenhower administration and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the second.

⁴⁶ Twining to Secretary of the Navy, Oct. 12, 1921, Naval Intelligence File.

from the American papers and printed throughout the United Kingdom.

Moreover, three distinguished Britishers came out publicly in favor of revision, enlargement, or abrogation of the agreement. As a result of the conference of premiers David Lloyd George openly and earnestly proposed an Anglo-American-Japanese triple alliance.⁴⁷ Although he felt that the arguments in favor of renewal were stronger than those in favor of denouncing the alliance, he hoped that the true line of advance lay "not in denouncing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but in transforming it into a Pacific triple entente, which the combined liberal forces of Great Britain and America could effectually prevent from ever becoming aggressive or acquisitive."⁴⁸

Lord Northcliffe,⁴⁹ returning from the antipodes where he had urged dominion participation in the Washington Conference, declared in an October 25 interview with a Reuters correspondent in Hong Kong his opposition to the treaty. He gave as his reason that it placed the United States "outside of the very definite arrangements for the control of China." For two years he had been gradually coming to the conclusion that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had outrun its usefulness. "Japan faithfully carried out the compact during the war, and she had been well rewarded for her services." The purpose of the Washington Conference was to reach a mutual agreement, but the United States was handicapped by an existing arrangement between Japan and Great Britain concerning the chief problem of the Pacific. Northcliffe concluded: "A prolongation of the alliance only serves to irritate public and official opinion in the United States, merely humiliates China and adds nothing to the prestige of Great Britain in Asia."⁵⁰

Viscount Bryce, who had just returned from a visit to the United States, contributed to the *Times* of October 18 an article

⁴⁷ *New York Times*, Oct. 14, 1921.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1921, VIII, 4. This opinion was expressed to Professor C. H. Van Tyne, of the History Department of the University of Michigan, in a letter written "by a man of international reputation, who now occupies one of the most important positions in the British Empire."

⁴⁹ Alfred Charles William Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Northcliffe, was a newspaper proprietor who served as chairman of the British War Mission, 1917-1918, director of propaganda in enemy countries, 1918, and of the Civil Aerial Transport Committee in 1917.

⁵⁰ *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 1921.

on the Washington Conference in which he referred to the American attitude toward the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in these words:

It has been pointed out over and over again that there is nothing in that treaty to affect the United States. Nevertheless, nine men out of ten in the United States continue to repeat that England is the ally—the exclusive ally—of Japan, and that the effect of the treaty has been and is to make Japan think she has a comparatively free hand and may adopt policies of aggression on which she would otherwise fear to embark.⁵¹

Lord Bryce observed that no explanation seemed likely to remove this impression from the American mind. It remained even when Englishmen pointed out that their own interests in securing not only the open door for commerce in China but the political independence of China were exactly the same as the interests of the United States. He concluded that there was no reason whatever for any divergence between the British and American policy as regards China and the possible action of Japan there.

Admiral Twining reported that by October the whole situation so far as the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was concerned had changed “from one of obvious, inevitable and peaceful procedure leading to the renewal of that treaty” to one in which the British government was faced with a tremendous problem which affected “the internal arrangements of the British Empire and its most important relations with the United States.” There was a desire in the United Kingdom that the government should escape in some way from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The general impression there was that the United States and Japan would be at war before many years, and the disturbing question was the position Britain would occupy in case of such an event. There was no question as to the sympathy of the English people; “in case of a white race against a yellow race the English would side with the white race” and the universal desire of Englishmen and the most pressing need of England was for “close and most friendly relations with the United States.”⁵²

From conversations with various people in minor government positions and in the army and navy, Twining received the clear

⁵¹ *The Times*, Oct. 18, 1921.

⁵² Twining to the Director of Naval Intelligence, Nov. 19, 29, 1921, Naval Intelligence File.

impression that a termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would be distinctly welcome, provided it could be reached without any actual or apparent bad faith toward the Japanese. Individuals freely expressed the opinion in private that they disliked the Japanese and regretted that political necessity had brought Great Britain into alliance with Japan.

From newspaper articles and from conversations which Twining had with people not in official life, there was also evidence of a strong sentiment in the country against the continuation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance; but in November, after the Washington Conference assembled, British opinion was not entirely certain whether the abrogation of the alliance would be favored in case of failure of the conference to produce some agreement or understanding which would in effect accomplish the same purpose as was supposed to be accomplished by the alliance. There seemed to be a very general opinion in Great Britain that the existence of this alliance was a source of irritation to the United States, and that its abrogation would tend to strengthen the Anglo-American entente, which was almost universally desired.⁵³

In addition to the anxiety over the treaty as a political instrument distasteful to the United States, and the feeling that the agreement had served its purpose, there was dissatisfaction with the alliance among British mercantile and financial interests alarmed over the increasing competition of Japanese commerce in China. They were also concerned that their business relations with the Chinese might suffer because of Britain's apparent approval of her ally's methods. Significant articles by prominent Englishmen in the Far East voiced these anxieties.⁵⁴ For instance, Robert Young, editor of the *Japan Chronicle*, considered that the alliance had "failed to preserve the independence of Korea or strengthen the integrity of China." It had "aroused the deepest resentment in China and intense suspicion in America." It was the cause of much of the ill-feeling that prevailed between China and Japan. Young concluded:

The militarists of Japan and of Britain, supported by their respective Foreign Offices, favour the Alliance, for it carries out the unexpressed objects for which it was really framed. But the agreement is wholly against the real interests of the British and Japanese

⁵³ Same to same, Nov. 29, 1921, in *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Dennis, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

peoples, which consist in the establishment of good relations and friendship with all nations.⁵⁵

Even in Japan there appeared to be an unofficial *volte face* on the question of the renewal of the treaty. The correspondent of the United Press in Tokyo reported that by November the editorials and semiofficial comment in the newspapers had suddenly turned against a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The substitution of an American, British and Japanese understanding was being urged as highly desirable.⁵⁶

The Washington Conference

In Washington the spokesmen of the Pacific dominions, while claiming to favor the renewal of the alliance, were less determined in their support of it than had been Prime Ministers Hughes and Massey in London. Now there appeared a willingness on the part of the delegates of both countries to search for a satisfactory tripartite agreement as a substitute for the bilateral alliance. In a press conference of November 22 Senator George Foster Pearce⁵⁷ made clear that even though Australia had nothing to do with the initiation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the war peril had passed which led her to endorse the treaty in the council of the empire, held in London in 1911, his government was in full accord with the rest of the British Empire with regard to the treaty. He gave a lucid explanation of the circumstances surrounding the Labour party's attitude on the subject of the renewal in 1911, when the party believed that, in the interest of Australia, the treaty should be renewed. The war demonstrated that Japan was an honorable ally who faithfully fulfilled her obligations under the treaty, and "it would not be fair treatment for us to be the first to say that the treaty shall now go into the waste basket." He wanted, however, to see the Anglo-Japanese Alliance renewed in such a form that was completely acceptable to and in no way directed against the United States. He also stated that the American proposal for a limita-

⁵⁵ Robert Young, "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance", *Contemporary Review*, vol. CXX (July 1921), p. 19.

⁵⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 21, 1921.

⁵⁷ In the conference documents Pearce is officially designated as "Minister of Defence", but in the *Times* (London), the *New York Times*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *Wellington Evening Post* he is always referred to as Senator Pearce.

tion of naval armaments, "which was hailed with lively enthusiasm by the people of the Australian Commonwealth, had materially strengthened the sentiment there in favor of a 'triple entente' in the Far East."⁵⁸

New Zealand stood beside Australia in favoring the continuance of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty at least until "a more comprehensive system" for guaranteeing the peace of the Far East had been devised. Her spokesman, Sir John William Salmond, was reported as saying:

We see no justification for scrapping that alliance without substituting something for it. Japan gave us faithful and valuable service in the dangerous time of war and we owe her our gratitude for it. It is not the English nor the American way to turn our backs on a friend. If and when some more general agreement can be entered into for the preservation of the peace of the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia will welcome it as a substitute for the present imperfect system.⁵⁹

In fine, by the time the Washington Conference convened, the opinion of all the dominion representatives appears to have been that expressed by General Jan Smuts in the Conference of Prime Ministers when he stated that South Africa was "opposed to any exclusive alliances." To him it seemed "clear that the only path of safety for the British Empire is a path on which she can walk together with America."⁶⁰ Moreover, the New Zealand delegate insisted that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was not applicable against the United States, stating that a recent speech of Lloyd George in the House of Commons expressed sufficiently New Zealand's point of view.⁶¹

At the Washington Conference the most dramatic achievement was the Five-Power Treaty to limit quantitatively and qualitatively capital ship and aircraft carrier construction at a ratio of 5-5-3-1.67-1.⁶² Japan accepted a position of capital ship inferiority in accordance with the 5-5-3 ratio only on condition that Great Britain and the United States agree not to build new fortifications in the Pacific during the life of the treaty. Consequently,

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1921; *Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 24, 1921.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1921.

⁶⁰ *Conference of Prime Ministers*, p. 24.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *U.S. Senate Documents*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., no. 126, *Conference on the Limitation of Armament*, pp. 252-254, 875-876.

there was incorporated in this treaty Article XIX, an agreement to maintain the *status quo* of certain specified naval bases and fortifications in the Pacific.⁶³ This article aimed to make the Pacific truly pacific.

With the menace of attack by one of the Pacific naval Powers against another removed, the way was prepared for the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The representatives of the British Empire, Japan, the United States and France entered into a Four-Power Treaty on December 13, 1921, under the terms of which the signatories agreed that if there should develop between any of them a controversy arising out of "any Pacific question and involving their said rights" which was not satisfactorily settled by diplomacy and was likely to affect their harmonious accord, they would refer the whole subject to a joint conference of all the high contracting parties "for consideration and adjustment." If the said rights were threatened by any other Power, the contracting parties agreed to communicate with one another "in order to arrive at an understanding as to the most efficient measures to be taken, jointly or separately, to meet the exigencies of the particular situation."⁶⁴ The agreement of ten years' duration was limited in its application to "insular possessions and Dominions in the Pacific Ocean," including the mandated islands.

This was a four- not a three-Power treaty as originally advocated. Secretary Hughes insisted upon bringing France into the agreement, not only to soothe her somewhat ruffled pride over the naval ratio of 1.67 vis-à-vis the same for Italy, but undoubtedly as a deliberate policy of generalizing the responsibilities of a treaty that might otherwise appear to be a departure from the traditional American policy of avoiding entangling alliances. The agreement called merely for consultation, not arbitration, and even this was limited by a supplementary proviso so as not "to embrace questions which according to principles of international law lie exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of the respective Powers."⁶⁵

This mild denatured agreement to refer disputes to consultation met American objections to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 875.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103, 890.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 892. For a discussion of the Four-Power Treaty, see Tate, *op. cit.* pp. 126-133.

and was a cheap price for the United States to pay for the abrogation of that alliance and a new pledge of respect for the integrity of the Philippines. In the words of A. Whitney Griswold: "It substituted a four-power agreement to talk for a two-power agreement to fight."⁶⁶

The delegates of both Australia and New Zealand were satisfied, in fact pleased, with the results of the conference. From Senator Pearce's point of view the Four-Power Treaty was the most valuable of the agreements concluded at Washington. Sir John Salmond felt that the quadruple agreement ensured peace in the Pacific Ocean for at least ten years. Pearce, in a statement to the Australian Press Association on February 6, 1922, observed: "The Four-Power Pacific pact does not involve any interference in purely domestic questions, therefore it does not in any way involve our independence in respect to local questions." Referring to the remarkable results achieved at Washington, the statesman concluded that "the success of the Conference is beyond the wildest anticipation of the most hopeful," and he invited critics in Australia who foretold its failure to review their criticism.⁶⁷

At the Washington Conference a Japanese diplomatist is alleged to have remarked to his British colleague: "At any rate you gave the Alliance a splendid funeral!" and the Englishman is not reported to have disagreed.⁶⁸

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⁶⁶ Griswold, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

⁶⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Feb. 8, 1922.

⁶⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1920-1923*, published under the auspices of the British Institute of International Affairs (London, 1925), p. 490. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance actually came to an end on August 17, 1923, the date on which the ratifications of the Four-Power Treaty were deposited.