



# Great Britain, the Dominions and Their Position on Japan in the 1920s and Early 1930s<sup>1</sup>

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Signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance treaty on 30 January 1902 did not just signal the end of Great Britain's policy of Splendid Isolation, but also meant that until the 1920s Japan would remain a loyal ally to the British Empire and its interests in the Far East. The very fact there was an alliance had a significant influence on the traditional and specific interests of certain Dominions, in particular Australia and to a lesser extent also Canada and New Zealand, in the Pacific. When Japan became a great power, affirmed by its victory in the war with Russia in 1905, objections from the Dominions grew. The Dominion governments argued that signature of the alliance implied, or even confirmed, the Empire's economic, political and naval weakness. When it was decided to extend the alliance in 1911, the Australians in particular vehemently opposed its renewal, referring mainly to the unwanted immigration of large numbers of Japanese to the Australian continent and adjacent islands and the strong-arm method of spreading Japanese influence in the Pacific, weakening Britain's, and Australia's, position.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, alliance with Japan provided the Pacific Dominion with a certain level of security since the alliance coming to an end would lead to a deterioration in the British Empire's strategic position in the Far East.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Cf. R. J. GOWEN, *British Legerdemain at the 1911 Imperial Conference: The Dominions, Defence Planning, and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 1980, pp. 385–413; H. D. HALL, *Commonwealth: A History of the British Commonwealth of Nations*, London 1971, p. 77; P. LOWE, *The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1911–1915*, in: *History*, Vol. 54, Is. 181, 1969, pp. 213–214; N. K. MEANEY, 'A Proposition of the Highest International Importance': *Alfred Deakin's Pacific Agreement Proposal and Its Significance for Australian-Imperial Relations*, in: *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 5, Is. 3, 1967, pp. 201; I. H. NISH, *Australia and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1901–1911*, in: *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1963, pp. 207–208.

3 The National Archives, London-Kew (further only TNA), Cabinet Office (further only CAB) 1/4, No. 78–C, *Australia and New Zealand: Strategic Situation in the Event of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Being Determined: Memorandum by the Committee of Imperial Defence*, Whitehall Gardens, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1911, ff. 14–16 [242–243].



Following three joint meetings (26–30 May 1911) of the Dominion and British participants of the Imperial Conference and the Imperial Defence Committee, the beginning of negotiations with the Japanese government on an extension to the alliance for a further ten years was agreed to.<sup>4</sup> This, historically, was the first officially recorded shared decision which was jointly discussed on an important matter of foreign policy in the Pacific and Far East region.<sup>5</sup>

Although the course of the First World War demonstrated that Japan was acting as a responsible British ally, the increasingly expansionist tendencies of Japanese policy in the Far East and the Pacific aroused significant concern. In early 1920, His Majesty's Government realised it was in a difficult situation. The Foreign Office and War Office proposed a continuation of the alliance with Japan, but Britain had marked interests in China and Korea which it was difficult to overlook.<sup>6</sup> An extensive memorandum from the end of February 1920 put together by an employee of the Far Eastern Department at the British Foreign Office, Charles Henry Bentinck, which analysed the ambitions of the great powers and interested European powers in China and the Far East, confirmed that British and American interests in the Pacific were *de facto* identical, while British and Japanese interests were diametrically opposed. Bentinck referred to the fact that Japan was promoting a weak central government in China that should be economically closed, and that it aspired towards hegemony in the Far East, putting it in conflict with British endeavours for a united strong China and maintenance of the Open Door principle and the equal trading opportunities therein. The Foreign Office saw Tokyo's hegemonic tendencies as a threat to Britain's power and economic status in Hong Kong, Singapore, the Pacific islands and the Yangtze basin. Disagreements between the Dominions and Japan mainly involved the practical implementation of the Dominions' "white policy" which limited "coloured" immigration and which was in conflict with Japan's expansive objectives in the Pacific. Bentinck in addition also stressed that the opposing positions of Japan and America in the Far East and Pacific would likely one day erupt into conflict and that Great Britain should carefully choose on whose side it was going to be.<sup>7</sup>

4 TNA, CAB 2/2, Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the 111<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1911, f. 36.

5 Cf. N. R. BENNETT, *Consultation or Information? Britain, the Dominions and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1911*, in: *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1970, pp. 178–194; HALL, p. 82.

6 Cf. D. C. BOULGER, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 118, 1920, pp. 326–333; M. G. FRY, *The North Atlantic Triangle and the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1967, p. 48; United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Papers* (further only PD), House of Commons (further only HoC), 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 130, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1920, cc. 2365–2366; TNA, CAB 1/4, 126–C, Committee of Imperial Defence: Anglo-Japanese Alliance: Memoranda and Minutes Regarding the Renewal Anglo-Japanese Alliance Received from Foreign Office March 1920, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, ff. [1]–6 [263–266].

7 See [F 199/199/23], Foreign Office Memorandum on Effect of Anglo-Japanese Alliance upon Foreign Relationships, Foreign Office, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1920, in: R. BUTLER — J. P. T. BURY — M. E. LAMBERT (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939* [further only DBFP]: 1919, 1<sup>st</sup> Series, Vol. 6, London 1956, Doc. No. 761, pp. 1016–1023; P. H. KERR, *The Anglo-Japanese*



Although the First World War was a test of the alliance with Japan, providing a certain feeling of security to Pacific Dominions,<sup>8</sup> the British Empire's post-war marine weakness in the Far East and Pacific<sup>9</sup> did lead to a reassessment of the situation and the beginning of intensive collaboration with the United States of America in Pacific matters.<sup>10</sup> As such, generally good relations with the Americans became the axiom of imperial foreign policy. Britain was rather sensitive in trying to maintain the appearance of an Empire of unanimous opinion towards third countries and as such feared that the Canadian cabinet might be rather pro-active in the matter and begin excessively openly to express a dissenting position on the renewal of the alliance.<sup>11</sup> As such, after the First World War the Pacific became a place where British and American economic and political influence clashed, with a latent racist subtext of whether the Pacific should be "yellow or white".<sup>12</sup>

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*Alliance*, in: *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 11, Is. 41, 1920, pp. 93–96; G. L. KOEHN, *Menace of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Current History*, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1921, pp. 738–739; P. LOWE, P., *The Round Table, the Dominions and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1911–22*, in: *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 86, Is. 341, 1997, pp. 87; NORTHEEDGE, F. S., *The Troubled Giant: Britain among the Great Powers 1916–1939*, London 1966, p. 286; TNA, CAB 24/97/102, C. P. 599, [M.] Ferguson, Paraphrase Telegram from the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1920, f. 658.

8 H. N. CASSON, *The Significance of the Imperial Conference*, in: *Barron's*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, p. 5.

9 After the First World War, in regard to the distribution of maritime forces, the British admiralty had to make a decision on whether to maintain two naval bases in the Pacific — Singapore and Hong Kong. For strategic and financial reasons, and taking account of Australia and New Zealand's positions, it eventually chose Singapore as its main base. Cf. *Britain's Navy*, in: *Evening Post*, Vol. 101, Is. 48, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1921, p. 2; TNA, CAB 34/1, S. S. — 2, A. J. Balfour, Committee of Imperial Defence: Standing Sub-Committee: Naval and Military Situation in the Far East, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1921, ff. [1]–5 [7–11]; TNA, CAB 34/1, S. S. — 6, Committee of Imperial Defence: Standing Sub-Committee: Empire Naval Policy and Cooperation: Summary of Admiralty Recommendations in Regard to Dominions Naval Policy, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1921, ff. [21–22]; TNA, CAB 34/1, S. S. — 12, Committee of Imperial Defence: Standing Sub-Committee: Singapore — Development of as Naval Base: Draft Conclusion, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, ff. [34–35].

10 TNA, CAB 1/4, 122–C, Committee of Imperial Defence: Anglo-Japanese Alliance: Effect of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance upon Foreign Relations, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1920, ff. 4–5 [245].

11 Cf. Cmd. 1474, s. 13; [F 1579/63/23], Memorandum by Mr. Lampson on Correspondence with Canadian Government Relating to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Foreign Office, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1921, in: *DBFP: Far Eastern Affairs April 1920 — February 1922*, 1<sup>st</sup> Series, Vol. 14, London 1966, Doc. No. 261, pp. 271–276; Governor General to Colonial Secretary, Ottawa, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1921, in: L. C. CLARK (ed.), *Documents on Canadian External Relations: 1919–1925* [further only *DCER*], Vol. 3, Doc. No. 213, Ottawa 1970, pp. 166–167; *PD, HoC*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 143, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, cc. 792, 795–796; TNA, Colonial Office (further only CO) 886/9/8, The Secretary of State to the Governor General, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1921, Doc. No. 142, ff. 91–92.

12 See A. BEST, *Race, Monarchy, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–1922*, in: *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2006, pp. 171–186; J. R. POYNTER, *The Yo-yo Variations: Initiative and Dependence in Australia's External Relations, 1918–1923*, in: *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14,



After the First World War, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance became very unpopular in the United States because Tokyo's policies were taking a more marked expansionist course. America feared that extension of the alliance could be further linked with an acknowledgement of "Japan's special interests in eastern Asia",<sup>13</sup> which it saw as a "treachery [...] of modern civilised ideals".<sup>14</sup> As such, from 1920 American politicians took the position that if an Anglo-Japanese treaty was to be accepted, it would have to be renewed with certain modifications. In particular, it was to guarantee the Open Door principle in China, and Japanese foreign policy instability meant it should not be concluded for a period longer than five years.<sup>15</sup>

From the end of January 1921, the British government notified the Dominions that a number of issues had to be dealt with before the summer Imperial Conference in regard to current Imperial defence problems. Discussions on the ending or extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, however, completely overshadowed other defence matters.<sup>16</sup> Canadian politicians considered relations with Japan as of great importance, possibly affecting the direction of imperial foreign policy for many years, and as such they had a wide analysis undertaken. On 1 February 1921, Loring Christie submitted a memorandum which in view of a lengthy discussion of twenty years of Anglo-Japanese collaboration came down clearly against the automatic renewal of the alliance, proposing that an attempt should be made to find some kind of alternative.<sup>17</sup> In mid-February, the Canadian government expressed its disagreement to the proposed extension of the alliance because it feared a deterioration in Anglo-American relations, specifically the unforeseeable impacts a further alliance with Japan would likely have on Canadian interests in the North American continent. It was also against the unnecessary creation of a barrier between the English-speaking countries which should be collaborating rather than competing.<sup>18</sup> Canada's position was

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No. 54, 1970, p. 233; [F 3823/2635/10], V. Wellesley, General Survey of Political Situation in Pacific and far East with Reference to the Forthcoming Washington Conference, Foreign Office, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1921, in: *DBFP*, Vol. 14, Doc. No. 404, p. 438.

- 13 The Acting Secretary of State [Phillips] to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis), Washington, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1919, in: United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* [further only *FRUS*], 1920, Vol. 2, Washington 1936, p. 679.
- 14 F. W. EGGLESTON, *The Imperial Conference*, in: *New Statesman*, Vol. 17, No. 426, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, p. 268.
- 15 The Acting Secretary of State [Polk] to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis), Washington, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1920, in: *FRUS*, 1920, Vol. 2, pp. 680–681.
- 16 C. P. STACEY, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies: 1867–1921*, Vol. 1, Toronto 1984, p. 334.
- 17 Loring Christie, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1921, in: A. R. M. LOWER, *Loring Christie and the Genesis of the Washington Conference of 1921–1922*, in: *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 1966, pp. 42–48.
- 18 Cf. Governor General to Colonial Secretary, Ottawa, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1921, in: *DCER*, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 209, pp. 162–163; M. G. FRY, *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy 1918–22*, Toronto 1972, pp. 91–92; TNA, CAB 1/4, 130–C, Committee of Imperial Defence: Memorandum by Sir B. Alston Respecting Suggestions for an Anglo-Saxon Policy for the Far East, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1920, ff. [1]–5 [273–275]; TNA, CO 886/9/8, The Secretary of State to the Governor General, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1921, Doc. No. 140, ff. 89–90.



also influenced by fears of the outcome of any American-Japanese antagonism in the Far East, where Ottawa had had interests since the time of the Siberian Intervention. An unwillingness to take in Japanese immigrants also played a role.<sup>19</sup>

The other Dominions, except for the Union of South Africa, looked at the matter differently. The Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand in particular perceived the alliance with Japan more as a security guarantee than an immediate power threat.<sup>20</sup> Australia's William Morris Hughes feared that after the war the Pacific would become an area in which another international crisis would break out because, "*the Wars and the Panama Canal has shifted the world's stage from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to the Pacific. [...] The American Navy is now in those waters. Peace in the Pacific means peace for this [British — J. V.] Empire and for the world.*"<sup>21</sup> Although Hughes was of a different opinion to his Canadian opposite number Arthur Meighen, their countries had the same priorities. For both Canadian and Australian interests, an appropriate balance of power in the Pacific meant more than the international situation in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

The Anglo-Japanese treaty had been negotiated in 1902 as a purely British agreement with the Dominions not a party to the treaty, although from the beginning the treaty terms closely affected them. Since the autonomous overseas territories and the motherland decided jointly in 1911 on an extension to the treaty for a further ten years, they were automatically consulted on all aspects of the alliance's renewal in 1921 too.<sup>23</sup> When representatives of the Dominions and Britain met up at the Imperial Conference in June 1921, the London government, following months of debates with Canada, was leaning towards favouring renewal of the alliance treaty with modifications which would satisfy American objections and which would bring the treaty in line with the League of Nations' Covenant,<sup>24</sup> something the wording of the alliance treaty of 1911 did not conform to.<sup>25</sup>

19 M. G. FRY, *The North Atlantic Triangle and the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1967, pp. 46–47; WOODSWORTH, C. J., *Canada and the Far East*, in: *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 10, No. 14, 1941, pp. 162–163.

20 For more on Australia's and New Zealand's positions cf. J. B. BREBNER, *Canada, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Washington Conference*, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1935, pp. 51–52; J. GALBRAITH, *The Imperial Conference of 1921 and the Washington Conference*, in: *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1948, p. 147; G. P. de T. GLAZEBROOK, *Canadian External Relations*, in: C. MARTIN (ed.), *Canada in Peace and War: Eight Studies in National Trends since 1914*, London 1941, p. 164; M. TATE — F. FOY, *More Light on the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 4, 1959, pp. 536–537; R. THORNTON, *Semblance of Security: Australia and the Washington Conference, 1921–22*, in: *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1978, p. 66.

21 Cmd. 1474, p. 21.

22 BREBNER, *Canada*, p. 53.

23 HALL, pp. 438–439; J. D. HARGREAVES, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–1952*, in: *History Today*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1952, pp. 257–258; C. N. SPINKS, *The Termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 6, 1937, pp. 322–323.

24 Cf. BREBNER, *Canada*, p. 51; FRY, *The North*, p. 53–55; SPINKS, p. 325; TNA, CAB 1/4, 121–C, Committee of Imperial Defence: Anglo-Japanese Alliance: Correspondence Regarding Strategic and International Considerations Involved in the Continuance of the Alliance,



Furthermore, at the beginning of conference discussions, it appeared that the matter would have to be dealt with quickly, because the alliance was meant to end on 13 July 1921.<sup>26</sup> Australia's Prime Minister Hughes, who mostly supported the arguments of his New Zealand counterpart, William Ferguson Massey, spoke in favour of renewing the alliance. Canada's Prime Minister Meighen in particular was vigorously against, arguing of the necessity to accept American objections to the treaty.<sup>27</sup> In the debates on imperial foreign policy implementation, Meighen endorsed the principle that the voice of Dominions in affairs which affect them in particular should carry due weight in decision-making.<sup>28</sup> The Dominions' statesmen were fully aware that the issue of an alliance with Japan was an important foreign policy decision which would impact not just on relations with the United States of America, but also on the British Empire's position in the Far East and the Pacific.<sup>29</sup>

Although Australia's Prime Minister was aware that Japanese Far East and Pacific policies were invoking significant international controversy and had not lined up with Australia's "white policy" for many years, he assumed that an extension to the alliance would allow the British Empire to keep them in better check or even guide them. As such, during conference discussions Hughes was the leading proponent of collaboration with Japan.<sup>30</sup> Against him, South Africa's General Jan Christiaan

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Foreign Office, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1920, ff. 2–10 [236–240]; TNA, CAB 1/4, 122–C, Committee of Imperial Defence: Anglo-Japanese Alliance: Anglo-Japanese Alliance as Affected by the Covenant of the League of Nations, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1920, ff. 2–3 [244]; TNA, CAB 23/25/27, Cabinet 43 (21), Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, Downing Street, 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1921, ff. 2–17 [298–313].

- 25 The Chargé in Japan (Bell) to the Secretary of State, Tokyo, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1920, in: *FRUS*, 1920, Vol. 2, pp. 685–686.
- 26 The alliance was able to formally continue for a further 12 months following the declaration of the end of the alliance. Cf. G. M. CARTER, *The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions 1919–1939*, Toronto 1947, p. 44; W. R. LOUIS, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939*, Oxford 1971, p. 74; TNA, CO 886/9/8, House of Commons: Far Eastern and Pacific Policy: United States and British Empire Relations, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, Encl. No. 1 to Doc. No. 146, f. 95.
- 27 Cmd. 1474, p. 31; SPINKS, pp. 322–323.
- 28 TNA, CAB 32/2, E. 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, Stenographic Notes of a Meeting of Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, f. 8 [147].
- 29 *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, in: *Spectator*, Vol. 125, No. 4802, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1920, p. 39; Cmd. 1474, p. 13; M. PRANG, *N. W. Rowell and Canada's External Policy, 1917–1921*, in: Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1960, p. 101.
- 30 Cf. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates* [further only *APD*], *House of Representatives* [further only *HoR*], No. 14, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, p. 7265; *APD*, *HoR*, No. 37, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1921, pp. 4387–4390; Cmd. 1474, p. 19; S. BRAWLEY, *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1919–1978*, Sydney 1995, pp. 73–74; D. K. DIGNAN, *Australia and British Relations with Japan, 1914–1921*, in: *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 21, Is. 2, 1967, pp. 135–150; LOUIS, p. 55; E. L. PIESSE, *Japan and Australia*, in: *Foreign Affairs: An American Quarterly Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1/4, 1925/1926, pp. 475–488; POYNTER, pp. 236–238; *The Anglo-Japanese Pact*, in: *Evening Post*, Vol. 101, Is. 48, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1921, p. 6; TNA, CAB 32/2, E. 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Stenographic Notes



Smuts referred to the fact that Japan represented more of a “potential danger” than a friendly country, and that if the British Empire was to “look to world peace, we must do nothing to alienate Japan [...]”. Smuts, who perceived most affairs within a wider international context, considered Japan a threat to the peace settlement guaranteed by the League of Nations, and as such suggested that all interested powers should act in unison in regard to Pacific affairs.<sup>31</sup> The South African General further made no secret of his opinion that close collaboration with the United States of America would secure the British Empire’s security in future.<sup>32</sup> Canada’s proposal for the immediate convening of a conference of the four powers with interests in the Pacific in order to deal with the current problems was one of the reasons the Imperial Conference found itself in deadlock. Thus, Canada’s position at the turn of June and July 1921 significantly reformulated imperial foreign policy.<sup>33</sup>

When American President Warren Harding’s invitation to participate in a conference in Washington looking in depth at limiting naval arms and Pacific affairs arrived in London on 8 July 1921,<sup>34</sup> Lloyd George took advantage of this to postpone discussions on Pacific affairs including the extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance until this forum.<sup>35</sup> It was clear that the alliance with Japan was a major obstacle to Anglo-American friendship and collaboration;<sup>36</sup> the Americans prioritised multilateral treaties in the Pacific rather than bilateral pacts.<sup>37</sup> Pressure grew on the British cabinet. During September, British public opinion began to gradually come to the conclusion that friendship with the United States was preferable to renewal of the alliance with Japan.<sup>38</sup>

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of a Meeting of Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, ff. 2–8 [70–73].

31 Influential members of the Round Table Movement held a similar opinion to Smuts. Srv. KERR, p. 96; TNA, CAB 32/2, E. 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Stenographic Notes of a Meeting of Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1921, ff. 8–10 [73–74].

32 Cmd. 1474, p. 24; GALBRAITH, p. 147.

33 For discussion on the influence of the Dominions on the change in British policy see I. KLEIN, *Whitehall, Washington, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1919–1921*, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1972, pp. 464–468.

34 The naval powers of the British Empire, the United States of America, Japan, France and Italy, and countries with interests in the Pacific such as China, Holland, Belgium and Portugal received invitations to the Washington Conference.

35 *Fruits of the British Imperial Conference*, in: *Current History*, Vol. 14, No. 6, 1921, p. 1048; SPINKS, pp. 332–333; The Secretary of State [C. E. Hughes] to the Ambassador in Great Britain (Harvey), Washington, 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1921, in: *FRUS*, 1921, Vol. 1, p. 18; Colonial Secretary to Governor General, Downing Street, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1921, in: *DCER*, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 429, pp. 484–486.

36 Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the British Ambassador (Geddes), 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1921, in: *FRUS*, 1921, Vol. 1, p. 73.

37 J. B. BREBNER, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., New Haven 1947, p. 282.

38 A. BEST, *The ‘Ghost’ of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making*, in: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49, Is. 3, 2006, p. 818.

On 12 November 1921, American President Warren Harding officially opened the Washington disarmament conference, which he promised would help to “minimise mistakes in international relations”.<sup>39</sup> Although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was not on the officially approved conference programme, Britain attached great importance to it. There was a parallel gradual climb-down by Pacific Dominions, which had previously taken an uncompromising position. Australian politicians decided only to endorse a form of Anglo-Japanese alliance which would be acceptable to the United States of America.<sup>40</sup> American representatives then strongly pushed for a four-party treaty, because this corresponded better to their perspective on the balance of power in the Pacific.<sup>41</sup> In the end, Britain accepted the American proposal on 7 December 1921, after ensuring the treaty would also apply to Australia and New Zealand.<sup>42</sup> The Dominions’ Prime Ministers agreed with the arrangement. The content of the treaty was a great success for Canada’s representatives in particular, because it generally corresponded to Meighen’s proposals and position which he had presented at the Imperial Conference in summer 1921.<sup>43</sup> The treaty was signed on 13 December between the four powers, and its fourth article ended the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The convention was meant to apply for a period of ten years.<sup>44</sup>

One can claim that the Four-Power Treaty satisfied American demands and did not expressly offend Japan.<sup>45</sup> A potential cause of possible future Anglo-American

39 TNA, CAB 30/5, W. D. C. 1, Cabinet: Washington Disarmament Conference: President Harding’s Opening Speech, Washington, 12<sup>th</sup> November, [1921], f. 6.

40 *Far Eastern Problem: Quadruple Agreement Possible: Britain, America, Japan, China*, in: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, No. 26174, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1921, p. 9.

41 TNA, CAB 30/5, W. D. C. 13, Cabinet: Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armament: Copy of a Despatch (No. 1) from Mr. Balfour to the Prime Minister, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1921, f. 126; J. C. VINSON, *The Drafting of the Four-Power Treaty of the Washington Conference*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1953, p. 43.

42 TNA, CAB 30/5, W. D. C. 52, Cabinet: Washington Conference on Limitation of Armament: Proposed Quadruple Agreement, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, No. 112, f. 265; TNA, CAB 30/1A, B. E. D. [No. 58], British Empire Delegation: Eleventh Conference of British Empire Delegation, Washington, Franklin Square Hotel, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, ff. [1]–3 [41–42].

43 CARTER, p. 54; Canadian Delegate [R. L. Borden] to Prime Minister [A. Meighen], Washington, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, in: *DCER*, Vol. 3, Doc. No. 449, p. 505; TNA, CAB 30/1A, B. E. D. [No. 59], British Empire Delegation: Twelfth Conference of British Empire Delegation, Washington, Franklin Square Hotel, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, ff. [1]–5 [44–47]; TNA, Admiralty Papers (ADM) 1/8630/142, B. E. D. [No. 60], British Empire Delegation: Thirteenth Conference of British Empire Delegation, Washington, Franklin Square Hotel, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, ff. [1]–2 [8].

44 See BUELL, R. L., *The Washington Conference*, New York 1922, s. 172–200; SPINKS, s. 337; [F 4539/2905/23], Mr. Balfour (Washington Delegation) to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Washington, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1921, in: *DBFP*, Vol. 14, Doc. No. 471, pp. 541–542; The Secretary of State [C. E. Hughes] to Mr. Frank H. Simonds, Washington, 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, in: *FRUS*, 1922, Vol. 1, p. 40; Treaty between the United States of America, the British Empire, France, and Japan, Signed at Washington, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, in: *FRUS*, 1922, Vol. 1, pp. 33–36.

45 M. SULLIVAN, *The Great Adventure at Washington: The Story of the Conference*, New York 1922, p. 236.





antagonism was also successfully eliminated.<sup>46</sup> Signature of the Four-Party Treaty was a great success for Washington, which had managed to enforce the “American perspective” on the state of affairs in the Pacific, and in particular prevent the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Nevertheless, London’s representatives continued to believe that Britain’s position was not significantly weakened; on the contrary. Despite all the unpleasantness which accompanied discussions on renewal of the alliance in 1921, they believed that British relations with Japan continued to be friendly.<sup>47</sup> The Four-Power Treaty nevertheless affirmed a long-term trend; Britain had prioritised good relations with the United States over greater ties with Japan.<sup>48</sup> The Washington Naval Conference in early 1922 established a new balance of naval powers in the Pacific which prevented the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>49</sup> The Four-Power Treaty was meant to serve as a sufficient guarantee of the *status quo* in the Pacific while also helping to minimise the fears of Australia and New Zealand over future developments; though in reality the opposite was true.<sup>50</sup> Australia and New Zealand perceived the treaty as a painful compromise which only secured their security temporarily, and not permanently.<sup>51</sup>

The Pacific Dominions were soon to find out that it was not to be a permanent security solution. The so-called Mukden Incident took place in September 1931 in Manchuria, followed by military occupation of the territory by the Japanese army and the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. The international community decided to deal with the situation through the League of Nations which established a five-member commission led by Victor Bulwer-Lytton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Lytton, to investigate what had taken place in Manchuria. In October 1932, the Lytton Commission announced its conclusions that it represented Japanese aggression, causing Japan to leave the League of Nations. From the start of the Far Eastern Crisis (1931–1932), Great Britain and its Dominions promoted its resolution through principles of collective security, which from its perspective was symbolised by the weight and importance of the League of Nations. The Mukden Incident and Japan’s subsequent actions in Manchuria represented not just a test for the peace mechanisms of this international organisation, but also a test of the faith of Britain and Dominion representatives in the principles of collective security in this part of Asia. At the same time, the British Empire was unwilling to do more than strive to reconcile the warring parties over a negotiating table in Geneva. Neither British, nor Dominion, representatives were prepared to risk direct or indirect conflict with Japan, which they perceived as an unacceptable form of dealing with the Far Eastern conflict. Do-

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46 CARTER, p. 55.

47 [F 4745/2905/23], Mr. Balfour (Washington Delegation) to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Washington, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1921, in: *DBFP*, Vol. 14, Doc. No. 512, pp. 566–567.

48 CARTER, p. 54.

49 J. A. WILLIAMSON, *A Short History of British Expansion: The Modern Empire and Commonwealth*, London 1947, pp. 349–350.

50 S. MARKS, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918–1933*, London 1976, pp. 40–42.

51 POYNTER, p. 246; A. M. SPENCER, *A Third Option: Imperial Air Defence and the Pacific Dominions, 1918–1939*, PhD Thesis, Auburn 2008, pp. 118–119.

minion and London politicians even went as far as “hampering” their own critics in the interests of maintaining this position, so as not to extinguish the possibility of reaching a settlement or to permanently damage relations with Japan.<sup>52</sup>

At a stroke, the Pacific Dominions in particular felt in danger from Japan’s Far East and Pacific policy. Fears of an attack and a lack of general trust in the naval and air base in Singapore were facilitated by Great Britain’s essentially powerless position in regard to Japanese steps in China; the course of the conflict was clear proof of this.<sup>53</sup> Only Australian politicians expressed significant support to Britain’s response to the crisis, fastidiously sticking to the conditions of the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922,<sup>54</sup> affirming China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and accepting Open Door Policy principles.<sup>55</sup> Due to British trading interests in Japan and its more extensive and significant interests in China, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir John Simon accepted the general stance that a solution had to be found with the League of Nations member states which would calm the tense situation and which would suit both opposing parties.<sup>56</sup> This was not a realistic solution to the problem, however. Furthermore, economic and financial sanctions against Japan were definitively rejected in early 1933 due to their lack of effectiveness and significant fears of an unpredictable response from Tokyo politicians and influential figures within its navy and army.<sup>57</sup>

In light of this deadlock, the Australian Prime Minister Joseph Aloysius Lyons proposed an interesting attempt to “break the ice” in December 1933, specifically sending a goodwill mission to the Far East (Japan, Hong Kong and China), to South East Asia (Siam and Singapore) and to the Pacific region (the Philippines, Dutch East Indies and the French Far East Colonies), in order to promote friendly contact with their close neighbours, because “*international relations are more important than ever before*”.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, trading matters, whose “political” importance in relation to the Great Depression of the early 1930s had sharply grown, were not *a priori* the intended subject of discussions, although it was assumed that any eventual mission success could

52 Cf. CARTER, pp. 164–166; HALL, pp. 719–720; C. THORNE, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933*, London 1972.

53 Cf. R. CALLAHAN, *The Illusion of Security: Singapore 1919–42*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1974, pp. 73–92; Memorandum by Sir J. Pratt, Foreign Office, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1932, in: *DBFP: The Far Eastern Crisis 1931–1932*, Ser. 2, Vol. 9, London 1965, Doc. No. 238, pp. 282–283.

54 Cf. E. M. ANDREWS, *The Australian Government and the Manchurian Crisis, 1931–1934*, in: *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 30, 1981, pp. 307–316; TNA, Dominion Office (further only DO) 114/40, Mr. V. C. Duffy (Commonwealth Liaison Officer) to Dominions Office, London, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1932, Doc. No. 257, f. 177 [97].

55 LOUIS, p. 104.

56 TNA, DO 114/40, Manchuria: Note of an Interview between Sir E. Harding and Mr. Shedden and Mr. Knowles on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1932, at Which an *Aide-mémoire* Explaining the Policy of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom Was Handed to the Latter for the Information of Mr. Bruce and Sir T. Wilford, Doc. No. 263, f. 182 [100].

57 HALL, pp. 723–724.

58 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Australian Mission to the East, *The Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1933, f. [2]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, E. B. B. to Sir E. Harding, 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1933, f. [3].



lead to significant development of trading relations.<sup>59</sup> In simple terms, the mission did not “*come to Japan in order to buy or sell goods*”.<sup>60</sup> In terms of Australian-Japanese economic relations, the greatest complication was Canberra’s intention to increase import duties on Japanese goods.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, British textile merchants asked the British government to convince the Australians to postpone the mission because they feared Japan would easily achieve benefits for its exporters in the Dominion markets to the detriment of domestic entrepreneurs.<sup>62</sup>

Australia’s Minister for External Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, Sir John Greig Latham, was put in charge of the mission, which formally had eight members.<sup>63</sup> Britain’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs John Allsebrook Simon, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Simon, did not object to the trip, although in terms of foreign Imperial interests he prioritised a visit mainly to Japan, China and then Hong Kong and Singapore. Regarding Siam, he recommended consultation with His Majesty’s Government. If Latham planned to visit the Dutch East Indies, he stressed that it would be a good idea to visit other Far East foreign colonies, such as the American Philippines and French Indochina so that the choice of destinations appeared balanced.<sup>64</sup> Simon wanted Latham to prioritise a visit to Japan. In contrast, the Australian mission planned an extensive two-month trip through the Pacific, South-East Asia and the Far East, covering almost the whole area. Over more than two months, they visited seven areas and thirty venues.<sup>65</sup>

The mission began on 1 April 1934 with a visit to the islands of the Dutch East Indies. In his 1934 report to the Australian parliament, Latham assessed the visit to the

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59 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Foreign Office to Mr. Ingram (Peking) and to Sir F. Lindlay (Tokyo), Foreign Office, London, 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1933, f. [19].

60 TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham: Appendix “B”: “All Japan” Broadcast Speech by Mr. Latham, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, p. 26.

61 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Australian Visit to Japan, The Times, 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1934, f. [5].

62 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Representative in the Commonwealth of Australia of His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1934, ff. [2-3].

63 Taking part besides Sir John Latham was his wife, daughter Freda, Advisor Eric Eldwin Longfield Lloyd, Information Officer Arthur Claude Moore, Secretary Henry Austin Standish, Assistant Secretary John Leselie Ferguson and Stenographer Miss Marjory Millicent Grosvenor. TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham, p. 4.

64 TNA, DO 35/181/1, W. H. Connor Green to [Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies], Ivor Miles Windsor-Clive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Plymouth, Foreign Office, London, 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1933, ff. [13-14]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, A. W. C. Randall to J. McLaren, Foreign Office, London, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1934, f. [16].

65 In the Dutch East Indies, they visited Makassar (sometimes also Macassar), Bali Island, Soerabaya, Djokjakarta, Bandeong, Soebang and Batavia, in British Malaya they visited Singapore and Johor, in Indochina they visited Saigon and Hong Kong, in China they visited Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin, Beijing and Guangzhou, in Japan they visited Nagasaki, Kobe, Tokyo, Nikkō, Yokohama, Kamakura, Miyanoshita, Kyoto, Nara, Yamada, Osaka, Shimoneseiki and Unzen, and in the Philippines they visited Manila and Davao.



Dutch colony very positively as it had received invitations from the highest authorities including a meeting with the Governor General Bonifacius Cornelis de Jonge in Rijswijk Palace in Batavia. Latham took note of many matters, and in regard to the Dutch he highlighted the warm welcome at official and non-official levels and acknowledged that Australia and the Dutch East Indies faced similar challenges in the Pacific, such as apprehension of Japan's hostile intentions and a possible attack on oil-fields there, and as such he hoped that closer political and trading relations could be developed. The next destinations on the trip were Singapore in British Malaya where Latham saw the naval and air base, French Indochina and a short visit to Hong Kong.<sup>66</sup>

On the morning of 25 April 1934, the mission arrived in Shanghai, where Latham held many discussions and took part in a number of joint events. In Nanjing, he met Chinese Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Ching Wei, who later collaborated with Japan during the Second World War, and with the Chairman of the National Government, Lin Sen. The Australians also undertook an official visit to local sites. They subsequently visited Beijing and its Summer Palace, the Forbidden City and other towns. Latham expressed interest in a number of matters in China. First of all, it represented a promising potential market for Australian goods, and on the other hand he was struck by the level of corruption, the complete (economic, political and social) distrust in the government in Nanjing and the disunity of the different Chinese regions.<sup>67</sup> He aptly described it by saying, "*China is pieces to-day, and it may be in fragments to-morrow*".<sup>68</sup> Although the visit to Chinese territory had great international significance in the context of Sino-Japanese disputes over Manchuria, in terms of Australian policy objectives, the visit to the Empire of Japan was more significant.

In terms of Imperial foreign policy, the most interesting and certainly the most important of the countries visited was Japan, where the Australians arrived on 8 May 1934. Latham's mission became the centre of political events for a number of weeks, and it was received not just by leading political figures including the Prime Minister, Viscount Saitō Makoto, and also Emperor Hirohito and Empress Kōjun. At many meetings, the Japanese appreciated Australia's interest in friendship and working together. Frequently, the Japanese hosts hailed and looked back on the friendly relations they had had during the First World War, which had led to significant development in mutual economic relations. During the course of the mission, Japan hoped that it would manage to conclude some trading agreements.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham, pp. 7–10; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, ff. [33–46].

<sup>67</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham, pp. 10–16; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, ff. [41–40].

<sup>68</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, f. [47].

<sup>69</sup> Further information on the reception of Latham's mission TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham: Appendix "B": Speech by His Excellency K. Hirota, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Japan, at a Dinner Given to the Mission at His Official Residence, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, pp. 16, 25; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Hirota Suggest Australian Pact, The Japan Times, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [36]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Australian Mission Attends Reception at Industrial Club, The Japanese



Latham discussed current problems in mutual relations at a number of meetings with Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kōki Hirota, who was later the only civilian executed for war crimes during the Tokyo Process after the Second World War, where, for example, Latham proposed Japan's return to the League of Nations in the hope that this would lead to a successful resolution to the Manchuria problem to the satisfaction of many sides.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, British representatives were mainly of the opinion or conviction that Japan would only be willing to return to the League of Nations on condition that its actions in Manchukuo were accepted.<sup>71</sup> Latham hoped that he would be able to find some method or formulation of words so that Japan and the League of Nations could come to an agreement while "not losing public face", which would lead to reduced tensions in international relations.<sup>72</sup> Yet Japan considered the puppet state a cornerstone for ensuring its security. It was not ready to give up Manchukuo, and it perceived Lytton's report as a great injustice. Japan's Foreign Minister was also convinced that Chinese representatives were encouraging League of Nations member states to continue the hostile course they had taken towards Japan, following the occupation of Manchuria and the Mukden Incident and its withdrawal from Geneva. Hirota assured Latham that: "*Japan's policy was one of establishing her security, and not one of aggression.*"<sup>73</sup> In regards to Japanese foreign policy priorities, Latham came to the conclusion that Japan really didn't desire further military adventure in China, that it was very suspicious of the United States of America's Far East policy and that it feared steps the Soviet Union might take in regards to the intensive fortifications of their mutual border in Manchuria and its long desire for a warm water port in the Far East.<sup>74</sup>

The Japanese Foreign Minister also called on Latham to establish an Australian legation in Tokyo, as Canada already had. However, Australia did not express an interest in a direct diplomatic representation because mutual relations did not produce so many diplomatic matters such that employees at the British Embassy were unable to manage, and as such Latham did not support the suggestion. Furthermore, Canadian representatives had not developed much diplomatic activities in Japan and were using their legation more for dealing with trading matters. At the same time, Ottawa representatives had unofficially expressed their dissatisfaction in that the annual cost of 70,000 dollars was a waste of funds taking account of the level of activities.<sup>75</sup>

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Advertiser, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, ff. [37–38]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Welcome Latham Mission, The Japan Times, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [41]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Hirota, Tokyo, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [44].

<sup>70</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, From Japan, Mr. Dodd, Tokyo, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, ff. [9–10].

<sup>71</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Extract from a letter to Sir E. Harding from Mr. Crutchley, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1934, ff. [2–3].

<sup>72</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, f. [52].

<sup>73</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Simon, Tokyo, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [16]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, ff. [48–52].

<sup>74</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, ff. [55–56].

<sup>75</sup> Cf. TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham: Appendix "A": Interview between His Excellency K. Hirota and Mr. Latham, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, p. 24; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Simon, Tokyo, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, ff. [9–11]; TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, ff. [60–61].



In his discussions with Hirota, Latham opened up the somewhat controversial point of “the menace of Japan”, as Australia regarded Japanese policy with much suspicion in regard to its true objectives and how they aimed to achieve them. This was in part due to the fact that many politicians and influential military and naval leaders frequently issued declarations and it was not clear to external observers whether they were speaking privately or were presenting the government opinions.<sup>76</sup> His Japanese counterpart assured him that there was no threat from Japan, because “it was a fundamental part of the policy of Japan to cultivate relations of friendship with the British Empire”. Hirota also expressed his regret that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had ended, as he took the view that it would mean “*peace in this quarter of the globe would be far easier to ensure*”.<sup>77</sup> From a Japanese perspective, then, Tokyo was left with no choice but to take a different policy course to secure its “vital” interests.

Another subject of discussion was defensive matters. Latham expressed the Australian government’s fears over reports that Japan was fortifying the Marshall Islands and Caroline Islands in contravention of mandate terms, something his Japanese counterpart termed entirely inaccurate, because “[...] *the islands under Japanese mandate had not been fortified and never would be fortified*”. Hirota did say, however, that attempts were being made to end the Japanese mandate administration because of its departure from the League of Nations, and as such some were of the opinion that the islands should be fortified. He also claimed that the League of Nations did not have the right to end Tokyo’s mandate. As proof of Japan’s peaceful plans for the Pacific, Hirota mentioned that an arbitration treaty had recently been signed with the Dutch government in regard to regions under the influence of the Dutch East Indies.<sup>78</sup>

His Japanese counterpart also expressed certain worries. In terms of defence matters, Latham rejected the idea that the Australian fleet, naval and air base in Singapore and the defensive measures in British Malaya, India, Australia and New Zealand were in any way meant to threaten or target Japan, because it was built as a purely defensive facilities, “[...] *just as Japanese naval bases were built to serve Japanese defence plans*”.<sup>79</sup> Latham also pointed out that the Australian government had no objections to the fortifications of Formosa and assured him that in terms of the increase in the number of Australian defence vessels, this was merely a return to the previous state before the Great Depression. As such, it did not represent an increase in its naval fleet.<sup>80</sup>

For British diplomats, Latham’s mission was a success in all aspects of the goals it set itself. British Embassy employees in Tokyo were convinced that the Japanese had worked to make the mission a success and were in favour of a clear strengthening of friendship between the two countries. It was assumed that it would also help to

76 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Latham to Lyons, Canberra, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934, f. [54].

77 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Simon, Tokyo, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, ff. [14–15].

78 Ibidem, ff. [17–18].

79 TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham: Appendix “A”: Interview between His Excellency K. Hirota and Mr. Latham, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, p. 24.

80 TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Simon, Tokyo, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [19].



accelerate the conclusion of mutual trading agreements.<sup>81</sup> Although the negotiation of any kind of trading matter was not a primary objective, it was clearly beneficial to trade. Furthermore, the naming of an Australian Trade Commissioner in Japan was also meant to help to strengthen economic relations, his personal influence providing a boost to mutual trade.<sup>82</sup>

In some respects, Latham's mission was unique, as it was the first mission with a diplomatic objective or character sent by the Commonwealth of Australia to a foreign country. Australia had begun to play a more important role in Far East and Pacific affairs. One should also note that controversial issues, such as that of Japanese migration in the Pacific, were not discussed for tactical reasons. It is extraordinary that Latham received so many Japanese assurances of mutual friendship. Besides the official report for parliament, there was also a confidential report dealing with the international situation and trade.<sup>83</sup> Latham himself aptly summarised the whole mission and state of relations thus: *"I came to Japan to bring a message of friendship and goodwill from Australia. I return to Australia bearing a message of friendship and goodwill from Japan."*<sup>84</sup>

## GREAT BRITAIN, THE DOMINIONS AND THEIR POSITION ON JAPAN IN THE 1920S AND EARLY 1930S

### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on analysing the positions of Great Britain and selected Dominions (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) towards Japan in the 1920s and early 1930s. It particularly focuses on the circumstances of the establishment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the questions raised in relation to British attempts at extending the alliance in 1921. In the end, international circumstances and the treaties signed at the Washington Conference led to the end of the alliance. The Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1932 repeatedly forced British and Dominion, especially Australian, representatives to take a position on Japanese foreign policy and Tokyo's aspirations. When the endeavour to deal with the disputes at the League of Nations failed, Australia decided to send a special mission led by Sir John Greig Latham to the Far East and the Pacific in order to consolidate friendly relations with neighbouring countries and attempt to solve mutual problems and conflicts.

### KEYWORDS

Japan; Great Britain; Dominions; British Empire; Far Eastern Crisis, Latham Mission

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<sup>81</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Dodd to Simon, Tokyo, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, f. [30].

<sup>82</sup> Cf. APD, HoR, No. 27, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1934, p. 333; TNA, DO 35/181/1, The Australian Eastern Mission, 1934: Report of the Right Honorable J. G. Latham: Appendix "A": Interview between His Excellency K. Hirota and Mr. Latham, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1934, p. 27.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Crutchley to Harding, Canberra, 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1934. ff. [4–5].

<sup>84</sup> TNA, DO 35/181/1, Farwell Address by the Right Hon. J. G. Latham, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1934, f. [46].