

Interrelations between Ministry and Staff in the restructuring of Imperial Japanese Navy operations

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In 1933 the Imperial Japanese Navy went through a comprehensive restructuring of its organization, through the process of revising its Naval General Staff Regulations and Protocol for Naval Ministry-Staff Liaison Affairs. What these revisions amounted to was the Naval General Staff attaining autonomy from a system formerly dominated by the Naval Ministry. Although we find some mention of these revisions in the research to date on the Imperial Navy, the relative inavailability of source materials has hindered any full-scale, detailed treatment of the subject. Here the author attempts to fill the existing gaps by offering a more detailed account of the response of the Navy's top mind's in an analysis of the information offered by the diary of Iwamura Seiichi, then senior adjutant in the Naval Ministry.

In time of war with the establishment of Imperial Headquarters, the Naval General Staff was to be the agency for implementing IH's naval functions, while during peacetime, the Ministry was in charge of naval affairs. Although there was dissatisfaction within the ranks concerning such an arrangement, the Ministry refused to address the problem, thus maintaining the status quo. However, the situation began to change surrounding the issue of supreme command raised at the first London Naval Disarmament Conference of 1930. Over the issue of troop strength, the Naval General Staff demanded that the Ministry make concessions, resulting in the implementation in 1933 of measures expanding the authority of the Naval General Staff.

These revisions were particularly important for the issues of troop strength and who controlled the flow of military developments. The former issue, which was the source of attacks on the government from the Seiyukai Party and right-wing organization, had not been provided for in the existing Liaison Affairs Protocol; however, provisions were made as the result of a proposal submitted

by the Chief of Staff and successful negotiations with the Minister of the Navy.

Control over the flow of military developments had been in peacetime part of the Naval General Staff's regimental command authority. For example, when the need arose to protect Japanese citizens residing abroad, the Naval Minister would request the despatch of troops and after cabinet approval, the Naval General Staff would begin strategy planning under the leadership of the Naval Minister. However, following the Protocol revisions, the Naval General Staff was permitted to propose troop deployment independently. In other words, within the revision process, the Naval General Staff was able for the first time to establish autonomous authority over naval affairs.