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Great Britain's dominant position on the seas was achieved in the Seven Years' War (1757-1763) under the leadership of William Pitt, First Earl of Chatham. Until Pitt's advent as Prime Minister, Britain had contested with the French for maritime control while simultaneously supporting the deployment of large armies in European continental campaigns. The results had been indifferent on both land and sea. Altering this strategy, Pitt left the fighting in Europe to his continental allies, supporting them only with subsidies and token forces, while British resources were concentrated on maritime objectives. The result was that Britain overwhelmed her opponents on the seas and gained an ascendancy there that brought her both security and profit. The fact that the British Navy was in need of new ships and standardization did not prevent her triumph, although it certainly delayed it. Britain's experience on the seas and her leaders' decision to concentrate their efforts there proved to be decisive.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF SEAPOWER BY GREAT BRITAIN

A lecture delivered at the Naval War College

by

Professor Henry H. Adams

Admiral Colbert, faculty and students of the School of Naval Warfare, I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak to you this morning on the subject of "The Development and Utilization of Seapower by Great Britain." The problem is where to begin, how to say anything significant in the space of time allotted to me, and, if possible, stop.

I am reminded of a statement I read somewhere: "England is an island surrounded by three parts water and one part Scotch." I would gladly give credit to the author if I could locate the passage again, but all my researches have failed.

The statement is far more profound than its author may have realized, for the beginnings of English seapower

came as the English were struggling to contain the rough Highlanders to the north and (not mentioned in the little joke) the untamed Welsh to the west.

Following the Norman Conquest in 1066, the areas south of the Trent and east of the Welsh marches gradually came under the domination of a civilization more sophisticated than had been known before in the British Isles, at least since Roman times. For the Normans, under the Plantagenet kings, the English Channel was a broad highway to France, where political and ecclesiastical leaders spent as much time as they did in England. Throughout the turmoil of wars, French goods, French luxuries, French clothes, French ideas crossed the Channel in a steady stream. In return, the English traders, mostly Saxons who

had learned to live with the conquering Normans, returned English wool, the chief staple export. A goodly portion of this wool went to weavers in the Low Countries, whence Flemish goods were conveyed to France to pay for the French materials so needed by the Norman rulers.

Of course, France lay at the end of the long shipping routes from the East, as the caravans brought the spices and perfumes of Araby to the Mediterranean basin. The carrying trade in the Mediterranean was dominated by the Italian city-states, especially the Venetians and Genoese, and in this trade the English played no part. But across France came these treasures, and they added their weight to the cross-Channel trade which was carried in large measure in English bottoms.

Other English trade developed in the north. Once the Viking raiders and pirates had been brought under control, a lively trade developed in the Scandinavian areas among the cities which would later be known as the Hanse. English ships traded not only with the countries now known as Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Finland, and Russia, they ranged as far northwest as Iceland. In 1483, in the midst of an undeclared naval war with the Bretons, Richard III learned that a number of East Anglian merchant ships were on the verge of undertaking a dangerous voyage to Iceland. He issued strict instructions that they were to wait to form a convoy, one of the earliest references to convoy I have been able to discover. I shall return to that subject later.

Richard's order is worth quoting not alone for its quaint language, but more importantly for its assumptions of the importance of the protection of trade, a subject so important that the King himself drafted an order one might expect of a staff officer.

For as much as we understand that certain of you intend hastily to depart towards Iceland, not purveyed of wafters [not provided with escorts] for your surety . . . we . . . straitly charge . . . that . . . none of you severally [separately] depart out of any of our havens . . . without our license first so to do; and thereupon, that ye gather and assemble yourselves in such one of our havens or ports . . . as ye shall think most convenient, well harnessed and apparelled for your own surety, and so for to depart all together toward Humber, to attend there upon our ships of Hull as your wafters, for the surety of you all; and that ye discever not without tempest of weather compel you . . .¹

I might add that, following these instructions, the convoy made the round voyage without loss.

Throughout the Middle Ages the English kings had two principal concerns of a military nature: the frequent wars with France and the attempts to control, conquer, or contain the fiercely proud tribes of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. In all of these, seapower played a dominant role. In the wars in the British Isles, sea trains often supplied the armies contending in the Scots border country, in the Welsh marches, and in areas beyond the Pale west of the city of Dublin. Ships brought mercenary units from the Continent to cooperate in these wars; ships were used to transport troops for flanking expeditions along the coasts to turn enemy positions or to cut them off from retreat. Seapower, by its mobility and carrying capacity, proved decisive often when stalemated armies could neither advance nor retreat.

The Oceanic Age. As long as European seaborne trade was largely inter-

coastal, looking to the east as the course of riches, England had no particular advantage over her rivals. Indeed, finding herself at the western end of the long trade routes from the Orient, she often found that the real prizes in trade goods had dropped off along the way, while the prices had quadrupled on the items that remained. It is noteworthy that the five nations which sought water routes to the Orient—Spain, Holland, Portugal, France, and Britain—were all at the western ends of this long trade route. These countries all had the technical knowledge to build oceangoing ships, they had experienced mariners, and economics dictated that they should seek cheap waterborne transport rather than expensive land hauls to bring their goods home.

The voyages of exploration of the Portuguese and Spanish of the late 15th and early 16th centuries gave those nations a head start on the French, English, and Dutch. A papal bull of 1493 and the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 divided the non-Christian world between Spain and Portugal, Spain being awarded the New World; and Portugal, Africa and India and the Far East. The line of demarcation awarded part of present-day Brazil to Portugal.

The result of this treaty was to make all other nations interlopers in overseas exploration and trade. The Spanish, especially, resisted intrusions, particularly those of the French, English, and Dutch in the Caribbean and in Central and South America. Farther north, these incursions could not be denied, and voyages of exploration led the way in the next centuries to French, English, and Dutch colonies in Canada, in what is now the United States, in the Caribbean, and in northern South America.

Portugal was not long able to maintain its dominant position in the Eastern trade. Her population base was too small to support sufficient agricultural and fishing activities and at the same time send large numbers of settlers to

defend and make viable the colonies she established in Africa, India, and the Far East. The problem was increased by religious fervor which resulted in the expulsion from Portugal of the Jews. From the world's leading commercial trader in the early 16th century, Portugal declined in power and influence until, with the death of King Sebastian in 1578, Portugal was prostrate. The House of Aviz died out 2 years later, and King Philip II of Spain made good his claim to the Portuguese throne by force of arms. Portugal did not regain her independence until 1640, and by that time she had lost many of her most important overseas colonies, mostly to the Dutch.

Under the reign of Philip II, Spain emerged in the closing years of the 16th century as unquestionably the richest and most powerful nation in the world. In addition to his inheritance of the Portuguese throne, Philip also acquired by descent the throne of the Netherlands. Thus, only England and France remained to challenge the claims of the Spanish to the trade of both the Orient and the New World.

Unfortunately for Spain's well-being, Philip and his successors believed in the concept known as "mercantilism," the idea of enriching themselves by the importation of gold, silver, and precious jewels. In the view of economists of the time, the supply of such treasure was limited, and a country prospered as it haggared its neighbor. With the discovery of the Incan, Aztec, and other treasures in Central and South America, the Spanish established colonies whose purpose was to milk the Indians of their wealth, giving them little or nothing in return. Natives who escaped massacre or enslavement were likely to fall into the clutches of the Inquisition which Philip, in his fanaticism, exported to the New World. Many a bewildered Indian went to the stake because he knew no Spanish and had treasures the Spanish thought he would be better off without.

Had not our Lord said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God."

No effort was made in the Spanish colonies to develop agriculture or industry; nor, for that matter, was any made in Spain. The result of this economic policy was disastrous for the Spanish people. The influx of precious metals from the Americas caused crippling inflation in Spain. The treasure was mainly dissipated in imperialistic wars with a notion of bringing more treasures to Spain. It was not used as capital to increase the gross national product of Spain. I am being very out of time here—anachronistic—by using the term "gross national product," but it fits.

The French and English, largely left out in the early days of colonization, began to establish footholds in the Caribbean and in North America. These colonies, although subject to the theory of mercantilism—that they existed for the benefit of the mother countries—began, over the years, to produce real wealth that contributed to the GNP of these countries in a way that the gold and silver did not do for Spain. In contrast to the Spanish, the French and English developed a real carrying trade between the colonies and the mother countries. Agricultural products shipped home raised the standards of living in France and England, while the goods the colonists could not produce for themselves went abroad in exchange for the grains, furs, and other products of the New World. In a very real sense, Spain's relationship with her colonies was parasitic; that of England and France tended to be symbiotic.

But this is in anticipation. The English first responded to the Spanish monopoly by raiding their treasure ships. The name of Sir Francis Drake leaps to mind as an example of the legalized freebooters who intercepted the homeward bound Spanish galleons and relieved them of their precious burdens. These treasure raids lasted far

longer than is usually believed. In 1740 Commodore (later Admiral) George Anson set out on a voyage around the world with the prime purpose of raiding Spanish colonies on the Pacific side of the Americas. He returned to England in 1743, having suffered incredible hardship. On the way he had captured the Manila galleon and brought back in all gold and silver valued at 1,250,000 pounds, the equivalent in today's money of well over \$25 million.

Long before Anson, however, King Philip decided to put to an end for once and for all the menace of the English sea raiders. Laying claim to the English throne on the grounds of his marriage to Elizabeth's deceased sister Mary, Philip prepared the famous Spanish Armada, which came to grief from the guns of the English ships and from the tempest which wrecked many ships on the Scottish and Irish coasts as they were attempting to return to Spain, north about the British Isles.

It was no English Navy that drove off the Spanish Armada, for the thrifty Elizabeth begrudged every farthing spent on military affairs. It seems hard to believe, but the English ships ran out of ammunition during the battle, having used up their allowance and their reserves. There was no more to be had. It made little difference; the Spanish had withdrawn from the battle.

The ships which fought against the Spanish were largely converted merchant ships, chartered into state service and given an augmented armament. These ships were far smaller than their Spanish opponents and more maneuverable, even though they must have been brutes to handle. Built with high bows and sterns to keep the seas from breaking over them, they were beamy, round-bottomed vessels, designed to carry cargoes at the expense of comfort and speed. The length-beam ratio was approximately 3 to 1, in contrast to the current-day ratio of about 7 to 1 for cargo ships. Some of those ships had

been taken over by the Government for the hattle; others were manned by their regular crews. The important tactical concept was to rely on their guns. The Spanish vessels were doubling as transports, and the idea of their commander was, if battle became necessary, to ram and board the English ships and let his soldiers fight infantry battles on the English decks. These tactics were time honored, going back to ancient days when the galley was the capital ship of the navies of the world.

Few Spanish ships were sunk as a result of the English gunnery, but the Battle of the Spanish Armada did establish the gun as the main naval weapon. The column, or line-ahead, became the tactical formation to exploit broadside guns and the oceangoing sailing ship the new capital ship for navies. Since it was comparatively easy to convert merchant ships to war service, the English kept the English Navy small. It was not until the restoration of Charles II in 1660 that the Royal Navy came into being officially.

The failure of the Spanish Armada had far-reaching consequences for Spain. It signaled the end of the Golden Age of Spain, it led to the loss of her Dutch possessions, and it marked the opening of maritime power for the English. Although Spain remained dominant in South America, she was no longer able to challenge England's expansion overseas, in the Caribbean, in North America, and in the Far East. Within 12 years after the defeat of the Armada, the British East India Company was founded; 2 years later the Dutch East India Company challenged the British for the monopoly of Far Eastern trade. Eventually the Dutch concentrated on the Far East—Indonesia, Malaya, and Ceylon—while the British took over in India. On one other side of the world, several companies, most important the Hudson's Bay Company, founded 1618, developed a fruit-

ful trade between the Old World and the New.

One of the most important aspects of these English companies was the establishment of mobile credit. An agent in Calcutta could sign a voucher knowing it would be honored in London. A bill of exchange could be given an Englishman on his departure from abroad, and the monies he had turned into a colonial counting house would be given to him in England. No longer was it necessary to carry sums of gold to transfer sums of money.

The establishment of mobile credit and of organized companies to conduct regular trade overseas led to unparalleled prosperity for the English. These trade ventures inevitably led to trade wars as one or another nation sought to interfere in the commerce of another. The three Anglo-Dutch wars of the 17th century were largely trade wars brought on by English attempts to control passage of shipping through the English Channel.

In spite of the expansion of English trade in the early years of the 17th century, the Dutch far outstripped the English. Finally freed of the shackles of Spain, the Dutch, with a population far exceeding the agricultural capacity of the land, turned increasingly to the sea. Their fishing fleets were the largest in the world, and soon their ships were moving out in trade as their settlers took over colonies of the hapless Portuguese in the Far East. Settlements in North America, such as New Amsterdam, and in South America and the Caribbean challenged the Spanish, English, and French.

English seapower was developing slowly. As their merchant fleets grew, the navy fell on hard times in the remaining years of Elizabeth's life. The situation got worse under James I, until in 1618 a Royal Commission led by Sir Lionel Cranfield led to sweeping reforms.

Charles I was heartily interested in the navy, to his cost as it turned out. He

introduced "ship money," a tax imposed on each maritime town to pay for the support of the navy. Soon ship money was extended to inland cities as well. Ship money was one of the ways Charles tried to bypass a niggardly Parliament which refused to appropriate enough money to run the country. Ship money was also one of the issues which led to the English Civil War and the deposition and execution of the monarch.

Most of the navy supported Parliament in the Civil War, and it is ironic since Charles had done more than any previous English monarch, except for Henry VIII, to support and improve the navy. His most important reform was an attempt to establish a permanent, professional fighting fleet with no chartered, converted merchantmen commanded by merchant captains in the line of battle. But even ship money could not provide the necessary sums, and this reform could not come until the Restoration.

The continued refusal of Parliament to provide money to Charles caused extreme decay in all levels of government. Nowhere was the rot worse than in the navy. Some crews had not been paid for years. In January 1628 the "Commander of the Narrow Seas" (the Channel Fleet), Sir John Mervyn, reported that the ships under his command had no hammocks and that "the men lodge on the bare decks . . . their condition miserable beyond relation; many are so naked and exposed to the weather in doing their duties that their toes and feet miserably rot and fall away piecemeal, being mortified with extreme cold."

Suffering from such conditions, it is small wonder that the navy followed Parliament in the Civil War. Anything that promised a change.

The role of seapower in the English Civil War was decisive. Naval patrols cut off any possible foreign intervention on the side of the Royalists. Naval forces

relieved Parliamentary troops when they were in danger and turned Royalist positions.

Under the Commonwealth, the navy was reorganized. The "new model army" became the prototype for naval reform at all levels from the office of Lord High Admiral down to operational levels. Vigorous officers took over from the incompetent favorites who had made up a large percentage of Royalist leaders. Three of these officers, formerly colonels in the new model army, became "Generals at Sea": Edward Popham, Robert Blake, and Richard Deane.

In the 2 years following the execution of Charles II in 1649, the strength of the navy was nearly doubled, and rotting ships were replaced. For the first time in English history, a large standing navy was kept in being and was efficiently administered. Regular escort of mercantile convoys was established, and the navy was made ready to fight.

In 1652 the establishment of the Articles of War provided a uniform measure of discipline in the English Navy, a prime factor in England's later domination of the seas. Discipline was severe, but so was civil punishment. The important thing about the Articles of War was the attempt at uniformity of punishment for infractions and the clear definition of expectation of performance of duties.

A related step occurred after the restoration of Charles II. A certain young gentleman, Thomas Darcy by name, presented himself on 7 May 1661 aboard one of His Majesty's ships with the pay of a midshipman, formerly a petty officer's rating, for training as an officer. By royal command, each ship in the Royal Navy was to carry such a "King's Letter Boy," to produce capable seamen-officers for the naval service.

This change in procurement of officers is far more important than it seems at first. In other navies there was a vast distinction between the men who sailed

the ship and the gentleman who commanded her. A French or Spanish naval captain was not expected to know anything about sailing a ship or the ways of the sea. By virtue of his birth he was expected to act as a leader, to inspire his men in battle. The actual working of the ship was done by a warrant officer known as the Sailing Master. He was a commoner and expert seaman, but he could never rise to command.

The British retained the concept that the captain should be a gentleman, but the system of training midshipmen insured that he would be a seaman as well. The English continued to use a Sailing Master, but he served in an advisory capacity to the commanding officer much as a pilot does today.

One more change occurred in the reign of Charles II. He appointed his brother, the Duke of York, as Lord High Admiral, and the line-ahead was established as the required battle formation. This finally eliminated the merchant ship as an element of the battle fleet, for the scantlings of merchant vessels could not absorb the punishment of sustained gunfire. Only those vessels which could lie in the line of battle, or line-of-battleships, were considered primary men-of-war.

By the end of the reign of Charles II, the Royal Navy had been formally established. It rested on the sound administrative organization presided over by the Duke of York and was extraordinarily well administered in its day-to-day operations by Samuel Pepys, known today for his famous diary. The navy had learned that its basic mission was protection of trade, and a well organized convoy system sprang into being with the outbreak of any war. The specialized warships began to be established as types, and the fleet was officered by professionals who were seamen as well as gentlemen. It was even possible for an officer to come aboard through the hawsepipe, that is, to rise

from the ranks to a commission. The navy had regularized tactical doctrine, faulty to be sure, but at least they had a doctrine and the habit of using it.

These were the basics on which Britain's mastery of the seas developed. The framework was there. It remained for a genius to show the British how to use the seapower they had developed.

The Seven Years' War. The first half of the 18th century was marked by a series of European wars, some of them with quaint names—the War of the League of Augsburg, the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of Jenkins' Ear, and the War of the Austrian Succession. Through these wars the English vied with the French, Spanish, and Dutch for naval supremacy, at the same time attempting to refine and improve their doctrines, ships, and weapons. But it was not until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War that the English found the fundamental strategy that would bring them unquestioned recognition as mistress of the seas.

The Seven Years' War can be properly characterized as the first world war. In its North American aspect it is known to us as the French and Indian War. But the war was also fought in Europe, in the Caribbean, in the Mediterranean and Africa, in India, and in the Far East. When the war ended, Britain had won most of her overseas empire and the trade that went with it.

The war started off badly enough for Great Britain. The ineffectual Duke of Newcastle, whose lack of strategic vision was exceeded by none, was firmly in office as First Minister—the title Prime Minister was not used until later—by reason of the favor of the King. The man of ability, of strategic plan and the courage to use it, the man whose leadership would bring the fruits of victory to the British, William Pitt, was out of office and seemed likely to remain out, the result of the King's implacable disfavor.

When war formally began, Newcastle proceeded to strengthen the Channel defense, already superior to the French, at the expense of overseas forces, already too weak. He weakened the Mediterranean Fleet when the Mediterranean was the place where the French would strike first. Belatedly he sent a squadron of 10 ships of the line under command of Adm. John Byng to Gibraltar. Byng sailed under what were perhaps the most poorly conceived set of orders in naval history. If he satisfied himself that Gibraltar was secured, he was to sail on to Minorca to relieve the siege of Port Mahon, unless no relief was needed or unless the city had fallen. In this case he was to cross the Atlantic to Louisburg in the mouth of the St. Lawrence and capture and garrison that city. *All this time he was responsible for the safety of Gibraltar.*

Byng was an example of the type of man who sometimes rises to high command during years of peace. He had never shown any special brilliance. His chief virtue was that he had never done anything wrong. He did not protest his absurd orders; he sailed from England and promptly ran into trouble. After calling at Gibraltar, he went on to Minorca, where he was badly mauled in a battle with a French squadron under Galissonière. Too weak to maintain his position off Minorca, he retired to defend Gibraltar.

Word of his defeat reached Britain from French sources, and public fury raged against poor Byng. Newcastle had but a single thought: make Byng a scapegoat for his own mistakes—anything to prevent the fury from falling on the heads of the Government. Byng was recalled and brought to trial under the Twelfth Article of War—failure to do his utmost in face of the enemy.

The wretched Byng stood no chance at all. One might suppose that the opposition, led by Pitt's supporters, might have defended Byng. But they took another course. They joined in the

outrery against him with a view of showing how incompetent the Newcastle government had been in sending him out in the first place. Byng was found guilty and, in spite of petitions for clemency, was executed by a firing squad on the deck of a ship in Portsmouth Harbor.

This affair and other less dramatic incidents led to the nation turning to Pitt for leadership. William Pitt the Elder, First Earl of Chatham, famous father of a famous son, was, like Churchill in 1940, the man of the hour. There was this difference, however. Churchill had a genius for leadership; his strategic vision was likely to be eccentric and the despair of his able Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Alan Brooke. Pitt did not have the leadership of Churchill, but he was a strategic genius; his basic plan was followed by the British in all subsequent wars, except for the 1914-1918 war, where the decision not to follow Pitt's ideas robbed Britain of nearly a generation of her young men.

Pitt clearly saw that Britain's strength lay in her seapower. With a large, trained navy, she could project force overseas. With no lengthy land borders to defend, there was little need of a large standing army at home. Her troops could be used overseas where they would do the most good. This did not mean landing large armies on the Continent for conventional land wars. Britain's population base was not large enough for that. Instead, Britain would use allies on the Continent, supported by subsidies and token forces. The remainder of Britain's strength could be directed elsewhere.

George II, whose own Electorate of Hanover was linked with the fate of Prussia, continually urged Pitt to throw men and materials away in central Europe. Pitt was adamant. He sent a few troops; he sent money; he sent supplies; and it was not only because His Majesty demanded it. His plan called for a strong

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ally to absorb the major efforts of France. In no other way would the rest of his plan work.

While France's major efforts were directed to attempts to crush Frederick the Great, Pitt was able to take advantage of her weakness elsewhere.

The first of these operations was to engage in a series of "conjunct expeditions" along the French coast. We would call them amphibious raids today. There was no intention of holding positions permanently. These "conjunct expeditions" were intended to wreck facilities, destroy ships and dockyard installations, and to force the French into dispersing their land strength in efforts to guard their long coastline. Even though the first of these expeditions was a tactical failure, it had enormous effect strategically. The French diverted several thousand men from the Prussian front to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, thereby relieving the pressure on Frederick.

The more important aspects of Pitt's plan lay overseas. First he used the navy to blockade all major French ports. This had the twofold effect of preventing the French from importing needed materials and from sending men and supplies to their colonies overseas. Thus weakened, the colonies would be ready prey to British overseas operations, and they and their produce could be diverted from French to British use. Lastly, with French merchant ships largely driven from the sea by the blockade, British merchantmen could take over the carrying trade with the newly won colonies. It was a beautiful scheme, and it worked.

First, however, the French Fleet had to be destroyed or at least weakened. In actions in Lagos Bay and Quiberon Bay, Admiral Boscawen in the former and Admiral Hawke in the latter destroyed or drove ashore two French Fleets, removing danger to the blockading squadrons and releasing navy ships for overseas ventures.

Pitt, however, had not waited for these decisive actions before implementing his plan. In 1758 a force under Admiral Boscawen with the troops ostensibly commanded by the venerable Gen. James Abercromby but actually under field command of Lord Jeffrey Amherst was sent to capture Louisburg. James Wolfe, later to win fame and find his death on the Plains of Abraham at Quebec, was one of the brigadiers under Amherst. Skilled use of seapower, ship-to-shore movement, gunfire support, and blockade crowned the British efforts, and Louisburg surrendered after a 6-week siege. The St. Lawrence lay open.

The story of the British triumph at Quebec is too well known to need recounting here. Seapower played a decisive role in all aspects of the campaign, and since it could interdict the St. Lawrence to French attempts at relief, the fate of French Canada was sealed.

In the Caribbean the British were able to take over several of the French "sugar islands" and, after Spain entered the war in 1762, some Spanish ones as well. Although many of these were handed back in the Peace of Paris signed in 1763, there were rewards even then. Britain gave up Cuba, but received Florida. Other exchanges took place which were calculated to build British strength in strategic places of the world.

The story of the British triumph in India is largely associated with the name of Robert Clive, whose name became a legend to every British schoolboy. But as elsewhere in British history, Clive's triumphs rested on the successful use of British seapower.

When the war began, both the French and the British had small squadrons in Indian waters. The French had established a series of small coastal settlements in the Madras region, but these were dependent on support from the sea. The cautious French commander, Admiral d'Ache, failed to

protect his own shipping, and Adm. Charles Watson and later Adm. George Pocock were successful in protecting British commerce and British settlements. The navy also cooperated with Clive in several operations at Chandernagore, at Plassey, and at Pondicherry.

Once the triumph had been won in India, an expedition was sent against the Philippines. The surprised Spanish were able to mount no effectual resistance, and in October 1762 Manila capitulated, and the conquest of the rest of the archipelago followed soon thereafter. The Manila galleon, with a million pounds worth of treasure aboard, was taken. In a very real sense, Britain was making her enemies pay for the war.

All of these triumphs which were being won by the Royal Navy and the Royal Army overseas would have been useless without the large merchant navy whose operations paralleled those of the fighting fleets. "Thus our trade encreased nearly a fifth," wrote Edmund Burke in 1769 in his *Observations on the Present State of the Nation*; "our British navigation had encreased likewise with this astonishing encrease of trade, but was not able to keep pace with it; and we added about 60,000 ton more of foreign shipping than had been employed in the last year of peace." The value of British exports rose from 11,750,000 pounds in 1756 to 14,500,000 pounds in 1761, and the rate of growth continued. By 1762 the British had no less than 8,000 merchant ships employed in the carrying trade, and thanks to protective measures the navy had learned to employ, the losses to the enemy were kept within bounds.

The Seven Years' War established Britain as a world power, increased her trade, and, most importantly, gave her a strategic doctrine for the employment of her seapower to defeat her enemies by what has come to be called peripheral strategy. Pitt, as the principal author of this strategy, brought Britain into a position where she would wield

increasing influence in the affairs of the world. To summarize, Pitt's plan had the following points:

1. Support a continental ally with subsidies and token forces.
2. Keep enemy land forces dispensed by "conjunct expeditions."
3. Blockade the enemy's posts to interdict trade and bottle up his naval forces and to keep him from supporting his overseas possessions.
4. Seize enemy overseas colonies and take over the trade associated with them.
5. Destroy or neutralize the enemy naval forces.
6. Interdict enemy shipping and protect one's own.

Reshaping the Navy. The seapower so brilliantly exploited by Pitt in the Seven Years' War rested on an imperfect base, for ship for ship, type for type, Britain's warships tended to be inferior to those of her adversaries. British naval supremacy rested on the narrow margin of better seamanship, better discipline, and better gunnery. Improvement in ships was essential if Britain was to maintain her superiority. In France, shipbuilders approached their problems scientifically, experimenting with underwater lines, with stability curves, with trim and loading experiments, with placement of masts, and with cut of sails and placement of standing and running rigging. In contrast, British shipwrights clung to rule-of-thumb measures. It used to be said that the British built their ships by the mile and sawed them off in convenient lengths.

Standardization of ship types ensued in the years following the Treaty of Paris in 1763 so that flag officers would be able to expect similar performance in response to signals. The 74-gun ship emerged as the standard battleship, with first rates of 90 guns or more serving as admirals' flagships. It is noteworthy that the first of these types were laid down

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during the Seven Years' War, including the famous *Victory*, Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar. Frigates emerged as a distinct class of ships. Their lines were improved, and their arrangement was standardized at 28, 32, and 36 guns. A good frigate during those days could log 9 or 10 knots, while a ship of the line would do well to make 6.

The final improvements needed to weld the fleet together lay in the areas of gunnery, signals, and tactics. There was not much to be done with the old muzzle-loading guns, although refinements to the tackle and constant drill increased the effective weight of metal by enabling British crews to get off three broadsides to their opponent's two. The introduction of the carronade, a short-range gun which threw an enormous ball, provided a highly effective weapon in the close-in fighting the British favored.

Tactical innovations went hand-in-hand with improvements in the signal book. As long as the navy was tied to the formal Fighting Instructions, there was little need for a flexible system of signals, but with the innovations of Howe, Rodney, Jervis, and Nelson, demand rose for a system by which an admiral could make his intentions known to his captains. After Adm. Richard Kempenfelt paved the way in 1781, there were many others until, in 1800, the Admiralty standardized signal books by accepting Sir Home Riggs Popham's *Telegraphic Signals or Marine Vocabulary*. This was a system that could literally say anything. This code was used to fly Nelson's famous signal at Trafalgar: "England expects that every man will do his duty."

The employment of this weapon in succeeding years was more or less effective according to the strategic plans. The loss of the American colonies during the American Revolution is too long a story to be told here. A large measure of blame for British failure in this war can be laid to dispersion of effort in Europe

and in the Caribbean. This dispersion led to loss of command of the sea at several crucial times, dooming the efforts of British troops ashore. War weariness at home and lack of sympathy for the war among many Britishers led to the recognition of American independence.

The 22 years of war with France which began in 1793 and extended with one hiatus until 1815 saw the Royal Navy at its fullest maturity. It was misused by stupid ministers at times, and it alone could not win. But it kept the French from winning.

During the Wars of the French Revolution and Empire, Britain's basic strategy was that of the Seven Years' War: blockade, amphibious raids, attacks on enemy overseas colonies, destruction of enemy naval forces and installations, and support of a continental ally. The difficulty was in finding the ally. As fast as the British allied themselves with anyone on the Continent, the French defeated that ally in battle and drove her from the war. Each of the four coalitions of this war represented an effort on the part of the British to find such an ally. It was like trying to cut with one blade of a pair of scissors. It was not until the alliance with Spain and Portugal and the establishment of a large British Army in the Iberian Peninsula in 1808 that the winning combination was found. The Peninsular Campaign weakened Napoleon so that he had that much less strength to send against Russia in 1812.

Wherever Napoleon went around the shores of Europe—the Mediterranean, the Bay of Biscay, the Atlantic, the Channel, the North Sea, the Baltic—the Royal Navy was there to thwart him. As Mahan put it, "those far distant, storm-beaten ships upon which the Grand Army never looked stood between it and the dominion of the world." But the Royal Navy alone could not defeat the Grand Army. It took troops to do that. The navy made it possible for the

troops to come to grips with the enemy.

A little-recognized activity of the navy during this period was the protection of trade. This assignment is, of course, well known in World War I and World War II, but one reads the histories of the Napoleonic Wars and encounters few references to this subject. Convoy escort duty was not glamorous, and it was not well reported in the accounts sent to the Admiralty by captains and admirals in distant stations. It was simply a matter of course. Convoy escort was a duty of small ships which could beat off the swarms of privateers. Large ships, too, played a role in these activities. Even ships of the line on passage to a distant station often escorted a merchant convoy through the dangerous waters off France.

Convoy was a way of life to mariners during the war years. The reason was simple: Lloyds kept careful statistics which showed that ships in convoy were 4 to 5 times safer than "runners," as they called independently sailed ships. Savagely punishing insurance rates assured that there were few "runners." In convoys the merchant ships came and went, and Britain prospered, even though Napoleon was able to restrict severely the amount of British goods exported to Europe. Britain found new markets overseas, and in a single year, 1810, the value of British exports rose from 50,000,000 pounds to 70,000,000 pounds.

The Pax Britannica. Following the war with France, the finely toned instrument the Royal Navy had become was allowed to decay. Ships were paid off and trained crews dissipated. Officers who remained were resistant to change. The results of the Industrial Revolution were felt in the Royal Navy long after they had made their impact in the merchant fleets of the world. For reasons both of conservatism and economy, naval vessels carried sails when merchant ships had shifted to steam.

Progress could not be stopped, however, and the navy had to make the changes—from wood to iron to steel for ship construction, from sail to steam, from round shot to shell. Fortunately no major war broke out in this period, for the navy soon became an arm incapable of fighting a war on modern terms.

In 1859 the British completed their first ship designed to carry armor, their first ship of all-iron construction, the *Warrior*. She carried guns in broadside and had partial compartmentation, but she was obviously a dead-end type, as the days of the small broadside gun were over. Developments in guns would demand the turret, and the weight of guns in turrets would severely limit the number that could be carried. Attempts to retain elements of the broadside resulted in barbitted guns and casemated guns, but the unsatisfactory results of several different calibers aboard a single ship led to the innovation of the first modern battleship, the all-big-gun *Dreadnought* of 1906. She was the brainchild of the brilliant, irascible Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord. "Jackie" Fisher, as he was known, rode roughshod over the ideas of lesser men. He insisted on a return to first principles, among which was the standardization of types, just as had happened in the last half of the 18th century. Where other naval capital ships carried as many as six calibers of guns, thus reducing the number that could be installed in the main battery, the *Dreadnought* mounted ten 12-inch guns in five turrets, three centerline, and one on each beam. Thus, she could fire eight guns on either broadside.

The *Dreadnought* instantly made obsolete every other capital ship in the world. Although pre-*Dreadnoughts* continued to be used, henceforth capital ships would be of the all-big-gun type. The ships that fought at Jutland and the ships that fought the surface action of the Battle of Surigao Strait in the Battle

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for Leyte Gulf were direct descendants of the original *Dreadnought*.

Fisher was also responsible for tactical reforms. In the absence of battle experience with steam-powered big-gun ships, tactical theories had run wild in flashy maneuvers designed to impress the spectators but having no conceivable use in combat. These so-called expert tacticians received a considerable setback as a result of the disaster which resulted in the sinking in 1893 of H.M.S. *Victoria* from a collision with H.M.S. *Camperdown*. The two vessels were lead ships in parallel columns 1,200 yards apart. Vice Adm. Sir John Tryon ordered the starboard column to countermarch to port and the port column to countermarch to starboard. The tactical diameter of the ships was 800 yards. The *Camperdown* smashed into the starboard side of the flagship *Victoria*. She sank in a few minutes, taking with her 337 men and 23 officers. Among them was Admiral Tryon, so no one was ever able to ask him his intentions in the maneuver.

Fisher soon put an end to such tactical nonsense. Fleet dispositions under his merciless rule were directed to one thing: to bring the maximum number of guns on the enemy and to afford maximum protection to the fleet. The usual scouting forces were expanded and made swifter. At the same time a new menace was just around the corner, the submarine.

The submarine had been rather resentfully received by the Royal Navy, for leaders saw it as a threat to their own dominant surface forces and to the shipping they were supposed to protect. When other navies adopted the submarine, the Royal Navy reluctantly went along. When World War I broke out, the German U-boat became a fearsome weapon, always to be borne in mind by fleet commanders fearing they might be drawn into a U-boat ambush. Sir John Jellicoe, Commander in Chief of the Grand Fleet, who would

command at Jutland, made this point clear to the Admiralty on 19 October 1914.

The Germans have shown that they rely to a very great extent on submarines, mines, and torpedoes, and there can be no doubt whatever that they will endeavour to make the fullest use of these weapons in a fleet action, especially since they possess an actual superiority over us in these particular directions. It therefore becomes necessary to consider our own tactical methods in relation to these forms of attack. . . .

If, for instance, the enemy battle fleet were to turn away from an advancing fleet, I should assume that the intention was to lead us over mines and submarines, and should decline to be so drawn.

I desire particularly to draw the attention of their Lordships to this point, since it may be deemed a refusal of battle, and, indeed, might possibly result in failure to bring the enemy to battle as soon as is expected and hoped.²

The sinking of the cruisers *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue* by a single U-boat 4 weeks earlier gave dramatic emphasis to Jellicoe's words. The excessive caution his critics have charged him with at the Battle of Jutland may be attributed directly to his concern over the U-boat peril.

When, after several false starts, Germany officially adopted unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917, Britain was quickly threatened with total defeat. The Royal Navy, which had fought at Jutland, which had swept the seas of German shipping, which had guarded the Channel so that men and supplies could be brought to France, stood helpless. They increased patrols. They stepped up antisubmarine hunts. The losses soared.

The solution was at hand, even though the senior officers fought it. It lay in the time-honored institution of convoys. Naval thinking had been led up a blind alley by the tendency to use abstract terms: "sea lanes of communication," "scalanes," "communication routes," and the like. They set out to protect these "lanes," these "routes," and paid no attention to the ships that used them. Even in "sanitized lanes," those especially carefully patrolled, ships continued to be sunk.

As an example of the futility of patrols, let me cite the following: three U-boats were operating in a small area of the Channel between Beachy Head and Eddystone. Their presence was known. Shipping was delayed while the patrols went after them. No fewer than 49 destroyers, 48 torpedo boats, 7 Q-ships, and 468 armed auxiliaries, a total of 572 vessels, were sent out. The U-boats were never sighted by the patrolling forces and after a week set out for home, having sunk 30 ships.

Convoy was opposed because it was considered inefficient. Independently sailed ships are more efficient as long as they stay afloat, but when the loss rate of independents is 12 times that of convoyed ships, that efficiency soon vanishes.

The lesson of convoy was almost forgotten by the time World War II came along and had to be learned all over again. But it was learned, the hard way, and the ships kept coming. Protection of the mercantile convoy was the Royal Navy's greatest task in World War I and in World War II. As Winston Churchill put it, "The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril."³ The failure to call a ship nearly brought Britain to defeat.

As we can see, naval warfare had become three dimensional with the invention of the mine, the torpedo, and the submarine. The obvious next step was to move into the air. The British

were leaders in this effort. The first combat use of naval aircraft took place at the Battle of Jutland when Admiral Beatty, commanding the scouting forces, ordered the *Engadine* to send up a scout plane for observation. No matter that the plane rose only a few hundred feet and fell into the water with a broken fuel line. It was a historic first. The British had the first carrier, the *Furious*, built on a cruiser hull. She was a curious sight with two flight decks, one forward for takeoffs and one aft for landings. Planes were trundled forward along walkways on either side of the ship, for the stacks and bridge remained on centerline. Later she was modified to the familiar island on the starboard side.

British carrier doctrine developed slowly, for carrier aircraft were conceived to be useful only as scouting forces or as attack units which could slow the enemy down so the battleships could finish him off. Developments in the U.S. Navy with the Fleet Problems of 1929 and 1938, which were mock carrier raids on Panama and on Pearl Harbor, respectively, changed some British thinking. British forces conducted the first carrier raid in combat with the attack on the Italian base of Taranto on 11 November 1940. Planes from the *Illustrious* sank one battleship and put two others out of action for months. The accounts of this attack made interesting reading in Tokyo a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

British seapower rested on centuries of tradition and know-how. An island favorably placed near convergence of the trade routes of the world. Britain enjoyed a position which enabled her to control or dominate trade. As she grew, she had too little agricultural land area to support her population. With no long land borders to defend, she was able to turn to the sea for fishing and for trade. She developed a race of skilled mariners, and it was normal for her young men to consider a seafaring career.

Leaders like Blake, Jervis, Howe,

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Rodney, Nelson, and Collingwood gave the Royal Navy a professionalism in its officer corps and molded a type of officer which would wield the weapon others had forged. Expert administrators like Pepys, Anson, and Sir John Fisher built the ships and the naval establishment adequate to the task. Nelson and Fisher, to name but two, refined the tactics, and a great strategic genius, William Pitt the Elder, gave Britain a master plan for the use of her seapower.

Why then the decline of British seapower today? In one respect this is a loaded question, for one element of British seapower is alive and well and living all over the world—her merchant navy. The Red Ensign flies in ships in ports from Singapore to London, from Cape Town to Vancouver, from Bombay to New York. The British merchant marine is in a far better condition than our own. The White Ensign is less to be seen than formerly. The reasons are simple—money. The age of colonialism is over, and the enormous expense of a modern navy no longer seems a justifiable expenditure to the British Government. On one occasion I was a luncheon guest at the United Services Club in Pall Mall. Over coffee in the lounge, a retired admiral remarked to me, "You know, Britain kept the sea for over 200 years. We are tired. Your country has that responsibility now. I pray you are equal to it."

I would like to conclude with the words of Adm. Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet for much of the Second World War. The Mediterranean Fleet was at its nadir. It has lost heavily in the evacuation of Greece in the spring of 1941. The evacuation of Crete was underway, and the cost to the navy was fearsome. An officer suggested that the evacuation should be ended as being too costly. Cunningham refused. "It takes the Navy three years to build a new ship," he stated. "It will take 300 years to build a new tradition. The evacuation will continue."

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Henry H. Adams completed his undergraduate work at the University of Michigan in 1939 and his doctorate at Columbia University in 1942. After 3 years of active duty with the U.S.

Navy, he joined the faculty of Cornell University in 1945. Commencing in 1951 he taught at Annapolis for 17 years as a professor, during which time he published a number of books and articles. Professor Adams is presently the head of the English Department at the University of Illinois and a retired captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul M. Kendall, *Richard the Third* (London: Allen and Unwinn, 1955), p. 279.
2. Gt. Brit., Admiralty, *Battle of Jutland 30th May to 1st June 1916. Official Despatches* (London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1920), p. 601-603.
3. Winston L.S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Their Finest Hour* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), v. II, p. 598.

