

## **The Preliminary Negotiations of the Second London Naval Conference**

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This essay focuses on the preliminary negotiations of the second London Naval Conference held in 1934 from the Japanese, American, and British points of view. International crises in the early 1930s, such as the Manchurian incident of 1931 and the rise of Nazi Germany, strongly influenced UK and US naval policy. The British Royal Navy in particular faced strategic challenges by Germany and Italy in Europe and Japan in the Far East. Serious financial constraints prevented the navy from countering both threats, so the British government decided to prioritize defence in Europe over the Far East and to appease Japan at the conference. However, it was expected that this appeasement policy would not be accepted by the US government, which wanted to deter Japanese expansion in the Far East. The British government also faced a diplomatic difficulty in handling a rivalry between the US and Japan.

Soon after the Roosevelt administration came to power in 1933, the new US government decided to expand its naval command to the upper limit of the Washington and London naval treaties in order to counteract Japanese expansion policy. This decision gave the Japanese navy an excuse to expand, and Japan decided to secede from the Washington and London naval treaties. In October 1933, the commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), Shingo Ishikawa, drafted a secret plan, “Personal policy to the next naval conference”, which suggested denouncing the Washington Naval Treaty if the UK and US did not accept Japan’s demand. The Kantai-ha (Hawks) of IJN, who were frustrated by the treaty, formally approved Ishikawa’s plan.

During the preliminary negotiations of the second London Naval Conference, the British government tried to be an intermediary between the US and Japan, but the Japanese delegation was uncompromising in its demand for naval parity among the UK, US, and Japan. The UK and US delegations, who estimated that a naval ratio of 5:5:3 should be beneficial for Japan, rejected the parity plan. The British government tried to keep Japan at the negotiating table, but the Japanese government denounced the Washington Naval Treaty on December 29, 1934, indicating the failure of the preliminary negotiations of the Second London Naval Conference.