

The proposed Hiranuma Kiichiro Cabinet and the Japanese Navy:
The search for political integration and the strengthening
of the military supreme command during the 1930s

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This article focuses on the relationship between the campaign to set up a cabinet under the premiership of Hiranuma Kiichiro and the Japanese Navy during the years of the Saito Makoto cabinet (25 May 1932—8 July 1934), in order to place this campaign within the context of the strengthening of the military supreme command system from the 1930's onward and clarify the influence of Hiranuma's plan upon the Navy, and the influence the resulting changes in the Navy exerted upon the campaign.

In order to overcome a divided structure of governance, in particular control over military authorities, Hiranuma's campaign won faction leaders over to its side and utilized the authority of the imperial family. Therefore, Hiranuma's plan for controlling the military authorities did call for institutional reorganization, but rather depended on personal connections. Hiranuma made Fushiminomiya Hiroyasu chief of the Naval General Staff (NGS) with the cooperation of the Kantai (Fleet) Faction led by Admiral Kato Hiroharu, going as far as to reorganize the system by extending the authority of the NGS. However, the Kantai Faction lost its unifying position in the Navy when it was criticized for politicizing the NGS and politically utilizing the imperial family. Since Hiranuma's plan to control the military authorities involved winning over the leaders of the various factions, the fall of the Kantai Faction from power brought about the failure Hiranuma to act as the unifier of the divided governance system.

Therefore, the campaign to form a Hiranuma Cabinet and the reinforcement of the supreme command in the navy developed under interrelationship of mutual influence. The collapse of the campaign after the Kantai Faction's

attempt to utilize the authority of the imperial family resulted in the loss of its unifying position in the Navy means no less than the failure of Hiranuma's efforts to overcome the divided structure of governance by means of personal connections. Only the extension of NGS power—in other words, the strengthened independence of Supreme Command—remained after Kato's retreat and the collapse of the Hiranuma campaign.