

Liberty University

Thinking on a Higher Plane:

The Evolution of a Strategic Mindset in the Navies of America and Great Britain at the Turn of  
the Twentieth Century

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the School of History  
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Doctor of Philosophy

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines how the American and British schools of naval thought matured in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Specifically, this is an ideological and institutional comparison of the two navies through the development of higher education for senior officers focused on strategic thinking. These programs helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection and influenced the ideology within each navy from a perspective emphasizing command of the sea in support of national interests and objectives. Principal elements discussed are the impact forums like the U. S. Naval Institute and the Royal United Services Institute, the establishment and institutionalization of senior naval colleges, and the publication of important works from theorists like Mahan, Julian Corbett, and others had on the ideological transformation of both navies in this dramatic period of change for the world as a whole. Research questions focusing the exploration and analysis of evidence surrounding this topic include the following and apply to both navies, British and American, unless otherwise stated. How did the development of senior officer education influence the development of naval strategic thought? What were the influences of the physical transformation of naval forces in this period on the development of naval strategic thought? What was the relationship between American and British naval intellectuals and how did that influence the development of naval strategic thought in both navies? How did changes in national interests influence the development of naval strategic thought? All of the questions seek to examine and discover answers surrounding a central point. The development of the naval war colleges in America and Great Britain enabled the intellectual transformation of their naval strategic thought at the turn of the twentieth century and helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection in support of national interests and objectives.

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## Introduction

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon at Mare Island Navy Yard. February in the northern reaches of San Francisco Bay is normally considered among the cooler and wetter months of the year, but that day, February 5, 1895, was an exception. As the officers and crew reported aboard their new ship, the sky was clear, the temperature was mild, there was only a slight wind from the southwest, and no rain. It was commissioning day for this new cruiser of the United States Navy. At 1:47pm, the Captain of the Yard turned over the ship, USS *Olympia*, to Captain John J. Read, who spoke briefly to the crew. Following the short ceremony, the crew and assorted dock workers resumed their duties about the ship in various spaces with activities of finishing and readying her for an operational role in the fleet.<sup>1</sup>

Officially, protected cruiser number 6, displacing 5,500 tons, was authorized by Congress on September 7, 1888, and built at the Union Iron Works of San Francisco for a bid of \$1,796,000.<sup>2</sup> The fight to get *Olympia* and others to this point was not an easy one. The debate included a range of factors to be expected in a defense bill such as overall program funding needs, anticipated costs per ship, technical specifications of the vessels, and at this period in history, the shift from wooden sailing ships to steel-built ships powered by steam engines. There were already some of those in Congress who doubted the need or even usefulness of these new ships. Mr. Eugene Hale of Maine was one of those not yet convinced of the value and capability of steam-driven steel warships. Although not necessarily an anti-Navalist, when speaking of the two new steel battleships then under construction, *Texas* and *Maine*, he noted, “They are

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<sup>1</sup> Deck Log of USS *Olympia*, February 5, 1895, 02/05/1895 – 07/31/1895 [Logbooks of U. S. Navy Ships, ca. 1801–1940]; Record Group 24: Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1798-2007; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C., ARC Identifier 148845743 at <https://catalog.archives.gov>; August 28, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1890* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 9.



doubtful structures at best. I do not want to see another of those ships built until we know what we shall get out of the experiment.”<sup>3</sup>

Still, at the heart of this debate was the argument over to what degree should the United States be willing, or at a minimum be prepared, to take a role in the growing drama of world affairs. After all, this was what a capable navy would enable a maritime nation, like the United States, be able to undertake. Mr. John T. Morgan of Alabama argued this point in his remarks on the debate for adding the new ships, cruiser number 6 among them, to the naval appropriations bill in 1888. Morgan argued, “I want a navy, Mr. President, not because I anticipate the coming of a war, at least, not immediately, or anything like that, but I want it to give force and effect, moral force and moral effect, to the power of the American people among the nations of the earth.”<sup>4</sup> Morgan understood the world was changing in the latter years of the nineteenth century and with that change, international affairs were being drawn closer into the realm of influence over domestic affairs. He also understood that a proper and capable navy – a modernized navy - was a critical element to being able to participate in world affairs in any way. Morgan, again, noted, “A nation without the capacity to equip itself with arms and with a navy, if it is a maritime power, is lying out of the use of some of the most essential advantages of its sovereignty. The absence of these elements is felt in our foreign diplomacy and in our foreign relations.”<sup>5</sup>

The technological advances of the Second Industrial Revolution brought improvements in lifestyle and other societal affairs including communications, transportation, and production. Those advances also brought improvements in areas related to the field of warfare including steel manufacturing, large-scale ship construction, armaments, and ability to operate at extended

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<sup>3</sup> Cong. Rec., 50<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1888, vol. 19. pt. 11: 6718.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

ranges around the globe. These improvements made it possible to build better ships for the navy, turning what had been the obstacle of the sea into potential highways of attack or invasion. Other maritime nations of the world including Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia were all doing so with a significant lead over the United States. Mr. M. C. Butler of South Carolina recognized this and commented during the debate in the Senate, “if we do not have some, say a dozen, heavily armed and heavily armored fighting ships of war, we should be at a disadvantage and untold loss upon the country before we could provide for the emergency.”<sup>6</sup> Several other members of Congress made arguments for constructing new and larger ships built of steel and with heavier armaments for the U. S. Navy based upon the premise that if all other major powers of the world were doing so, then the United States would be in a position of disadvantage, even weakness, to not do the same.

Defense of foreign policy, or even the ability to have a foreign policy at all required a capable navy to carry out that policy. Without a capable navy, Mr. William Stewart of Nevada said, “we must submit to all manner of treaties that are proposed, we must allow European nations to take islands of the Pacific, to dominate South America, and to dominate countries on the north...To talk about the Monroe doctrine without a gunboat that could go to sea, when all other nations are armed, seems to me all nonsense. They are not afraid of our talk.”<sup>7</sup> Newer and more powerful ships were bringing foreign activity closer than ever before. The United States would not be able to stand back and allow the expanse of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to be the primary maritime defense of the homeland anymore, and this certainly would not hold true for protection of any American interests beyond North American waters.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 6723.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6725.

By 1895, the U. S. Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island was in its tenth year. The decade was not an easy one for the still relatively new school for senior officers of the Navy with many thinking it was nothing more than “a post-graduate school to carry officers forward in the theoretical studies pursued in the Academy at Annapolis.”<sup>8</sup> By this time, the curriculum, more firmly established than in the early days, garnered not only the interest of those selected to attend, but also of the senior leadership of the department. This same interest was shared by those in the Royal Navy as they were having their own discussions by this time on establishing a similar course of instruction for their own senior officers. Secretary of the Navy, Hilary Herbert, remarked in his report to Congress, “This successful development of the art of war by our Navy is especially gratifying now, when a respectable naval force of admirable ships will soon be at [our] disposal, and when knowledge of properly disposing and combining them for war will be of the highest value.”<sup>9</sup> The transformation to this level of respect and beyond for the college in Newport and the one yet to come in Britain were indications of an acceptance for naval officers to raise their level of naval thought to a higher level.

USS *Olympia* was launched on November 5, 1892, at the Union Iron Works in San Francisco.<sup>10</sup> By December 1893, she had completed her trials for the powerplant and propulsion. Eventually, she moved to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California in the northern reaches of San Francisco Bay where she spent much of the remainder of the year 1894 finishing out her armaments and remaining systems aboard the ship. By the end of the year, the Secretary

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<sup>8</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1895* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), XLI.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIII.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 7.

of the Navy reported her ready for commissioning.<sup>11</sup> At this point, *Olympia* was among the early vessels completed in the “New Steel Navy” for the United States. She was not the largest or most powerful of the fleet, but she would play a significant role in the steps toward a new strategic role for the United States Navy in world affairs going forward as part of a maturing national maritime strategy. In the words of Benjamin Franklin Cooling, “the USS *Olympia* symbolizes to this day the spread-eagle diplomacy that so marked the turn to the twentieth century.”<sup>12</sup> The Officer of the Watch that night of February 5, 1894, commissioning day for *Olympia*, never knew the path that would take his ship to Manila Bay a little over a year later for her role as the flagship in a major event toward the development of a strategic mindset for the officers of the United States Navy. These thoughts were likely far from his mind in the stillness of the hour as he recorded in the deck log at midnight the ship’s current state, “Clear. Calm. Dew falling.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1894* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire*, ix.

<sup>13</sup> Deck Log of USS *Olympia*, February 5, 1895.

## Chapter 1

### **The Setting: American and British Naval Thought in the Nineteenth Century**

The oceans and seas of the planet are mysterious and vast. For centuries they were obstacles that separated worlds and beckoned explorers and traders to sail upon their waves to connect lands and peoples from abroad making the world a smaller place. The narrative of those journeys and the events that resulted as mariners took to the seas and the world became a smaller place is a grand story of humankind. There is a quote on a wall in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England by Poet Derek Walcott that embodies this premise. Walcott remarks, “Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs? Where is your tribal memory? Sirs, in that gray vault. The sea. The sea has locked them up. The sea is history.”<sup>1</sup>

The growing enterprise of maritime commerce produced not only wealth, but intense competition among nations requiring naval power to protect national and commercial interests abroad. The American naval theorist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, wrote of this relationship stating, “The history of Sea Power is largely, though by no means solely, a narrative of contests between nations, of mutual rivalries, of violence frequently culminating in war.”<sup>2</sup> The sea is considered a great natural highway upon which all nations with the capability to do so may use to their advantage. British journalist and naval author, Gerard Fiennes, wrote “...security and prosperity rest upon the power to use the sea.”<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth century, prosperity among the powers of the world was built largely upon maritime commerce. European nations like Britain and France were among those dominating in this arena due, in large part, to the strength and capability of

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<sup>1</sup> Derek Walcott, “The Sea is History,” from *Selected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 137.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1918), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gerard Fiennes, *Sea Power and Freedom* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1918), 2.

their navy. Alexander Hamilton lobbied to put the United States in a similar position when he wrote in *The Federalist Papers*, “A further resource for influencing the conduct of European nations towards us...would arise from the establishment of a federal navy.”<sup>4</sup>

The role of the navy changed over the course of the nineteenth century, but the greatest leap in development occurred in the final decades leading up to the turn of the twentieth century. Advances in technology and manufacturing provided the platform for a physical transformation in naval warfare not yet seen. Along with this transformation in the vessels and armory of naval warfare, a transformational struggle on how to use such machinery to support or achieve national objectives on a strategic level also occurred. This was a struggle between traditionalists and reformers, or modernizers, over the need to transform at all. It was a sign of some semblance of grand strategy in the works whether they realized it or not. Grand strategy, or higher strategy, as Liddell Hart describes, “should both calculate and develop the economic resources and manpower of nations in order to sustain the fighting services [as well as] the moral resources – for to foster the people’s willing spirit is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power.”<sup>5</sup> This struggle revealed itself in many ways throughout the era of transformation and well into the decades beyond. Debates and fights over budgets and the need to spend national resources was constantly at the center of many of the most important issues in naval development, both physical and intellectual.

Discussion on ship construction plans, structure of fleets, and operational needs were typically internal. However, “strategy and policy are also public activities. Across generations, naval officers learned that they needed to communicate their professional and strategic value to

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Hamilton, “The Federalist No. 11,” *The Federalist* (1787; repr., New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1888), 62.

<sup>5</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2d ed. (New York: Meridian, 1991), 322.

the...people.”<sup>6</sup> Many of the same naval theorists who helped educate the public on the needs of the Navy also pushed ideas for the development of a higher level of education for senior naval officers. A course of higher education would enable these officers to better understand the dynamics of strategy and policy as part of overall national objectives and development of strategic plans based on national interests to meet those objectives. In other words, a college to provide senior officers with a course of study on the higher aspects of naval warfare and its influence on national strategy.

### Research Prospectus

This dissertation examines how the American and British schools of naval thought matured in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Specifically, this is an ideological and institutional comparison of the two navies through the development of higher education for senior officers focused on strategic thinking. These programs helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection and influenced the ideology within each navy from a perspective emphasizing command of the sea in support of national interests and objectives. Principal elements discussed are the impact forums like the U. S. Naval Institute and the Royal United Services Institute, the establishment and institutionalization of senior naval colleges, and the publication of important works from theorists like Mahan, Julian Corbett, and others had on the ideological transformation of both navies in this dramatic period of change for the world as a whole. Research questions focusing the exploration and analysis of evidence surrounding this topic include the following and apply to both navies, British and American,

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<sup>6</sup> Commander Benjamin Armstrong, “American Naval Dominance is Not a Birthright,” *Proceedings* vol. 147, no. 9 (September 2021), 49.

unless otherwise stated. How did the development of senior officer education influence the development of naval strategic thought? What were the influences of the physical transformation of naval forces in this period on the development of naval strategic thought? What was the relationship between American and British naval intellectuals and how did that influence the development of naval strategic thought in both navies? How did changes in national interests influence the development of naval strategic thought? All of the questions seek to examine and discover answers surrounding a central point. The development of the naval war colleges in America and Great Britain enabled the intellectual transformation of their naval strategic thought at the turn of the twentieth century and helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection in support of national interests and objectives.

#### A Nineteenth Century Strategy Primer

To prepare the reader for the discussion on naval theory and development of strategic thinking in the following chapters, it is necessary to provide a primer on the principle writing regarding strategy and the art of war within the nineteenth century context. The early strategists influenced those who followed in several ways. Military theory influenced the development of naval theory. Throughout history, overland routes have proven challenging and limited in their ability to connect nations to all potential partners for trade and commerce. The sea provides the opportunity to extend a nation's lines of communication for trade and other matters to much greater lengths, provided they have the assets with which to participate and the ability to protect those assets in the realm of the maritime enterprise. In this manner are military and naval strategy inevitably linked. Alfred T. Mahan noted the importance of these elements stating, "Let us start from the fundamental truth, warranted by history, that the control of the seas, and



especially along the great lines drawn by national interest or national commerce, is the chief among the merely material elements in the power and prosperity of nations. It is so because the sea is the world's great medium of circulation."<sup>7</sup> Connectivity and circulation on the world's routes breeds competition among those with the capability to participate. War, whether fought at sea or on land, is the ultimate competition among nations, and requires armed forces to conduct operations aimed at achieving objectives in support of national interests. How a nation determines national interests, and more importantly, objectives in pursuit of those interests requires a mature level of thinking to determine the strategy to guide the nation's military and naval forces in that pursuit.

Prussian military theorist General Carl von Clausewitz, noted in his landmark work, *On War* (1832), "War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."<sup>8</sup> Clausewitz provides an extensive discussion on the nature of war in his writings along with his own thoughts on the purposes, means, and the elements in war. He also draws the connection between war and political objectives noting, "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means," and continues "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."<sup>9</sup> Although Clausewitz's experience in warfare that provided his foundational understanding for his commentary was as a general staff officer during the Napoleonic Wars, his insights apply equally to warfare at sea. The mission of forcing an enemy

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<sup>7</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1898), 52.

<sup>8</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Indexed ed., ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

to yield to the will of another to fulfill national goals requires a force capable of doing so guided by doctrinal principles and strategy to successfully use that force on land or sea.

It is essential at this point to clarify what strategy and doctrine are and how they interact with one another in order to understand the significance of these principles in naval theory. Defining doctrine – military doctrine - is not a simple task. One may look at multiple sources and not find a pure or true definition. In some cases, it depends on the context or the branch of military service in which it is being applied. Standard practice in the development of doctrine is that it is based on actions and results of previous experience – that experience typically being from the previous war or conflict – and lessons learned from those experiences. Therefore, “doctrine tends to be backward looking but forward leaning.”<sup>10</sup> This is a crucial point in understanding the process by which doctrine is developed. Carl von Clausewitz, defined strategy as, “the use of engagements for the object of war.”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to elaborate that, “Though strategy in itself is concerned only with engagements, the theory of strategy must also consider its chief means of execution, the fighting forces.”<sup>12</sup> In basic terms, strategy is about where and what military forces may be employed in the pursuit of stated objectives and doctrine is about how those forces will carry out their mission to achieve those stated objectives. Clausewitz concluded, “Strategic theory, therefore, deals with planning; or rather, it attempts to shed light on the components of war and their interrelationships.”<sup>13</sup> How did this premise fit within the context of the nineteenth century? To understand this, one must review the writings of some of the other principal military and naval theorists of the period.

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<sup>10</sup> Roger W. Barnett, *Navy Strategic Culture: Why the Navy Thinks Differently* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 128.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Antoine-Henri Jomini, a contemporary and competitor of Clausewitz in the field of military theory, was from Switzerland and served for France and Russia during the wars of the early nineteenth century. He is a celebrated author on the theories and principles of the Napoleonic Wars. Jomini's definition and explanation of strategy differ from that of Clausewitz. Jomini defines strategy as, "the art of making war upon the map, and [it] comprehends the whole theater of operations...strategy decides where to act."<sup>14</sup> In his description of strategy, Jomini further explains the role of Grand Tactics and logistics. Grand Tactics are the maneuvering of forces on the battlefield while logistics is the means to "the execution of strategical and tactical enterprises."<sup>15</sup> How these elements of strategy intertwine with each other are delineated among thirteen points Jomini used to determine the initial steps in campaign planning. Among these points are included consideration or identification of the theater of war, decisive points, objectives, bases, lines of operation, and lines of communication. How all these elements or points of consideration blend together in a concept plan is the realm of strategy.<sup>16</sup>

Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, Prussian Chief of Staff during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871, was one of the leading writers in the realm of modern military thinking in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Somewhat counter to the systemic approach taken by Jomini, and similar to the premise of Clausewitz's use of the engagement to achieve the purpose of war, Moltke defined strategy as, "a system of expedients."<sup>17</sup> Moltke viewed it in more in a manner of application, calling it "more than a mere scholarly discipline. It is the translation of

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<sup>14</sup> Antoine-Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. By G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill (Public Domain, 1862), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, ed. Daniel J. Hughes, trans. Daniel J. Hughes and Harry Bell (New York: Presidio Press, 1993), 47.

knowledge to practical life...Strategy is the application of sound human sense to the conduct of war...Its value lies entirely in concrete application.”<sup>18</sup> In this respect, Moltke’s views on the importance of strategy over tactics is clear. “Strategy governs the movements of the army for the planned battle; the manner of its execution is the province of tactics.”<sup>19</sup>

In the rapidly changing world of naval warfare in the latter nineteenth century, commanders needed to gain a stronger grasp of the strategic environment and the craft of planning the use of naval forces within the same. The strategic value of naval power and its influence on world affairs only seldom revealed itself in the centuries leading up to the era of transformation toward the end of the nineteenth century. On some occasions, tactical results held strategic impact, but these were not often acknowledged or even realized at the time they happened. For naval officers and their national leaders to understand the implications at stake in the modern era would require a program for training and education in the use of squadrons and fleets to achieve strategic objectives versus individual ship handling symbolic of traditional naval education programs and practice. It was not until the final decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth that works by the prominent naval theorists of the period came onto the scene to instigate the sea power debate and influence decisions on naval development.

Alfred T. Mahan was an American naval officer and widely considered to be one of the most important and influential naval strategists and historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. His works are still required reading among naval officers and students of naval history worldwide. Mahan’s principles were instrumental in how nations viewed the importance of control of the sea in shaping global policy. He analyzed three key elements; production, shipping, and colonies or

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 125.

trading partners, in which history and policy are found for seafaring nations. He noted that successful maritime trade for a nation relied not just upon the vessels to carry out the trade, but safe and secure ports from which to operate, and the protection of those assets while abroad by an armed fleet.<sup>20</sup> Mahan's elements of sea power; geographical position, physical conformation, territory, population, character of the people, and character of the government, "affect, favorably or unfavorably, the growth of sea power in nations."<sup>21</sup>

British naval strategist and theorist Vice Admiral Philip H. Colomb of the Royal Navy described the basics of naval warfare as requiring two conditions to exist. There must be property on the sea (commerce) worthy of being pursued or captured by an enemy, and there must be ships available that are capable of staying and maintaining their presence at sea for extended periods of time.<sup>22</sup> Colomb, a contemporary of Mahan, was a leading British authority on naval history. Like Mahan, Colomb spent a lifetime in the navy and that experience influenced his works with the objective of maintaining British naval supremacy by using history as a teaching tool to support that aim. Colomb's *Naval Warfare* is comprised of articles he wrote previously for select journals and other publications on naval and military history and is regarded as a significant work on British naval history.

British naval officer and theorist, Admiral Sir Cyprian A.G. Bridge, wrote about naval strategy and tactics around the turn of the century. He provided various descriptions or definitions of strategy and tactics, arguing the terms are vague on their own, but are better understood when viewed through the manner in which they are viewed up close in execution. He

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<sup>20</sup> Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, 26-28.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> P.H. Colomb, Vice Admiral, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated* (1891; repr., Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 25-26.

also argued that strategy for operations on both land and sea have much in common, explaining that an understanding of the two is beneficial to the naval officer. He distinguished that the area in which land operations are planned is relatively more limited in scope (neighboring countries) as opposed to those planned at sea that could encompass an entire ocean. Bridge made a key distinction between land and sea strategy, however, that is important to consider. He argued that naval campaigns by themselves typically did not end wars but could make an opponent wish the war would end as a result of the effects felt from naval blockade, bombardment, isolation, or invasion. Bridge argued that the primary objective in naval strategy should be to enable an army to finish the mission.<sup>23</sup>

Julian Corbett was a British naval historian and geostrategist who began his professional career as a lawyer. He refined the ideas presented by Mahan and Colomb and was one of the first to write of what came to be known as the operational art in naval strategy and tactics. He also was widely respected for his work on the Sino-Japanese War of 1905 for its analysis on that conflict and the interaction between operations on land and sea. This was an example of how both forces working together could achieve victory contrary to the principle argued by Mahan on the use of sea power. Protection was not merely an act of defense, but could also be offensive in nature. Thus, “the object of naval warfare must always be directly or indirectly either to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it.”<sup>24</sup>

These works and others along with the establishment of naval senior service colleges on both sides of the Atlantic were all results of the transformative process both navies went through

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<sup>23</sup> Admiral Sir Cyprian A.G. Bridge, *The Art of Naval Warfare: Introductory Observations* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1907), 22-24.

<sup>24</sup> Julian S. Corbett, Sir, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911; repr., Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 91.

in the closing decades of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Yet, the lessons of Mahan, Colomb, Bridge, and Corbett were still a century or more away at the turn of the nineteenth century when the United States Navy was born, and the Royal Navy was the preeminent naval force in the world. Much still lay in the future for those of the maritime service and those who support them as America would eventually grow to become a major maritime power in the world. Robert G. Albion, famed authority and historian on maritime history from Harvard and Princeton, made a sound point in describing the American Navy in those early days by stating, “Like the United States itself during that century, the Old Navy might be called a force, but not a power.”<sup>25</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the American Navy was well on its way to making a name for itself among the other naval powers of the world and eventually challenging Great Britain and the rest of the world for supremacy of the seas.

### Historiography

The historiography covering the development of naval warfare and maritime strategy in general is fairly extensive. The material reviewed in this project included comprehensive naval histories, intellectual works on naval and maritime thought, organizational histories, military histories of select conflicts or engagements, economic histories in the maritime realm, and cultural histories within the naval community. Authors include classic and contemporary naval historians and theorists dating from the present and back into the nineteenth century. The material covers a variety of topics pertaining to the British Royal Navy and the U. S. Navy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to support the comparison of the two navies from

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<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy, 1798-1947* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 1.

an ideological and institutional perspective.<sup>26</sup> The objective here is to highlight selected works from the body of knowledge that demonstrate the general course of historiography on the development and use of naval forces, and how naval strategic thought was addressed within the United States Navy and Royal Navy through the turn of the twentieth century.

Early historiography on institutional development within the American Navy begins in 1794 through 1815. This period, and the War of 1812 in particular, served as a crucible for the early U. S. Navy and made an impact on the stature and reputations of the traditional naval powers of the time. Works from this period of naval history pertain to several schools of thought on naval warfare in the early modern era. The principal value of these works is to identify early capability, strengths and weaknesses in the naval force of America and establish a starting point for moving forward. Two excellent works on the early founding of the U. S. Navy at the start of the century and the development of the new Navy at its end are Ian W. Toll's *Six Frigates, The Epic History of the Founding of the U. S. Navy* (2006); and Edgar S. Maclay's *History of the Navy* (1895). Toll provides an epic account of the birth of the U. S. Navy along with the operational and political history in this vital period of American naval history. His story provides a foundation to understanding the ideological origins of the American Navy. Maclay provides a thorough overview with detailed accounts of activities and efforts in development of the Navy from its beginning along with discussion of naval and maritime issues affecting the need for and development of a navy and its role. This helps establish the context for the challenges facing the Navy moving forward into the nineteenth century, and illustrates how U.S. naval thinking was

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<sup>26</sup> The period of the nineteenth century was considered by some as a peaceful century from a global conflict perspective. The most significant naval conflicts of the period were the War of 1812 and the closing years of the war between Britain and Napoleon's France. Therefore, the collection of historiography on naval history in this period is composed primarily of comprehensive histories of early nineteenth century naval activity, maritime commerce, sea power and its influence in national strategy or development, and the transformation of navies in the industrial age.



not well founded in its early years. It was a collection of individuals moving about with no semblance of unity or train of thought. It needed a unifying guide to show them the way.

There are many naval histories of the War of 1812, but two, in particular, stand out for their importance to the field. Alfred Thayer Mahan's, *Sea Power and its Relations to the War of 1812* (1905), is a key work in naval history with a thorough review of all maritime issues surrounding the War of 1812 and discussion of the impact the battles on the lakes had on American naval policy and on future development of American naval power. The other is Theodore Roosevelt's *The Naval War of 1812* (1882). Widely recognized as an authoritative work, it provides a detailed historical narrative of the naval history of the War of 1812, highlighting all major engagements and their role in the war, and a discussion on the transformation of the United States from a regional to an international power in the maritime world. By doing so, Roosevelt implied that the United States needed a great navy with a clear sense of purpose. An exceptional history of the British Royal Navy in this period is Arthur Herman's *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (2004). The title of Herman's book is quite revealing in that this work is truly a comprehensive look at not just the history of the Royal Navy, but its role in establishing and maintaining the Empire and eventually passing principal elements and lessons on to the United States Navy.

There are a variety of comprehensive histories of sea power and its influence in national strategy or development, there are a few to note here. Two critical works on British sea power include Paul M. Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (1976), and Arthur J. Marder's *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905* (1940). Kennedy follows the Mahan model of naval history placing the Royal Navy in a framework of strategic considerations and implications for

economic and political issues at the domestic and international level from the early seventeenth century to the Cold War era. Marder paints a thorough narrative of Britain's naval history during the formative years from the late nineteenth to 1905. He describes in detail the work from a policy and practical application perspective of the Royal Navy in transformation. Both offer comprehensive narratives of the extended span of British naval influence, but more importantly, they address some of the key moments and personalities that influenced dramatic change in the structure, capability, ideology, and culture of the Royal Navy.

Two influential works on American sea power and its role in national strategy as pertaining to this dissertation are Robert G. Albion's *Makers of Naval Policy, 1798-1947* (1950), and Harold and Margaret Sprout's *Rise of American Naval Power* (1939). Albion, a renowned historian in British and maritime history, provides a summary history of the administrative and policy development of the U. S. Navy from its founding in 1798 highlighting some of the peripheral issues regarding the functions of the Navy as a complementary discussion on the role of sea power in national defense. The Sprouts provide an excellent narrative and intellectual history in *Rise of American Naval Power* as they discuss naval policies of the early nineteenth century, theories of Mahan, and the operational development of the Navy.

There are several important works by contemporary authors that examine the discussion on the role of strategy and American naval power, culture, and ideology during the transformative period of the latter nineteenth century. In *Progressives in Navy Blue: Maritime Strategy, American Empire, and the Transformation of U. S. Naval Identity, 1873-1898* (2018), historian Scott Mobley examines the intellectual and institutional developments in this period leading up to the Spanish-American War. Mobley looks closely at the shift in mission priorities for the Navy and how that influenced the professional identity of the officer corps, with fair

emphasis on the role of the U. S. Naval War College. However, his analysis was limited in focus to just that within the American Navy. In *Power at Sea: The Age of Navalism 1890-1918* (2007), Lisle A. Rose examines the schools of thought on maritime power coming out of the age of sail and moving into a more industrialized world. In this study, Rose leans on the theories of Mahan as the basis for explaining how and why nations like the United States and Great Britain, among others, shaped their navies for the battles of the coming twentieth century conflicts and how the first major conflict of the century, the Great War, would set in motion yet another major naval doctrinal argument over the type of capital ships for the fleet and how to employ the navy.

Two important contemporary works that examine the role of strategic thinking in the context of British naval power, culture, and ideology during the transformative period of the latter nineteenth century are by Andrew Lambert and Shawn Grimes. Lambert provides an excellent summary narrative of the efforts by Sir Julian Corbett to bring about development of a national maritime strategy in the early twentieth century in *The British Way of War: Julian Corbett and the Battle for a National Strategy* (2021). Lambert discusses the influence of Corbett's thinking and the role Corbett played in the development of curriculum at the Naval War Course. Shawn Grimes' *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918* (2012) provides an in-depth examination on the methodology and results of British naval war planning at the turn of the twentieth century. In his analysis, he argues that this was conducted using a professional process and was instrumental in the success of the Royal Navy staff during World War I. Part of that professional process was developed through senior officer education at the Royal Naval War College at Greenwich.

Historiography on the development of institutional education for senior officers in the field of strategy in both navies includes works by prominent historians in the field. A principal

work representing the American effort is *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U. S. Naval War College* (1984) by John Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, and John R. Wadleigh. The two key works by Harry W. Dickinson – *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Education for Officers* (2007), and *Wisdom and War: The Royal Naval College Greenwich 1873-1998* (2012), examine the British experience. The theme of all three works is an examination of the history of how these schools of naval thought developed and, in turn, helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection leading into the twentieth century. They provide what Roger Barnett described as an “approach to thinking about the application of military force,”<sup>27</sup> from the naval perspective.

Research in the field of maritime strategy and doctrine for both navies includes the exploration and examination of evidence from a variety of sources. Principal primary sources pertaining to the United States Navy include operational records and reports of the Secretary of the U. S. Navy to Congress, the Congressional Record, essays and papers from officers and members of the United States Naval Institute, lectures and notes from Stephen Luce and Alfred T. Mahan during their assignments at the U.S Naval War College, and other works by Luce and Mahan on the subjects of maritime strategy and naval warfare. In addition, the Naval Historical Collection housed at the U. S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island contains records and manuscripts from the early years from the founding of the College through the early twentieth century including records from the Presidents of the College in that period. All of these sources provide evidence on the level and depth of discussion on topics related to development of a strategic mindset in the Navy and steps taken to institutionalize a formal program of education in naval history and strategy for senior officers.

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<sup>27</sup> Barnett, *Navy Strategic Culture: Why the Navy Thinks Differently*, 6.

Principal primary sources pertaining to the Royal Navy include published works and personal papers of principle naval authorities such as John Knox Laughton, Philip Colomb, Julian Corbett, Herbert Richmond, Cyprian Bridge, and Reginald Custance. The writings of these men provide insight to the discussion on the need to train senior officers of the Navy in strategy leading to the development of the Senior Officer's War Course at the Royal Naval College Greenwich. They also provide evidence to the evolution of strategic thought in the Royal Navy in the decades leading up to the start of World War I.

Examination of personal correspondence and manuscripts between Luce and Mahan in America and Corbett and Laughton in Britain demonstrate the relationship and influence shared among naval authorities on both sides of the Atlantic. This is also evident through a review of Admiralty memorandums and Navy Department reports showing the progression of the educational programs of instruction in America and Britain. Finally, review of documents and records on naval development and growth along with operational records and histories for each navy demonstrate the evolution of the role of American and British naval forces moving into the twentieth century.

In summary, the historiography covering the development of naval warfare and strategy for the United States and Great Britain during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century is extensive. Material included in the works described above, and many others, provide valuable information on naval history and the development of the service in both nations. However, the scholarship is limited on the intellectual transformation both navies experienced at the turn of the twentieth century. That gap is wider, in particular, when exploring the comparison and contrast of how the intellectual development of naval strategic thought occurred in both navies and how the relationship of several select individuals played an important role in that development. There

are works that discuss the development of strategic thinking in both navies on their own. The works discussed here by Grimes, Mobley, Lambert, Hattendorf, Marder, and Dickinson, to name a few, at times draw some connections between the two programs, but they are not fully defined or detailed. Robert Mullins does discuss the similarities in development of strategic thinking in both navies in this period in, *The Transformation of British and American Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era* (2016). Mullins discusses the similarities of both programs, their inspirations and influences; however, the majority of his analysis and discussion remains at the policy level. It does not delve deeply into the cultural and intellectual battles fought on both sides of the Atlantic nor the extent of the relations between individuals and their influence to bring the education of strategic thinking into the core of the naval officer corps.

This dissertation is an intellectual examination of how the American and British schools of naval strategic thought matured in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Specifically, it is an ideological and institutional comparison of the two navies through their development of higher education for senior officers focused on strategic thinking. These programs helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection and influenced the ideology within each navy from a perspective emphasizing command of the sea in support of national interests and objectives. As such, it encompasses elements of multiple historical methodologies including military, diplomatic, economic, and cultural history. Considering the transformative events that took place during this period, the cultural element is influenced by the intellectual. This requires an understanding of the differences between strategy and doctrine and how one is a critical ingredient to determining the other. The remaining chapters in this dissertation present analysis of the evidence explaining how the intellectual transformation of American and British naval strategic thought at the turn of the century occurred and provides a

comparison of the influencing relationships between the two navies in their development of naval strategic thought.

### Chapter Structure

Chapter Two, “State of the Navies at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” will provide a historical reference to the period when the Royal Navy was at its zenith, with Nelson at sea and the young U. S. Navy’s experiences early on and their experiences in the War of 1812. A brief review of that war highlights some of the important aspects that came from that conflict to illustrate the level of operational maturity of each navy in this period. This is a high-level review and includes enough detail to provide proper context for where the navies came from before entering the period of transformation in the latter years of the century.

Chapter Three, “Changing National Interests and Thoughts on Policy,” addresses the state of national interests, policy, and the impact of the Second Industrial Revolution for both Great Britain and the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and how this related to foreign affairs, maritime commerce, and the need for a navy. For the United States, this includes a discussion on the influence of reducing the Navy following the Civil War. For Great Britain, this includes a discussion on the influence both traditional and emerging threats to the security of Britain, namely the rise of the Imperial German Navy.

Chapter Four, “Seeds for the Intellectual Transformation of American Naval Thought are Sown,” discusses the state of the Navy in the early 1870s, the origins of the U. S. Naval Institute, the establishment of the U. S. Naval War College, the rise of Alfred Thayer Mahan, and the publication of his *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890) and their role in the development of American naval strategic thought. This chapter also includes a brief discussion on the

influence of this process on naval appropriations and the shipbuilding program for the new American Navy.

Chapter Five, “Physical Transformation Drives Intellectual Transformation in the Royal Navy,” discusses the dramatic transformation of the British fleet following the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and the intellectual response in its wake. This includes a discussion on the influence of the writings of principle British navalists, and the establishment of the Senior Officer’s War Course at the Royal Naval College Greenwich to illustrate the desire of the Royal Navy to bring their officers to a higher level of thinking with regard to strategy and policy during the rise of the naval race between Germany and Great Britain.

Chapter Six, “The Naval War Colleges in the New Century,” reviews the state of naval strategic thinking in the United States and Great Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. For the United States, this includes examining the continuing debate over the value of the Naval War College, the impact of the Spanish-American War, and the maturation of American naval thinking to support the United States in the new role of colonial world power. For Great Britain, this includes an assessment of the state of the senior officer education system in place in the Royal Navy, the influence of naval reform in the early 1900s, the development of naval strategic thinking in the Edwardian era, and the influence by naval theorists like Julian Corbett and Herbert Richmond in the development of planning and training skills for the Royal Navy in the lead up to the First World War.

Chapter Seven, “Comparison and Contrast of the Two School’s Evolution of Naval Strategic Thought,” presents a summary of the findings from the exploration and analysis of the evidence answering the primary research questions and discussed throughout this dissertation. They are aimed at providing illumination to the central thesis - the development of the naval war



colleges in America and Great Britain enabled the intellectual transformation of their naval strategic thought at the turn of the twentieth century and helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection in support of national interests and objectives. This is accomplished through an intellectual and institutional comparison of the navies of Great Britain and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The similarities of this process of ideological and intellectual development demonstrate how the development of naval thought on both sides of the Atlantic influenced, and in some cases complimented each other.

Before examining the intellectual transformation that occurred in both the United States Navy and the Royal Navy in the late nineteenth century, one must explore where the two navies were at the start of that century. During the Age of Sail, the Royal Navy reigned supreme on the oceans of the world, and the American Navy was just beginning to take shape. However, the year 1815, after the War of 1812 and the Napoleonic Wars were over, is a good starting point for understanding where the two navies were from a physical and cultural state. It marks a significant point of contrast for where the two navies would find themselves in the 1870s as they moved into the era of transformation.

## Chapter 2

### State of the Navies after the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

At the end of the War of 1812, one navy was nearing its zenith while another was just beginning to make a name for itself. The Royal Navy, although bested in battle tactically on most occasions by their American opponents in that war, was still the most powerful navy afloat. The American Navy, fueled by the rush of victory over the British, proved its fighting capability, but lacked in all the other areas of organization and formal structure to be a force capable of conducting operations around the globe on a regular basis. With the cessation of hostilities between America and Great Britain signified by the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814,<sup>1</sup> and the exile of Napoleon to St Helena after his defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the world saw the end of decades of conflict and violence in the “war for all the oceans,”<sup>2</sup> involving the great powers of Europe and the United States.

Daniel Walker Howe wrote about the future of America after the War of 1812, emphasizing Jefferson’s dream for an empire of liberty involving “the extension of American power across the continental space.”<sup>3</sup> During the nineteenth century the United States experienced dramatic growth and expansion in both its national and international interests. A key element in American ability to participate on the world stage was development of a standing navy with the capability to support and sustain American interests abroad as well as project power to various parts of the globe as part of American diplomatic, military, and economic

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<sup>1</sup> James Madison, “Treaty of Peace,” memorandum, February 18, 1815, in *The History of the War Between the United States and Great Britain*, ed. J. Russell, Jr. (Hartford: B. & J. Russell, 1815), 424.

<sup>2</sup> Roy and Lesley Adkins, *The War for All the Oceans: From Nelson at the Nile to Napoleon at Waterloo* (New York: Viking, 2006), 480.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

interests. However, in the early nineteenth century, the state of naval affairs in the United States varied depending on political influence and perceived threats to American security by a foreign power.<sup>4</sup> During this time, Britain still maintained a naval presence in the region to protect her interests. As a result, the United States benefitted from the security provided by the Royal Navy in keeping out other potential threats.<sup>5</sup> Mahan, “argued that British control of the seas...paved the way for Great Britain’s emergence as the world’s dominant military, political, and economic power,” and he believed the same lessons could apply to U. S. foreign policy.<sup>6</sup>

Moving forward into 1815, Britain still faced the final campaign to rid itself completely of its enemy of the past two decades, Napoleon Bonaparte, but in July that year it was the British ship *Bellerophon* that took aboard Napoleon following his defeat at Waterloo and eventual surrender. This ushered in the era of Pax Britannica when the Royal Navy enjoyed “unchallenged supremacy”<sup>7</sup> on the world’s oceans. Historian David Howarth described the period as “unique in the history of the sea – when the prestige of the Royal Navy stood so high that sea warfare practically ceased.”<sup>8</sup> Although there were to be some conflicts at sea in the coming decades none were near the level of intensity as those just ended.

The Americans found themselves in their own positive position among the American people and the Congress. Historian Charles Oscar Paullin noted remarks from the Secretary of

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<sup>4</sup> Paolo Coletta, *The American Naval Heritage* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 101.

<sup>5</sup> George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U. S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 135.

<sup>6</sup> “Mahan’s The Influence of Sea Power upon History: Securing International Markets in the 1890s,” Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State, accessed November 14, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/mahan>.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *The Nation and the Navy: A History of Naval Life and Policy* (London: The Cresset Press, 1961), 223.

<sup>8</sup> David Howarth, *Sovereign of the Seas: The Story of Britain and the Sea* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 295.

the Navy in February 1815 stating, “the destinies of the nation appear to be intimately connected with her maritime power and prosperity; and as the creation of a navy is not a work to be quickly performed, it seems necessary not only to cherish our existing [naval] resources, but to augment them gradually and steadily.”<sup>9</sup> This growth advocated by Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Crowninshield was necessary to keep pace with the increase in commerce of the country. As a result, in December 1815 he recommended to Congress to increase the size of the Navy by an additional five ships over and above those already appropriated in January 1813.<sup>10</sup>

One navy riding high on the bow wave of prestige and strength. One rising on the increasing tide of the era of modern history. The size and strength of the ships in the fleet and the experience of those who sail them are not the only factors that determine the quality and capability of a navy. The year 1815 marks a key point in the history of these two navies. It provides a point of reference for where the two navies were at their height in the Age of Sail prior to the transformative decades at the end of the century, when steam and steel, along with a new world order, influenced major changes in naval warfare. This would most visibly play out in the physical changes in ships and weaponry and the corresponding changes in tactics. However, it would also require an intellectual and ideological transformation in the mindset of those who would fight those ships – the senior officer corps leadership of each navy.

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin's History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911: A Collection of Articles from the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (1968; repr., Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 159.

<sup>10</sup> Navy Department, *Register of the Navy for the Year of 1815*, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., Senate Executive Document 129 (Washington, December 7, 1815).

## State of the Royal Navy

During the early years of the nineteenth century, the Royal Navy was at its zenith as a result of its constant wartime footing since 1792 for the conflict with France and having not met defeat in all that time. Some remark, “it would be no exaggeration to say that England’s naval supremacy in the early years of the nineteenth century was unlike anything the world had ever seen before or has since.”<sup>11</sup> However, one cannot speak of the Royal Navy in this period without discussing the impact of Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson. Nelson embodied the spirit and identity of Britain’s navy. He joined in late 1770 as a midshipman aboard HMS *Raisonable* and rose through the officer ranks to command multiple ships of increasing size and capability over the years finally being promoted to vice-admiral in January 1801.<sup>12</sup> He served with many of the famous and respected naval leaders of the period learning and honing his craft. Nelson’s life at sea was one of an almost constant state of war. He was highly respected by all for his abilities as a sailor and for the care and inspiration he instilled in his men. His reputation for skill and bravery in famous battles at Cape St Vincent, the Nile, and Copenhagen among the many other engagements of his career was well known across the Navy and Great Britain. Even the First Lord of the Admiralty, Admiral John Jervis recognized this commenting after the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, “all agree there is but one Nelson.”<sup>13</sup>

The Battle of Trafalgar, fought on October 21, 1805, signaled the height of the great war at sea between Britain and France and illustrates the caliber of the Royal Navy in this period better than any other engagement. In the final hour leading to the opening of the engagement

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>12</sup> Steven E. Maffeo, ed., *Seize, Burn, or Sink: The Thoughts and Words of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), xxiii-xxxviii.

<sup>13</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *The Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1897), 104.

with the combined French and Spanish fleet off Cadiz that morning, Nelson's signal to the fleet was, "England expects everything from this day's action, and trusts every man will do his duty."<sup>14</sup> Mr. Greenly went on in his letter to describe the response of his own captain to his crew upon seeing Nelson's signal, "Our Captain told his men, we would act as Lord Nelson had always done, lay his ship alongside the largest he came near & would leave the rest to his men. They gave him 3 cheers, & they fought like lions."<sup>15</sup>

Although outnumbered by the combined French and Spanish fleet, Nelson chose to take the fight to them at all possible speed. Shortly after the battle commenced, his signal to the fleet called to "Engage the enemy more closely."<sup>16</sup> Nelson's second in command that day, Vice-Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, noted in his dispatches to the Admiralty about the fighting spirit of the British sailors at Trafalgar. This was later published in *The Naval Chronicle* - an influential publication of naval and maritime news of the period. Collingwood noted, "the spirit which animated all was the same: when all exert themselves zealously in their country's service, all deserve that their high merits should stand recorded; and never was high merit more conspicuous than in the battle I have described."<sup>17</sup>

The spirit of Nelson lived on after his death at Trafalgar such was the impact of his loss. One biographer of Nelson remarked, "The death of Nelson was felt in England as something more than a public calamity."<sup>18</sup> He lay in state at the Royal Naval Hospital in Greenwich until his

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<sup>14</sup> J. Greenly to his father, October 21, 1805, in *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France 1793-1815*, ed. Helen Watt with Anne Hawkins (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2016), 230.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>16</sup> W. Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, vol. 5 (1900; repr., London: Chatham Publishing, 1997), 136.

<sup>17</sup> Vice-Admiral C. Collingwood to Admiralty, October 22, 1805, in *The Naval Chronicle: The Contemporary Record of the Royal Navy at War, Vol. III, 1804-1806*, ed. Nicholas Tracy (London: Chatham Publishing, 1999), 214.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson* (1813; repr., London: Macdonald, 1953), 298.

public funeral at St. Paul's Cathedral where many of Britain's most heralded heroes slept. Nelson was Britain's greatest admiral. None before or since ever rose to the level of fame and respect achieved by Nelson during his career with the Royal Navy. Many attribute the quality of the Royal Navy to the efforts and influence of Nelson. None other than American naval historian than Alfred T. Mahan acknowledged this by commenting, "...the decisive supremacy of Great Britain's sea-power, the establishment of which, beyond all question or competition, was Nelson's great achievement."<sup>19</sup>

In the ten years following Trafalgar to 1815 there were no further major engagements at sea on the scale of those fought up to 1805. The Royal Navy changed its strategy against Napoleon from one solely focused on military objectives targeting the French fleet in their bases or abroad or the defense of the British islands. Economic warfare became the priority mission among the many roles the navy was called upon to perform in support of land operations against Napoleon in Europe. The French were forced into using the same strategy as neither could find the opportunity to conduct direct attacks against the enemy.<sup>20</sup> This shift to intercepting and/or protecting merchant ships eventually would involve contact with American ships, but at this point a critical issue was how this affected British naval operations overall. Julian Corbett commented on this dynamic when noting, "the force we found necessary to devote to trade defense in the North Atlantic was out of all proportion to the naval strength of the new belligerent [the Americans]. Our protective force had to be increased enormously."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A. T. Mahan, *The Life of Nelson*, 397-398.

<sup>20</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004), 551-552.

<sup>21</sup> Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 276.

The shift in operational priority of the Royal Navy also affected the manner in which the British fought the war against the Americans in this period. In early June 1812, President James Madison sent a declaration to Congress outlining the events and current state of affairs. He made the case for war noting the repeated occasions of British captains operating independently in violation of American rights on the ocean and thereby the law of nations. He also noted the incursions into American waters by British warships to harass merchant ships entering and exiting American ports.<sup>22</sup> The British were of the belief that they were operating entirely within the law (by their own interpretation) and felt it was the Americans who were acting with hostile intent in their insistence to suspend the practice of impressment.<sup>23</sup>

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1812, the Congress presented an act to President James Madison declaring a state of war existed between the United States and Great Britain. Madison approved this declaration and the authorization to use the naval forces of the United States and privateers under letters of marque or other commissions against all vessels and cargo under the purview of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>24</sup> The response by those in the British government soon after the official commencement of hostilities with America signified the importance of the naval aspect of this conflict. The situation was a topic of discussion in both houses of the British Parliament as members presented their addresses regarding the war with America. In the House of Lords, the Marquis of Lansdowne made it known that upon the opening of hostilities the destruction of the American navy was of the highest priority while Britain held an obvious advantage in naval strength and capability in handling what he called, “a navy so inferior, so

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<sup>22</sup> Jacob Elder, ed., *Events of the War, Between the United States of America and Great Britain, During the Years 1812 and 1813: Both Military and Naval* (Harrisburg: Jacob Elder, 1814), 2-3

<sup>23</sup> Debate in the Commons Chamber, *Declaration of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent Relative to the Causes and Origin of the War with America*, 3 February 1813, vol. 24 cc363-77 (United Kingdom).

<sup>24</sup> Elder, *Events of the War*, 9-10.



inexperienced, and so perfectly known in all its parts.”<sup>25</sup> In the House of Commons, Mr. Whitbread expressed a similar disregard for the capabilities of the Americans wondering how, “with...a navy so contemptible, [would they] tempt the strength and resentment of Great Britain,” while at the same time acknowledging “the influence which [the rebuff] produced on the minds of the American people in reconciling them to the war, he considered as a still more important and disastrous effect.”<sup>26</sup>

This lack of respect, even contempt, for the capability of the U. S. Navy affected the strategy and planning for use of naval assets in American waters, limiting the options available to British commanders in America both on land and sea. Troops for any campaign against American coastal towns and the ships to get them there all came from the West Indies while still having to secure those island assets at the same time. Throughout the war, achieving peace in Europe remained the priority over all British affairs overseas through the summer of 1815. The elements of the Treaty of Vienna established the British colonial holdings as a result of the victory over Napoleon and thus the foundation of the British overseas commercial empire moving further into the nineteenth century. This map would continue the mission of the Royal Navy to protect and sustain the overseas trade empire and thus Great Britain itself.<sup>27</sup>

One effect upon the Royal Navy that often impacts the victor after a war was a force reduction. It did not take the British Parliament long to act in reducing the enormous cost of maintaining a large navy. In 1813, the Royal Navy stood at a strength of 1,009 ships and over

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<sup>25</sup> Debate in the Lords Chamber, *Address Respecting the War with America*, 18 February 1813, vol. 24 cc575-589 (United Kingdom).

<sup>26</sup> Debate in the Commons Chamber, *Address Respecting the War with America*, 18 February 1813, vol. 24 cc593-649 (United Kingdom).

<sup>27</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy: Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69-70.

145,000 men. By 1826, it was reduced to just 23,000 men and one hundred-seventy-nine ships, with just a few of these actually in commission.<sup>28</sup> Part of the reasoning behind such drastic reductions in the fleet lay in the fact that none of Britain's former rivals were in any conditional state to challenge her at sea. So many years of war took their toll on all the participants, but more so, the growth of maritime commerce protected by the presence of the Royal Navy provided more incentive to reap the benefits rather than compete for position. The elimination of the Navigation Laws by Parliament in 1821 and 1822 further opened the way to an even greater level of prosperity on the sea lanes of world trade. The one potential threat Britain did not yet know how to completely address was a new one among the sea power nations of the world. That threat was the United States.<sup>29</sup>

#### State of the United States Navy

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1794, the United States Congress established the Navy Department and authorized the procurement and manning of six frigates.<sup>30</sup> This was the first step toward building a real navy. John Adams was always a strong advocate for “the creation and establishment of a permanent and efficient naval force, for the protection of commerce and the defense of the seacoast in case of war.”<sup>31</sup> During his administration as President of the United States between March 1797 to March 1801, he continued this advocacy in a deliberate manner. By the end of his

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<sup>28</sup> Brian Lavery, *Empire of the Seas: How the Navy Forged the Modern World* (London: Conway, 2009), 197.

<sup>29</sup> Noel Mostert, *The Line Upon the Wind: The Great War at Sea, 1793-1815* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 721-722.

<sup>30</sup> US Congress, House and Senate. “Act to provide a naval armament.” March 18, 1794.

<sup>31</sup> Horace Kimball, *The Naval Temple: Containing a Complete History of the Battles Fought by the Navy of the United States from its Establishment in 1794 to the Present Time; Including the Wars with France, and with Tripoli, the Late War with Great Britain, and with Algiers* (Boston: Barber Badger, 1816), 10.

first year in office the navy had twenty ships, increasing to thirty by the following year; however, the law directing construction of six seventy-four-gun-ships of the line never became a reality. By the end of his administration in 1801, measures taken by Congress to sell off ships and suspend any further new construction left the navy with just thirteen frigates.<sup>32</sup>

The period of 1801 to 1812 is referred to as the period of the Gunboat Navy because of the dominance of smaller vessels (brigs and schooners) that made up the standing navy while the larger frigates were laid up in storage reserve. This lack of vision regarding the greater need for a larger fleet limited the capability of the U.S. Navy and was reinforced by the feelings of those recognizing the supremacy of the British Navy. Although the gunboats served well for most of the operations in which they were employed they were wholly unsuited for the war that was coming.<sup>33</sup> The lack of preparedness and attention paid to ships in the fleet and those in storage would bring an enormous cost to replace. As historian Chapelle remarked, “the abysmal ignorance of both the American politician and the public regarding the function of a navy was about to be corrected in a sharp and highly unpleasant manner.”<sup>34</sup>

At the beginning of the War of 1812, the United States Navy, in comparison to the British Royal Navy, was vastly outnumbered and certainly did not carry the same level of power and prestige. Even with a respectable showing in the War of Independence, the Quasi-War with France, and the Barbary Wars, the Americans were still a fledgling force limited not only in size but by type of warship. Small vessels like gunboats and sloops or the slightly larger schooners and brigs were faster and more maneuverable than large ships, but carried less armament in the range of six to twenty guns typically on one gun deck. They were also unable to sustain

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 179 and 240.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 241.

themselves for long voyages on their own. Larger ships like frigates and ships-of-the-line were capable of sustaining themselves for longer cruises and had much heavier armament ranging from twenty to seventy-four or more guns on multiple decks. Larger ships also carried detachments of marines to provide defense against boarders and for excursions ashore.<sup>35</sup>

The majority of the naval battles in the War of 1812 were single-ship actions, as opposed to major fleet engagements, with the United States faring well in many of them, often victorious over larger and more heavily armed ships than their own. The original six frigates authorized by Congress on the rolls for the Navy at the start of the war were *United States* (44 guns), *Constitution* (44 guns), *President* (44 guns), *Congress* (36 guns), *Constellation* (36 guns), and *Chesapeake* (36 guns).<sup>36</sup> Some of the most famous and notable actions of the war were fought by these ships and their captains and crew establishing the identity of the United States Navy and making it one worthy of attention by potential concern by the Royal Navy. Symbolic of that belief are the following actions of renown.

In August 1812, *USS Constitution* encountered the frigate *HMS Guerriere* off the coast of Massachusetts. Once the action began, it took just over half an hour for the guns of *Constitution* render *Guerriere* incapable of continuing the fight. The lop-sided victory for *Constitution* added another battle star to this magnificent ship's record and was the first major victory for the United States in the war at sea in 1812.<sup>37</sup> In October that same year, Captain Stephen Decatur in command of *USS United States* met the large frigate *HMS Macedonian* five hundred miles south

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<sup>35</sup> Howard I. Chapelle, *The American Sailing Navy, The Ships and Their Development* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1949, 28-30 and 55-57.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Desilver, ed., *Naval Almanac for the Year of Our Lord 1814; Being the Second After Leap Year* (Philadelphia: Thomas De Silver, 1813), 24.

<sup>37</sup> Abel Bowen, ed., *Official Accounts of the Naval Victories Achieved by our Gallant American Heroes, During the Present War Between the United States and Great Britain* (Boston: A. Bowen, 1813), 3-4.

of the Azores in a sharp but short battle. In ninety minutes, Decatur was able to maneuver his ship to the advantage of his crew's superior gunnery skills and drop the mizen mast, fore and main topmasts, and the main yard along with damage to the hull. Again, as in *Constitution's* fight with *Guerriere*, the casualties were more severe aboard the British vessel. This victory was significant in that it was believed by the British in the aftermath of *Constitution's* earlier victory that *Macedonian*, as the largest frigate in the Royal Navy, would be able to handle the large American frigates in battle. Those beliefs were shot to pieces as was *Macedonian* in her fight with Decatur and his crew.<sup>38</sup> It also demonstrated the ability of American vessels to project power abroad and conduct operations far from their home bases.

In early January 1813, *Constitution*, under the command of Captain William Bainbridge, was sailing off the coast of Brazil when she met and engaged the British frigate HMS *Java*. In just under two hours, *Constitution* was again able to completely dismast her opponent with a casualty comparison of thirty-four Americans killed and wounded to 230 British, including *Java's* captain, Henry Lambert. The British ship was in such a state of destruction the Americans were not able to take her into a nearby port as a prize. The damage inflicted upon ship and crew by *Constitution's* guns attest to the skill and training in gunnery of the American sailors.<sup>39</sup>

The account of the engagement between *Chesapeake* and the prime British vessel HMS *Shannon* on June 1, 1813, off Boston was not another American victory, but one of courage and a lasting legacy. Captain James Lawrence of *Chesapeake* had only assumed command of the ship

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas H. Palmer, *The victories of Hull, Jones, Decatur, Bainbridge: As detailed in their official letters and the letters of other officers: Together with a collection of the public testimonials of respect and the songs and odes written in celebration of those events* (Philadelphia: The Proprietor, 1813), 25-26.

<sup>39</sup> Abel Bowen, ed., *The Naval Monument, Containing Official and Other Accounts of all the Battles Fought Between the Navies of the United States and Great Britain During the Late War; and an Account of the War with Algiers, with Twenty-Five Engravings. To Which is Annexed a Naval Register of the United States* (Boston: A. Bowen, 1816), 25-27.

a few weeks prior, and the crew was not well-trained. Once the battle was joined it was evident that the lack of training for the American crew was not the deciding factor, but the excellence in broadside gunnery of the British ship that defeated *Chesapeake*.<sup>40</sup> During the battle, Captain Lawrence was hit twice by musket fire and taken below for treatment. Upon recognizing his wounds were mortal and his ship was in danger of being taken, his last words to his crew were, “Don’t give up the ship!”<sup>41</sup> These words echo the legacy of Captain Lawrence to all the sailors of the U. S. Navy to always stay the course, protect your ship, and never quit.

In September 1813, Oliver Hazard Perry led a self-built force of small ships against the British squadron on Lake Erie. Perry, on the brig *Lawrence*, flew a special blue banner with the words of Captain Lawrence emblazoned, “DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP” large enough for everyone in the fleet to see and be inspired by the late hero’s dying words.<sup>42</sup> In a short but sharp action, Perry defeated the British squadron, winning a strategic victory for the Americans and providing one of the most “decisive battles in American history when one considers the results.”<sup>43</sup> Theodore Roosevelt remarked in his commentary on Perry’s victory on the steadfastness and hearty behavior of the American sailors and their officers, and acknowledged the Americans had better built and armed ships.<sup>44</sup> Mahan noted the significance of the American victory on how it helped stress the importance of “the influence of control of the water upon the

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<sup>40</sup> William S. Dudley, ed., *The Naval War of 1812, A Documentary History, Volume 2* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985), 126-132.

<sup>41</sup> Theodore, Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (1882; repr., Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1987), 182.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel R. Brown, *Views on Lake Erie, Comprising a Minute and Interesting Account of the Conflict on Lake Erie – Military Anecdotes – Abuses in the Army – Plan of a Military Settlement – View of the Lake Coast from Buffalo to Detroit* (Troy, NY: Francis Adancourt, Printer, 1814), 5.

<sup>43</sup> James C. Bradford, ed., *Command Under Sail, Makers of the American Naval Tradition 1775-1850* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 137.

<sup>44</sup> Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 257.

course of events.”<sup>45</sup> This engagement was the largest naval action of the war and one in which a U. S. fleet sailed directly into action against a British fleet and won. In reporting his victory, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry said, “We have met the enemy and they are ours,”<sup>46</sup> and in so doing ensured a place in the world of naval history for the United States for perpetuity.

The performance of the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812 raised its reputation and credibility, but it also indicated an acknowledgement of the rise of American influence in the areas of global military and diplomatic affairs. In a letter by William Cobbett, an English pamphleteer, to Prime Minister of Britain, Lord Liverpool, in the latter part of the war, Cobbett remarked at claims that, “the American navy would be swept from the face of the ocean in a month...yet, how different has been the events! No, no: the Americans are not cowards.”<sup>47</sup> The success by the big American frigates on the high seas demonstrated a higher degree of skill in gunnery and ship handling by their captains and crew, but also of superior ship construction. The success on Lake Erie by Oliver Hazard Perry demonstrated a higher degree of naval tactics and command and control which are critical for any naval force to be successful on a grand scale. It also demonstrated the ability to be flexible and adapt to different combat environments to capitalize on conditions to give them the advantage. These traits combined are what raised the reputation of the American Navy and in turn that of the United States as a whole.

Jeremy Black argued the rise in the reputation of the U. S. Navy after the war increased the popularity of the Navy in competition for post-war improvements, noting that in 1816,

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<sup>45</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of Eighteen Hundred and Twelve*, vol. 2 (1903; repr., Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1905), 101.

<sup>46</sup> Oliver Hazard Perry to Major General William H. Harrison, September 10, 1813, Naval History and Heritage Command – Oliver Hazard Perry (September 10, 2019). <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/historical-figures/oliver-hazard-perry.html>.

<sup>47</sup> William Cobbett, *The Pride of Britannia Humbled* (Philadelphia: William Reynolds and Daniel Griffin, 1815), 7.

Congress approved a shipbuilding plan for nine ships-of-the-line and twelve large frigates.<sup>48</sup>

Other immediate effects of success in the naval war were to instigate discussion on the doctrines of naval defense.<sup>49</sup> In the post-war period there was a movement within the United States by those pushing for better policies and programs for development and training of a stronger standing military. While acknowledging the success of the navy during the war, it was also understood it was a limited success. The service was young and heavily outnumbered by the Royal Navy – still the largest and most powerful navy in the world.

### Moving Forward Towards Transformation

After 1815, America held all the elements needed to be a strong naval power – extensive access to coastal ports, an increasingly large maritime commerce industry, a strong shipbuilding industry, and, as the showing of American naval ships and crew in the key engagements of the war demonstrated, an overall increase in American naval prowess and ability of the captains and crew. America had an extensive supply of men skilled and fit for life in the sea service. If the United States did not take steps to benefit from this position, it would always remain in a state of defense against any offensive moves made by the navy of Great Britain.<sup>50</sup> This situation was noted within the British Parliament, illustrated by comments recorded from debate within the House of Commons on the end of the war. Mr. Ponsonby remarked, “I will venture, to say, that the war for the Orders in Council, the attempt to govern the commerce of America, has hastened

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<sup>48</sup> Jeremy Black, “A British View of the Naval War of 1812.” *Naval History Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (August 2008). <https://www.usni.org/magazines/naval-history-magazine/2008/august/british-view-naval-war-1812>.

<sup>49</sup> Harold and Margaret Sprout, *Rise of American Naval Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), 86-87.

<sup>50</sup> William Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Essay on the Necessity of Improving Our National Forces* (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1819), 54-55.



the progress of that country towards being a great manufacturing and a great naval power, by at least a century.”<sup>51</sup> This is considerable notice by a nation built upon the premise and proven capability of its navy as an instrument of global influence.

The skill and determination of Perry and his force during the Battle of Lake Erie did more to raise the reputation and stature of the young American Navy than the famous battles on the high seas during the War of 1812. Yet, perhaps more important from a perspective of participation on the global stage, the combined actions of the U.S. Navy on the lakes and the Atlantic together positioned the United States as a maritime nation and naval power after the War of 1812. A notable editor of the period remarked in 1815 in response to the proceedings in Congress over the victories on Lake Erie and the “thunder of the *Constitution*” in how they “contributed greatly to raise the reputation of the American Navy to its present elevation,” and asserted, “a well-appointed naval armament, is the safest, cheapest and surest defense and protection of our maritime rights: the most infallible guarantee for free trade.”<sup>52</sup>

President James Madison acknowledged a similar sentiment in his address to the U. S. Congress in February 1815, “Experience has taught us that a certain degree of preparation for war is not only indispensable to avert disasters in the onset, but affords the best security for the continuance of peace.”<sup>53</sup> A. T. Mahan noted in the final words of his work on the War of 1812 that as a result of the outcome of the conflict, “the nation has taken its place among the Powers of the earth.”<sup>54</sup> With this new place among the great naval powers of the world and a popular

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<sup>51</sup> Debate in the Commons Chamber, *Address on the Treaty of Peace with America*, 11 April 1815, vol. 30 cc484-544 (United Kingdom).

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Desilver, ed., *Commodore Perry or the Battle of Erie; Containing a Full and Accurate Report of the Proceedings of Congress*, iii.

<sup>53</sup> *Annals*, 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session (February 18, 1815), 255-256.

<sup>54</sup> A. T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, 437.

enthusiasm for growing and strengthening the Navy, the United States needed to take proper steps to ensure the professional handling of this force moving forward. Discussion and debate on this issue began soon after the conclusion of the War of 1812, but would take decades to see any real steps taken toward this goal.

Gerard Fiennes wrote in his acclaimed work, *Sea Power and Freedom*, about the use of the sea as a highway of commerce and the critical task of the navy is to keep it free and open for use during a crisis. He observes that the Royal Navy had for centuries done its duty in keeping the sea lanes open, and in so doing, “play[ed] its destined part in promoting the welfare of mankind.”<sup>55</sup> In the period following 1815, the British Navy carried the mantle of this role for much of the modern world, thus ensuring Pax Britannica. However, even in the role of protector of the sea lanes of trade for the world, the Royal Navy still operated much the same as it did during the Napoleonic Wars with regard to strategic thinking of its leadership. Officer training and development had not changed from the process begun in the seventeenth century, with young boys beginning their training at an age barely older than ten years and rising through the ranks, testing along the way for promotion and greater responsibility.<sup>56</sup> They still used the “Fighting Instructions” as the basis for all tactical maneuvers of ships at sea – the manual of signals used by the Royal Navy as early as 1653 and updated on various occasions over the decades.<sup>57</sup> Even as recently as 1816, in an update to earlier changes offered by Nelson himself as early as 1805 on the eve of Trafalgar and then updated on three additional occasions prior to

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<sup>55</sup> Gerard Fiennes, *Sea Power and Freedom* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1918), 18.

<sup>56</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 506-507.

<sup>57</sup> Dear and Peter Kemp, eds. *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095817439>.

1816 showed the continuing argument over the tactics of naval warfare in the Age of Sail.<sup>58</sup> Still, the discussion and education remained focused at the tactical level, even within a navy capable of projecting force to support an empire and global maritime commerce for the community of nations.

Things were different after 1815. Historian Stephan Budiansky noted, “The war had heralded the rise of not only a new naval power but a new kind of naval warfare, more professional and less chivalric, based more on technical mastery and less on heroics.”<sup>59</sup> The continued reliance of the Royal Navy on practice and procedures of the past did not go unnoticed, as declared by *The Naval Chronicle’s* Albion, saying in 1815, “Soon will the rising greatness of this distant empire (and its distance is, perhaps, fortunate for Europe) astonish the nations who have looked on with wonder, and seen the mightiest efforts of Britain, at the era of her greatest power, so easily parried, so completely foiled.”<sup>60</sup> This embarrassment motivated critics from Parliament to voice their disagreement over the manner in which the Navy carried out the war, arguing those in the Admiralty were, “stuck in the past, failing to keep pace with technical advances, and honoring tradition and bureaucratic ritual over modern practicalities.”<sup>61</sup> The Royal Navy’s system of guild-like apprenticeship of officer development and training worked well to produce officers with superior skills in navigation, ship handling, and basic naval tactics. However, the system hindered its ability to develop officers with a strategic mindset. This system, the same used by the Royal Navy for the last 200 years, lacked a centralized

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Julian S. Corbett, *Fighting Instructions 1530-1816* (1905; repr., Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1971), 335-338.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Budiansky, *Perilous Fight: America’s Intrepid War with Britain on the High Seas, 1812-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 357.

<sup>60</sup> James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur, eds., *Naval Chronicle 33, January to June 1815* (1815; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 296.

<sup>61</sup> Budiansky, *Perilous Fight*, 358.

institution with a curriculum focused on developing a higher level of thinking in strategy, naval matters, and national objectives illustrative of a modern system of professional education and training for senior officers.

In the era following the great wars at sea of the previous decades leading up to 1815, both the navies of Great Britain and the United States somewhat faded to the background as elements of power projection in support of national interests or objectives. Although naval actions were part of the American Civil War and in the Crimea for Britain, the influence of those conflicts on the navies were more operational than strategic in nature regarding development of naval thought, with the exception of the impact steam-powered warships had on operations in the Crimea against Russia. For example, in that war, “steam battleships provided an unequalled strategic command of the Black Sea and the Baltic, despite the presence of powerful Russian sailing battlefleets.”<sup>62</sup> While the U. S. Navy played a more significant role in the Civil War, the Royal Navy in the Crimean War provided the all-important capability to sustain British operations and to blockade Russian ports.<sup>63</sup> This dynamic would take a further dramatic step forward in the latter nineteenth century.

British naval officer and author, Admiral Sir Reginald N. Custance, writing under the pen name “Barfleur,” (the name of a second-class battleship he commanded between 1895-1897) authored the work, *Naval Policy: A Plea for the Study of War* (1907). The work is a collection of articles that appeared in some of the prominent newspapers and magazines in London in the early 1900’s. Custance argues in his commentary that there were two schools of naval thought – the historical and the matériel. The historical school, Custance explained, adhered to the premise

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<sup>62</sup> Andrew Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia, 1853-56*, 2d ed. (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 349.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

that studying tactics and strategy through history were essential to gaining a true understanding of the art of war at sea and on land. The matériel school did not place faith in these lessons but placed all their effort into the development of the matériel items of a navy – ships, armor, weapons, etc.<sup>64</sup> Although much would still occur in the realm of naval development in the second half of the nineteenth century, the faith in the matériel, or physical capability, school took the lead. The lessons argued by Custance in the early twentieth century that the historical school should drive naval development were based, in part, on the manner in which navies and nations approached development in the closing decades of the previous century. The critical lesson he stressed, that those in the 1870s and beyond would fail to adapt, was not simply to build new ships, but to determine the purpose for the ships the navies would need. This issue would form the center of many debates in the United States and in Great Britain surrounding the turn of the twentieth century.

Although at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Royal Navy was the preeminent naval force of the time while the American Navy was still in its infant stage of development, it can be noted that the rest of that century was transformative in many ways.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the century the American Navy continued along a developmental path of peaks and valleys in growth, capability, and maturity. However, even Robert Albion noted, “They were able to handle pirates, Mexicans, the fringes of the French fleet and the tough little Confederate Navy, but were no match for Britain’s mighty Royal Navy.”<sup>66</sup> However, that would all change. By end of the nineteenth century, the United States was a colonial world power following its victory in the

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<sup>64</sup> Admiral Sir Reginald N. Custance, *Naval Policy: A Plea for the Study of War* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1907), vii-viii.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976), 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy*, 1.

Spanish-American War. Historian George Herring noted, “the War of 1898 also marked the beginning of what would come to be called the American Century.”<sup>67</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Great White Fleet of four American squadrons of steel battleships circumnavigated the globe – the first of its kind in history – as a symbol of American power projection capability.

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<sup>67</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 336.

### Chapter 3

#### Changing National Interests and Thoughts on Policy

The early 1870s was a slow period in the development of the navies of Great Britain and the United States; however, there were still events in the world of which some naval professionals took notice. World events would wield considerable influence over the direction for naval development, thus it was important that navies were represented by educated personnel to observe these events and make recommendations to leadership for naval requirements in ships and training. In Europe, the Franco-Prussian War, fought between July 1870 and January 1871, was a short conflict but it had a significant impact. Although Britain was not directly involved, it did pay close attention to the outcome of the conflict between two major continental powers, those being Britain's traditional enemy, France, and former ally of Britain in the war against Napoleon Bonaparte, Prussia. Much like the Crimean War in the 1850s, the Franco-Prussian War was mainly a land conflict, illustrating how "In this British Century of Pax Britannica, the lack of naval battles was a reminder that land warfare in Europe still prevailed."<sup>1</sup>

The countries on the European continent shared mutual borders, and thus were required to spend more to maintain large armies for their defense. France, at the time, had the second largest empire in the world and the second largest navy behind that of Great Britain. The French were in the process of modernizing their fleet using the new technologies of steam power and iron. The Prussian Navy was no competition in size and capability against the French Navy, for the Prussians only started modernizing to ironclads in the mid-1860s. However, neither navy was able to put any of their new vessels to much use in the war as much of the activity consisted of

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<sup>1</sup> *Naval Encyclopedia*, "French Navy 1870," <https://naval-encyclopedia.com/industrial-era/french-navy-1870.php>

blockade operations. Only one engagement between vessels from the two navies occurred and it was fought to a draw in the waters off Cuba.<sup>2</sup>

The results of the Franco-Prussian War varied, but one of the most notable was the symbolic and political alteration of the community of Europe. Michael Rowe noted, “Geopolitically the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War was massive. It led directly to the creation of the German Empire, Continental Europe’s most powerful state with Berlin replacing Paris as the focal point of global politics.”<sup>3</sup> This change created a lasting antagonism between the French and the newly unified Germans and a rivalry that ultimately would lead to the onset of the First World War. In contrast, the rivalry between France and Germany created an opportunity for the once long-time enemies of Britain and France to look to each other in a different light that eventually ended in an alliance against Germany. This also signified a change in the naval threat to Britain and what would become a new naval armaments race.<sup>4</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States was in the midst of Reconstruction following the Civil War. American resources and political effort were focused on repairing the physical and emotional damage throughout the eastern states in the aftermath of the war. This was an enormous undertaking considering the required mending of cultural and philosophical differences along with the loss of 750,000 Americans on both sides of the conflict.<sup>5</sup> The energy consumed during Reconstruction to bring the two sections of the country together again was immense. This fact impacted the nation in many areas, but most significant was on any further

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Rowe, “The Franco-Prussian War 150 Years on: A conflict that shaped the modern state,” King’s College London, July 17, 2020, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/the-franco-prussian-war-150-years-on>.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended the Peace: The Road to 1914* (New York: Random House, 2013), 78.

<sup>5</sup> Guy Gugliotta, “New Estimate Raises Civil War Death Toll,” April 2, 2012, *The New York Times*.



aspirations for growth beyond the existing national borders. Instead, the United States focused its expansion efforts to the western frontier. Some historians argue that “this did not mean that Americans were inward-looking or isolationist, [but] just the opposite...in which Americans closely followed foreign affairs and increasingly viewed themselves as propagators of ‘civilization’ from Europe to the wider world.”<sup>6</sup> However, beyond the continued American interest in the Far East, the predominance of American activity and attention was focused on conquering the western frontier and consolidating the internal borders of the country.

During this same period, the world was in the midst of what many call the Second Industrial Revolution. It was in this Second Revolution when the “limited and localized successes” of the first were extended “to a much broader range of activities and products...[and] witnessed the growth in some industries of huge economies of scale and throughput.”<sup>7</sup> Advances in technology occurred in many fields, and most of them held significant meaning or influence for the advancement of naval warfare. Some of these included steel production, chemistry, electricity, transportation, production engineering, and information technology.<sup>8</sup> Some historians acknowledge the impact of these developments “profoundly changed”<sup>9</sup> naval warfare. Developments in specific aspects within these fields combined with the new capabilities for large-scale construction enabled nations to build a new kind of warship made of steel, powered by steam-driven engines, and armed with more powerful guns capable of firing at extended ranges. By the early twentieth century, these ships would have the ability to communicate over

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<sup>6</sup> Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 161.

<sup>7</sup> Joel Mokyr, *The Second Industrial Revolution, 1870-1914* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1998), 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-12.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Phelps Hall and Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *A History of England and the British Empire* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1946), 653.

long distances using wireless radio communications. Such was the range of impact of the Second Industrial Revolution on the field of naval warfare.

How this impact would play out regarding influence on national interests where naval forces and operations are concerned would vary from one nation to the next. Technological developments from the Industrial Revolution helped fuel change in the geopolitical situation among the major powers of the world. Michael Mann remarked how, “The late nineteenth-century science of geopolitics also systemized [the] pursuit of ‘national interests,’”<sup>10</sup> among the major powers of Europe. Mann notes four “vital national interests,” as defined by geopoliticians of the era:

1. Above all else, to defend the territorial integrity of the realm.
2. To extend control over territory by formal geopolitical imperialism, or by securing it as friendly all or client state.
3. To make use of the nineteenth-century revolution in extensive power to establish a global colonial and naval sphere of strategic control.
4. To guarantee the first three by brandishing economic and military power within the system of Powers.<sup>11</sup>

The influence of this period in history on the definition of national interests is significant. The long period of relative calm among the major powers of the world was coming to an end. The definitions of national interests noted by Mann signify an acknowledgement of the importance of territorial control. He notes, “National interests were served by militarism and empire. The map room became the hub of diplomacy and high command...to bring the mainly economic and military resources of their territories to bear on those of other powers.”<sup>12</sup> From where would these military resources come? What would they look like and how would they be

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 2, *The Rise of Classes and Nation States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 746.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 747.

used? These are some of the questions that would be discussed by all of the major powers, whether by design or default, in the decades to come.

Each of these events influenced the shaping of national interests in Britain and America in different ways. This was demonstrated throughout the various realms of government in each nation, yet most are not the focus of this work. What is important here is how that influence shaped national interests in the areas of defense and foreign affairs. This is demonstrated by the level of interest among the people on the importance of these affairs. It is demonstrated by the debate in the halls of Congress and Parliament over the purpose and need for a navy, and by the topics of discussion among naval officers on each side of the Atlantic over how to use a navy. Britain and the United States would take different routes toward answering some of the questions surrounding naval development in this period – meaning the order in which the physical transformation versus the intellectual transformation took place. The direction in which national interests were heading in 1870 would help shape the debate in the decades to come for naval transformation on several levels.

### The U. S. Navy in the Post-Civil War Era

The Civil War had a tremendous impact on the United States in many ways. Although it was an internal conflict, there were international implications both during and in the immediate aftermath of the war. President Abraham Lincoln used the Monroe Doctrine to warn Europeans against interfering in the war in America and in the revolution in Mexico against French ambitions. This measure gave confidence to the U.S. government that there would be no outside intervention from Europe, and enabled momentum to westward expansion in the years following

the war.<sup>13</sup> Andrew Lambert noted, “As the United States focused on closing the internal frontier, harnessing domestic resources and developing industrial power, the navy slipped out of sight.”<sup>14</sup> Lambert also remarked how “British observers recognized US power was based on military and industrial mobilization, rather than naval capability.”<sup>15</sup>

When wars end, the need for the large military forces that fought the war also ends. Therefore, the demobilization of the Army and Navy after the war was inevitable, but it was not accomplished to the same standard across both forces. One area this was most evident was in the level of spending. The federal defense budget in 1861 was just \$36.4 million, but rose dramatically each of the next four years to \$437.9 million, \$663.6 million, \$781.5 million, and finally over \$1.17 billion in 1865. This represented a rise in the percent of the total federal budget devoted to defense of forty-five percent to almost ninety percent in each of the succeeding years of the war. In 1866, the amount and percent devoted to defense did drop, but still remained at over \$343 million and sixty-four percent of the federal budget. Federal spending on defense remained strong in the next several years not falling below \$100 million until 1871.<sup>16</sup>

The dissimilar level of demobilization and focus on the western frontier can be seen in a review of the naval budget from the same period. In the years 1861 to 1865, the budget of the United States Navy was just over \$23 million, almost \$56 million, over \$145 million, \$118 million, and \$124 million, respectively. These amounts reflect a varying percentage of the total defense budget in those years beginning at sixty-three percent in 1861, but dropping to just under

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<sup>13</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 97.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 296.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *The Legacy of the Civil War*, Rick Beard and Richard Rabinowitz, The National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/features/waso/cw150th/reflections/legacy/index.html>.

thirteen percent in 1862, rising to almost twenty-two percent in 1863, eighteen percent in 1864, and just barely ten percent in 1865. However, in 1866, the Navy budget barely broke the \$2 million mark representing just .006 percent of the defense budget. In the next six years, the Navy budget combined for a total of just over \$114 million. Succeeding years followed a similar path with the budget only finally breaking the \$100 million threshold in 1898 and then not making that mark again until 1905 when the annual budget finally remained above \$100 million.<sup>17</sup>

This drop in defense spending on the Navy can be attributed to the money being prioritized to the Army to carry out its mission to provide security and protection to the westward expansion which included operations to subdue the Native American Indian nations of the American West. The results were dire for the Navy. At the end of the Civil War, the United States Navy was one of the largest and most powerful naval forces in the world with a fleet of “more than six hundred ships, fifty thousand men, and extensive combat experience with new shot, shell, and armored vessels.”<sup>18</sup> The drastic drop in naval spending signaled a drop in the interest and desire for a credible American naval force. As a result, “By the end of 1870, this force had shrunk to less than 200 vessels...[but in] reality, the shrinkage was even greater, for many of those vessels were worn out or otherwise unfit for service.”<sup>19</sup>

Another critical issue influencing the decline of the U. S. Navy after the Civil War is how it lost its identity among the people of the nation. Union Army soldiers were remembered everywhere by everyone for their role in the great land battles of the war in places like Antietam,

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<sup>17</sup> Konstantin F. Wild, “Budget of the US Navy: 1794 to 2014,” Naval History and Heritage Command, August 23, 2017, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/b/budget-of-the-us-navy-1794-to-2004.html>.

<sup>18</sup> William M. Fowler, Jr., *Under Two Flags: The American Navy in the Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 303.

<sup>19</sup> Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 165-166.

Fredericksburg, Shiloh, and Gettysburg that generated romantic images of bravery and honor. Union Army veterans were sought after for many positions of elected office, and as such carried a large amount of political clout. This was not the case with those who served in the Navy. Sailors were a forgotten breed, and the admirals, unlike their Army counterparts, remained unknown to most Americans. Even Admiral David G. Farragut, the hero of Mobile Bay, remained out of the public eye, never ran for office, and never published his memoirs.<sup>20</sup>

Why was there such a drastic change in the interest for a navy? For years after the War of 1812, stories of American naval heroes were still popular among the population and the members of the government. The popularity of the Navy in those years enabled the increase in size and further professional development of the Navy in a variety of ways. As early as 1828, in his report to Congress, the Secretary of the Navy, Samuel L. Southard, presented a plan for the formal establishment of the Navy in peacetime including the proposal for number of ships by class, personnel structure and pay, and for a naval school. Southard sought through his proposed plan, “that what Congress had sanctioned for the army would meet approbation when applied to the navy, the situation and services of the latter being such as to justify equality with the former.”<sup>21</sup>

Most observers who follow political debate and the trends of society understand public support for national defense ebbs and flows with the passage of time. The members of Congress understand this, and it was no different in the nineteenth century than it is today. So, although the Navy did grow in size and capability over the decades of the mid-1800’s, it took constant attention and action by those in the Navy leadership to keep the needs of the service on the docket for discussion and debate in the halls of the U. S. Government. Samuel Southard’s report

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<sup>20</sup> Fowler, *Under Two Flags*, 303-304.

<sup>21</sup> A Plan for a Naval Peace Establishment Of the United States, Communicated to the Senate, January 15, 1828, 20<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., No. 346.

to Congress in 1836 illustrates this effort as he continued the fight to establish a school for new naval officers as he stated, “In again presenting it to the Senate, the committee are influenced by a strong and decided conviction of its indispensable necessity to the public interests, and to the honor, usefulness and efficiency of the navy...The nature and situation of the naval service exhibit strongly the necessity for the proposed measure.”<sup>22</sup>

Southard went on to lay out the importance of the Navy and naval officers in the service to the nation. In making his case, Southard not only identifies the primary mission of importance to the growth and development of the nation the Navy was performing in this period, but also points to the importance of officer education and development. This case would come to bear again in the future when the professional development of the Navy’s senior officers would come to the forefront of the discussion on naval education. Southard stated,

Our navy visits every land and every ocean. It protects a commerce at this moment as *valuable* as that of any other nation...In the protection of this commerce, our naval officers are often brought in contact with the governments and official agents of every civilized nation...They are, indeed, our national representatives in all other countries, and from them much of the estimate of us, as to our manners, intelligence, and character as a nation, must be drawn. It is not possible that their duties can be performed in the manner in which we should desire them to be performed, without science, intelligence and knowledge... But how can [this] be accomplished by them without proper practical and useful education? and when are they to receive this education?

The only mode by which it can be secured is by the establishment of a school, which shall combine literary and scientific instruction with practical performance of a portion of their duties...and by connecting with the school one or more small vessels, in which they may be compelled...to perform, in turn, all the services of the common sailor, with those, also, which belong to office and command.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, in 1845, Congress approved the funding and actions required to establish a naval school for the training and education of new naval midshipmen, and acknowledged such a

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<sup>22</sup> On the Expediency and Necessity for the Establishment of a Naval School or Academy, Communicated to the Senate, May 14, 1836, 24<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., No. 637.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

school, “will go far to renovate and improve the American navy.”<sup>24</sup> The school would be established at the former Army post, Fort Severn, in Annapolis, Maryland. Secretary Bancroft reported the assent of President James K. Polk in the plan, and noted, “the President expects such supervision and management as shall make of them an exemplary body, of which the country may be proud.”<sup>25</sup> Moving forward to the period of the Civil War, former Secretary of State Edward Everett spoke at the graduation of the Naval Academy Class of 1863. Everett, it should be noted, was the speaker before President Lincoln just six months later when Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address. At Annapolis that day in May 1863, Everett spoke optimistically about the future of the Navy in the aftermath of the war and upon restoration of the Union stating, “the United States will take their place in the family of nations as a great naval Power, second to no other that navigates the ocean.”<sup>26</sup>

Such was the start of professional naval education in the United States, albeit at the level of junior officers, that began an institutional acknowledgement of the professionalism and national commitment to further development of a standing naval force. That naval force demonstrated its capability during the course of the Civil War, proving invaluable against the Confederacy. The strength of the U. S. economy in the period since the War of 1812 provided the resources necessary to grow the Navy, enabling it to provide a strong force of river gunboats for operations in the Western theater, and a fleet of vessels to blockade Southern ports. The stranglehold placed on the Confederacy through these operations and others were instrumental in

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<sup>24</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1845* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1845), 647.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 843.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Everett, “An Address Delivered at the Annual Examination of the United States Naval Academy,” May 28, 1863, Special Collections and Archives, Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), 22.



the final Union victory. This capability would not have been possible without the political and economic maneuvering of the Lincoln administration with public and private sector stakeholders to provide the necessary resources and industrial capability to build and employ such a force.<sup>27</sup>

The unfortunate reality of societies and political administrations is that they constantly change their priorities and interests. The U. S. Navy, once a large and powerful force in 1865, became a hollow shell of what it once was in a new world of dramatically reduced budgets and declining interest. Reverting back to its pre-war mission focused on protecting American maritime commerce, the U. S. Navy also lost interest in its own technological innovation and development. As a result, efforts toward new development in ship construction and armaments were delayed until the 1880s in favor of continued construction of wooden ships powered primarily by sail. Maintenance of existing ships slowed down until vessels literally rotted while at berth in their home ports. By 1871, there were barely fifty vessels still in commission and capable of performing their mission.<sup>28</sup>

The decline in American naval power continued into the 1880s, finally reaching a low point in 1882, “when the entire naval force numbered only thirty-one vessels in commission, all but four of which were built entirely of wood...[with] their sole usefulness...in displaying the national flag upon the seas and in the harbors of the commercial world in times of peace.”<sup>29</sup> This was a troublesome position for the United States moving into the latter portion of the nineteenth century. Events around the globe continued to raise the stakes for the United States to become involved in the competition for imperial gains by other nations of the world. As one set of

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<sup>27</sup> Jonathan R. Dull, *American Naval History, 1607-1865: Overcoming the Colonial Legacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 112-113.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>29</sup> Willis J. Abbot, *The Naval History of the United States* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1896), 1014-1015.

historians put it, “involvement in Great Power confrontations was inevitable given America’s determination to defend what it considered its special sphere of interest in the Western Hemisphere and its access to world markets.”<sup>30</sup> Many Americans preferred an isolationist stance with the ability to use the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to separate America from everyone else. However, the potential for damage to, or at the very least, limitations, to American economic prosperity were too great to maintain such a position for very long. The role of the United States in the world community was rapidly changing.

Moving into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the United States began to realize they were now part of the circle of power among the nations of the world economy. In this position, the United States needed, “to develop the diplomatic and military instruments needed to protect its interests from the other Great Powers.”<sup>31</sup> Compared to the naval capability of the other Great Powers, the United States was far behind. Part of the reason for this predicament was poor fiscal management and lack of strategic vision among the leadership of the Navy. The failure of leadership both in the Navy and the government to realize a growing and developing nation the size of the United States of America would not by default take a place among the leading economic powers of the world is short-sighted at best and negligent at worst. This failure to look to the outside of national borders and instead concentrate only on internal aspirations and objectives helped render the Navy impotent by the 1870s.

The failure to continue on the path toward technological innovation and reduced naval budgets were also important ingredients in the decline of the Navy. A key step taken in this respect carried long-term implications on naval operations and policy. That step was General

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew Gibson and Arthur Donovan, *The Abandoned Ocean: A History of United States Maritime Policy* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 89.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

Order No. 131, 18 June 1869, outlining steps to economize the use of coal in the Navy, prioritizing the use of sail over steam power while the Royal Navy was beginning its permanent move away from canvas. Although the order was issued under the authority of Secretary of the Navy, Adolph E. Borie, the de facto power behind the directive was Admiral David Porter. Porter did not appreciate the growing influence of engineering officers within the Navy – an attitude held by many senior officers.<sup>32</sup>

The intent behind General Order No. 131 was to reduce costs on the use of coal to power U. S. naval vessels. Directives within the order called for vessels to cruise only under sail with the guise that not only would this save money, but also train young officers, “in the most important duties of their profession.”<sup>33</sup> This applies to the skills of seamanship - a task held in the utmost priority by Admiral Porter. The order also directed that all vessels be fitted, or re-fitted with full sail-power – an extraordinary cost in and of itself – in order for the full sail order to be implemented. Commanders were required to account and report for any time spent under steam vice sail along with the steaming specifics on coal consumption, speed, distance, wind conditions, and more specifying that using coal was for emergencies only. To add emphasis to this point, the order warned commanders that, “They must not be surprised, if they fail to carry out the spirit of this order, if the coal consumed is charged to their account.”<sup>34</sup> With regard to this last remark, Robert Albion noted, “The ‘spirit of this order,’ unfortunately, dominated naval policy for years to come.”<sup>35</sup> As a result, this anchored progressive naval thought in the operations

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<sup>32</sup> Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy*, 200-202.

<sup>33</sup> Department of the Navy, General Order No. 131, “Economizing the Use of Coal,” June 18, 1869, in *General Orders and Circulars Issued by the Navy Department from 1863 to 1887*, compiled by M. S. Thompson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 83.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy*, 202.

of the past instead of aggressively moving toward the future. This delayed institutional thinking on the development of steam-powered vessels, the modernizing of the fleet, and the influence of that development on naval tactics and strategy.

The Navy leadership tried to rationalize the closure of overseas coaling stations in favor of switching the fleet back to sail as a cost-savings measure. They claimed the money saved by closing of the stations and less reliance on coal for fueling the vessels would more than compensate for the expense of the reversion of ships back to sail. They also tried to highlight the experience and training young officers and crew could obtain by sailing their ships as the Navy of old. This, the Secretary of the Navy claimed, was, “an advantage whose value, as well as that of others resulting from the release from dependence upon steam alone as a motive power, can hardly be estimated in money.”<sup>36</sup>

Albion continued his analysis of the fiscal irresponsibility of the navy leadership of the period, arguing that even with a reduced budget as previously outlined, the Navy could have achieved a much higher level of operational efficiency had they not wastefully spent the funds allotted. He noted that much of the budget went to pay for a much greater number of officers than the fleet required. Other areas of wasteful spending included the constant maintenance required to keep wooden ships afloat, and converting new steam-powered vessels to fully-rigged sailing vessels. Finally, Albion noted how the reasoning for outfitting multiple inappropriate vessels for stations abroad when better, more capable, and more respectable vessels would have been better missed the opportunity for those ships to gain “respect abroad as potential fighting ships and commerce raiders. Instead, the Navy was the butt of international jokes.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1869* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), 42.

<sup>37</sup> Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy*, 203.

These efforts to hold back the Navy from moving forward toward new technology and new missions, including even reversing its course to the days of old, were primarily driven by what were referred to as “an ultraconservative professional group within the Service.”<sup>38</sup> This group were the senior line officers of the Navy with Admiral Porter as their chief advocate and leader. Men who felt themselves to be the aristocracy of the Navy and subject to no other department officer in the Service. However, the rise of steam power signified a rise in stature of the engineers almost to the level of the line officers. Secretary Borie was more a figurehead only in his role with the Department leaving Porter in operational command per se and free to take his actions against the steam advocates. Secretary Robeson’s assumption of the office following Borie ended the role for Porter, but only for a short while. In 1870, when Admiral Farragut died, Porter assumed the role of Admiral of the Navy – similar to the Chief of Naval Operations today – where he was able to carry on his influence on naval policy.<sup>39</sup>

The Navy was foundering in the decade plus following the end of the Civil War. The national interests lay in the western frontier and Congress was indifferent to what direction the Navy took. Naval historian Charles Oscar Paullin wrote a series of articles on the administration of the Navy. In his writings on the period of the 1870s, he noted that, although Congress approved funds to the Navy for basic maintenance of the existing fleet, they did not provide authorization for any new construction, and showed no concern for the continuing decay of the ships on hand. He remarked, “Questions of reconstruction, finance, and party success engrossed its attention. The Democratic Party was especially committed to the policy of economy in the management of naval affairs.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, 177.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-180.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin’s History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911*, 337.

The Navy itself lacked the leadership to take control of the sinking ship, as it were, and take the proper steps in damage control to right the situation. Even Admiral Porter, who did damage himself with his earlier policies, sounded off in his reports included with the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy on the problems and weaknesses of the Navy. A key problem impacting all this was that “The period of 1869-1881 was one of differences of opinion among both naval amateurs and experts.”<sup>41</sup> Multiple revolutions were underway in the field of naval science including contests between the various types of material used to construct ships, means of motive power, armored or unarmored, and new types of weapons. Something or someone had to take control of the chaos and indecision.<sup>42</sup>

These contests or arguments over direction for the Navy required a sound body of professionals to consider what was the best direction to pursue, and then take those recommendations to the civilian leadership for the funding. However, it was not just the need to obtain funding to build new ships, but the mindset for making the right decisions for using those ships. Too many decision makers were thinking at the tactical level versus the strategic level, for most involved in the naval profession had never operated themselves at a higher level requiring this kind of mindset. A new breed of naval professionals were coming to the forefront to pick up this banner. Jonathan Dull stated it well in pointing out the direction to come, saying, “With a strong economy, an assertive government, a supportive public, and leaders and thinkers like Dewey, Mahan, Luce, Sampson, and Schley formed by the Civil War, the [Navy] finally was ready to overcome the limitations imposed by its colonial legacy.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Dull, *American Naval History, 1607-1865*, 124.

### The Royal Navy in the Later Nineteenth Century

While the United States was involved in various conflicts and preoccupied with the task of westward expansion in North America over the course of the nineteenth century, Great Britain experienced a period of relative peace following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. The Pax Britannica, as it is called, was a time of extended peace in Europe with no major conflicts for Britain for almost one hundred years. True, there were some minor conflicts, but nothing of comparison to the great wars with France of the previous period, nor the Great War that was yet to come. However, what is most significant about this period for the Royal Navy is that “it was then that the modern Navy took shape, and it was during the same epoch that British sea power exercised a wider influence than has ever been seen in the history of maritime empires.”<sup>44</sup>

For most of the latter half of the nineteenth century, during the period of Pax Britannica, Great Britain chose to pick wisely where to commit to military action. Throughout much of this era the British military either maintained peace and order or carefully positioned itself to avoid over-commitment where the national interests were not at stake. Mis-placed confidence in treaties with Russia, threats of action against France, and the belief in British capability to uphold bold statements would blow back in the face of British diplomats and members of Parliament. The perception was that playing a non-interventionist role in affairs on the European continent would allow Great Britain to focus more on domestic reform and maintenance of the worldwide empire connected by maritime trade. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 changed this perception. In swift measure, Britain’s long-time enemy France was soundly defeated by the Prussians, and in so doing, changed the landscape of European power.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *The Nation and the Navy*, 223.

<sup>45</sup> Waldemar B. Campbell, “The Franco-Prussian War and British Military Reform,” *The Historian*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring, 1942), 149-151.

One of the most disturbing observations of the Franco-Prussian War to the British lay in the ability of the Prussians to rapidly mobilize an army large enough to subdue the French in such short time. Due to the many commitments in locations around the globe either to maintain the holdings of the British Empire or in support of various trade and defense agreements, the British Army was stretched quite thin. It was noted that taking a count of all British troops in those locations would barely reach 100,000 men. Yet, the armies of Austria, Russia, and Germany could each muster over a million strong on their own.<sup>46</sup>

The same concerns existed on the naval front. Although the extent of naval operations in the war between Prussia and France was minimal, the outcome of the war still influenced the world naval balance. The fear existed in Britain over whether the newly unified Germany would gain control of the majority of the French fleet and allow the Germans to “launch on vast designs of empire,”<sup>47</sup> threatening British holdings around the world. The overseas maritime trade was the lifeline to the stability of the British homeland, and must be protected. As it stood in this period, “the external trade of the United Kingdom in 1870 was greater than that of France, Germany and Italy combined, and over three times that of the United States.”<sup>48</sup> Naval Historian Arthur Herman argued, “that empire too would not have existed without the Royal Navy.”<sup>49</sup> Yet, this maritime commerce enterprise did not only provide for Great Britain. Again, Herman argued, “The Navy...guaranteed the safety of a global economic system, a new world order based on British

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>48</sup> Lord William Strang, *Britain in World Affairs: The Fluctuation in Power and Influence from Henry VIII to Elizabeth II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1961), 133.

<sup>49</sup> Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 463.



values, along with the gold standard.”<sup>50</sup> This broad and extensive empire, both at sea and ashore, came at an enormous cost, both fiscal and physical. As a result of this broad empire, a sense of strategic vulnerability stimulated naval strategic thinking.

The financial cost for “maintaining a navy strong enough to protect the entire Empire, practically [fell] upon the taxpayers of the British Islands only.”<sup>51</sup> The colonies paid either a financial contribution or provided various support-in-kind by means of maintaining a local squadron or other kind of base support. Paying for the Navy was not hard to justify in the 1870s, as the popularity of the fleet remained at a very high level among the British population. Some would say of the times, “The British navy had become a self-conscious symbol of the nation itself.”<sup>52</sup> David Howarth noted this enthusiasm held by the British people saying they, “were not particularly proud to have an empire...but they were still intensely proud to have such a navy.”<sup>53</sup> That enthusiasm and esprit de corps flowed just as strongly through the rank and file of the Navy itself, if not more so. Howarth again noted that in the minds of the officers and sailors of the Royal Navy, “it was inconceivable that any foreigner could come near the elegance, precision, confidence and efficiency of British naval seamanship. It was something only the British could do to perfection; or at least, they thought it was.”<sup>54</sup> Although the Navy still carried the pride of the nation wherever its ships carried the Union Jack abroad, there were challenges brewing on the horizon. The period of relative British isolation from European conflict allowed the expenditures on the fleet to at best remain the same in comparison to previous periods of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> E. F. Knight, *Over-Sea Britain: A Descriptive Record of the Geography, the Historical, Ethnological, and Political Development, and the Economic Resources of the Empire* (London: John Murray, 1907), 18.

<sup>52</sup> Herman, *To Rule the Waves*, 466.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 332.

extensive ship building programs and maintenance of hundreds of ships worldwide. However, this would soon come to an abrupt halt.

Britain, basking in the confidence of the strength of the Royal Navy during Pax Britannica, failed in this time to continue the development and growth of her navy, letting naval expenditures languish while watching her former opponents wage war against each other. As noted earlier, the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War changed the balance of power on the European continent, leaving a newly unified German Empire on top. France, in the wake of its defeat at the hands of Prussia, took immediate steps to rebuild her shattered army but soon turned her attention once again to the navy. It did not take her long to rebuild the navy enough to challenge the British once again. In this same time, British support of Turkey in its war against Russia in 1877-1878 rekindled the antagonism between Britain and Russia, while France drifted more to the side of supporting Russia. The people of Great Britain came to the realization of this precarious position in 1884 following the publication of an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.<sup>55</sup>

The *Pall Mall Gazette* was a widely read daily newspaper published in London between 1865-1923. In September 1884, an anonymous article was published by the paper's editor, William T. Stead, entitled, "The Truth about the Navy," laying out all the deficiencies and issues with the capability and readiness of the Royal Navy in carrying out the mission of defending the Empire with the warning, "that our naval supremacy has almost ceased to exist."<sup>56</sup> The author went on to lay out in detail how the British population, trade, wealth, and shipping had all increased extending British positions in all areas almost to the maximum, yet naval expenditures had not increased as well to cover this growth. He highlighted how the competitors to Britain had

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<sup>55</sup> B. B. Schofield, *British Sea Power, Naval Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: B. T. Batsford LTD, 1967), 17.

<sup>56</sup> William T. Stead, ed., "The Truth about the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, September 18, 1884.

increased their own naval expenditures while those of Britain either remained steady or even decreased a slight degree. What really stirred up the population was the author's claim that France, Britain's traditional enemy, was outbuilding Britain in naval construction and on the verge of reaching parity with the Royal Navy. Historian Paul Kennedy remarked, "The revelations of naval weakness...fell like a bomb upon a public already uneasy at the commercial and colonial threats to Britain's world interests."<sup>57</sup> The anxiety of the public over this situation was enough to stir the British government to action, at least for the moment, to increase the budget for naval warships, ordnance, and overseas coaling stations by £5.5 million.<sup>58</sup> However, this was only a temporary delay regarding the greater issue looming on the horizon, as geopolitical activity involving nations like France, Russia, Turkey, and Germany evolved. This concern could be validated further by a response to the anonymous article by a respected member of the naval community and member of the Royal United Services Institute, retired Admiral Sir George Elliot, who strongly supported the claims made regarding the readiness of the navy and the potential threats to Britain identified in the article. Elliot remarked that the article, "contains no exaggeration; on the contrary, in some respects too favorable a view has been taken of the comparative merits of our fleet."<sup>59</sup>

Why was Elliot well qualified to address the claims in the article? In 1859-1860, Admiral Elliot was appointed to serve on the Royal Commission on the Defense of the United Kingdom, charged with examining the state of the defenses of the United Kingdom against attack from a foreign invader by land or sea.<sup>60</sup> This role prepared him to be a credible authority on the claims

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<sup>57</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 178.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> George Elliot, "Admiral Elliot on the Need for Action," *Pall Mall Gazette*, September 26, 1884.

<sup>60</sup> J. M. Collinge, ed. "List of commissions and officials: 1850-1859," in *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, vol. 9, *Officials of Royal Commissions of Inquiry 1815-1870* (London: University of London, 1984), 62.

made in the *Pall Mall Gazette* article. Upon reviewing the information contained in the report of the Commission, it is a remarkable similarity from what was noted in 1860 that still held true in 1884 if not more so! Included in the Commission's report to the House of Commons in February 1860 was a narrative of the technological advances and growth in size of the French Navy, enabling it to eventually surpass the capability of the Royal Navy. The findings also identified the emerging threat contained in the growth and development of the Russian Navy. Following a listing of the numbers and types of vessels in each of these opposing navies was a discussion of the same assets in the Royal Navy for comparison along with the anticipated growth, pending authorizations, in the Navy in the coming year. Included in this laydown of British naval assets was a listing of the deployment of these assets regarding their various areas of responsibility around the world to conduct their mission of support and protection of the extensive British Empire.<sup>61</sup> Although almost twenty-five years before publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and ten years prior to the Franco-Prussian War, the insights of this Commission, as outlined by Lord Clarence Paget, a naval officer and then Secretary to the Admiralty, were accurate in their warning to Parliament of a pending potential crisis given the current course the government was taking in naval affairs. In addition to the worries over the difference in size and capability of the Royal Navy and their potential competitors, there also lurked ideas among some of what the Navy was for, what its operational priority should be, and the importance of everyone in the Navy understanding that purpose and direction. Herein lay the need for professional military/naval education of the senior leadership of the service.

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<sup>61</sup> Supply Committee-Navy Estimates, Lord Clarence Paget, HC Deb. (13 February 1860), vol. 156, col. 965.

There were some missteps by the Commission that later naval strategists pointed out. Captain J. C. R. Colomb wrote about the issues for defense of Great and Greater Britain in 1880. He pointed out how the Commission in 1859-1860 ruled defense of commerce and the food supply of Britain be the responsibility of the Navy, but did not bother to consider “the altered conditions and principles requiring fulfillment to enable naval power to perform the twofold task then and in the future.”<sup>62</sup> Captain Colomb spoke on Britain’s lengthy reign as sovereign of the seas and how they took for granted the Navy’s capability to continue in that role. The faith of the public and the government alike in the ability of the Navy was strong. So much so, it appeared as if “our national naval policy thus became simply a policy of blind trust.”<sup>63</sup> These comments seem to be an extension of earlier sentiment of Captain Colomb when he presented a paper to the Royal Colonial Institute on defense issues. He noted then on how many felt secure in the defense of Britain simply because of the size and power of the Royal Navy to maintain command of the sea. Colomb remarked, “Few realize that the command of the sea can only be maintained by a scientific combination of three things – strategy, purely military force, and purely naval power.”<sup>64</sup> This is to the point that one service cannot be completely successful on its own. He explains, “As a military force is necessary to the support of naval power, and as in our case military force is in its turn dependent upon naval power, the distribution of the one must have reference to that of the other.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Captain J. C. R. Colomb, *The Defense of Great and Greater Britain: Sketches of its Naval, Military, and Political Aspects; Annotated with Extracts from the Discussions They have called forth in the press of Greater Britain*, Foyle Special Collections Library, King’s College London, FC02 JV1019 COL (London: Edward Stanford, 1880), 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Captain J. C. R. Colomb, *Colonial Defense, A paper read before the Royal Colonial Institute, 1873*, Foyle Special Collections Library, King’s College London, FC02 JV1019 COL (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1877), 21.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 27.

The other brother Colomb, Captain Philip H. Colomb, authored the prize-winning essay on naval affairs for the Royal United Service Institution in 1878. In that essay, he addressed what he suggested were the best ways to develop Great Britain's maritime power as it pertained to warships, protection of commerce, personnel manning, and colonial and home defense. Early in the work, Colomb lays out his belief that the British, in their approach to development of naval power, were victims of believing they were subject to the same worldly circumstances or conditions as all other countries. They believed that this similarity extended to the countries having similar features from naval and military perspective. Colomb did not share this same belief. He felt Britain was guilty of disregarding these differences in circumstances, and believing itself liable and susceptible to the same naval and military necessities of any other nation. He even argued that other countries would find it surprising that British naval policy would follow suit with that of other nations.<sup>66</sup>

In his essay, Colomb described and made the case for various courses of action for development of the Navy for its role in the three categories noted at the start. He concluded with a summary of his six recommendations that, if taken, would have radically changed the plan of development for the Royal Navy from its current path. Those recommendations included: 1) prioritize steam power and plan for coaling stations to support this requirement; 2) develop a classification system for ships and reduce the number of the type of ships in the fleet; 3) it is an error to believe armor will not have a future in the navy and just as much an error to believe that super large caliber guns are the armaments of the future; 4) torpedoes will not greatly change

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<sup>66</sup> Captain Philip H. Colomb, "Great Britain's Maritime Power: How Best Developed as Regards: 1. Fighting Ships; 2. Protection of Commerce. 3. Naval, Volunteer, or Supplemental Force. 4. Colonial and Home Defense; the Classes, Armament, and Description of the Vessels Needed; and the Organization Required to Secure a Powerful and Economic Imperial Naval Force." *The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 22, No. 94 (1878), 2.

naval tactics; 5) it is possible to prioritize the needs of a peacetime navy below those of a wartime navy without an increase, and possibly, a decrease in the overall naval budget; and 6) coastal and harbor defense should take a subordinate position in naval planning, and the best use of overseas naval stations is for defense of routes of communication between them and the home islands. Some of these would be taken to heart by other naval planners moving forward, but others would not. Regardless, through his insight and grasp of naval affairs and the principles of naval development, Philip Colomb established himself as one of the important naval thinkers for the pending era of naval transformation.<sup>67</sup>

Parliament, the Navy, and the public were all put on notice of the precarious situation regarding the preparedness and capability shortfalls within the naval arm on at least two formal occasions in 1860 and 1884. The decade of the 1870s produced some influential writings on the purpose of a navy and the need for incorporating some of the technological advances in naval ships made possible through the Industrial Revolution. Many of these works were based on the geopolitical developments taking place around Europe and the outer reaches of the British Empire. Through the influence of these works, combined with the internal political maneuverings between the Admiralty and Parliament, and the growing acknowledgement of the changing look of naval development and naval forces worldwide, were having an impact. Some of the more influential geopolitical developments involved Russia and the old enemy, France.

The concerns over Russia noted by the Commission in 1860 added fuel to this slow burning fire. Ill feelings still remained over the conflict between Russia and Britain in the Crimea in the previous decade. Russian influence in the Balkans, the increasing of the Russian Navy, and strengthening ties with France generated higher levels of interest, even concern, among those in

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

Parliament previously less enthusiastic about increasing the naval budget. The prospect of an alliance between France and any other European nation, or even Russia, could put the Royal Navy, and by default, Britain, in a potentially untenable position. This was, “a situation which could not be contemplated with equanimity, since by tradition British naval policy was based on a two-power standard.”<sup>68</sup> The ever-shifting line-ups of friends and foes was always a factor in diplomatic and foreign relations, as well as an essential consideration in the planning and preparation of military and naval affairs. Monitoring what other nations, friend or not, were doing with regard to military and naval development was crucial to British survival.

Understanding the motivations and interests of other nations and how to respond in pursuit of British interests was important because:

It is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is to be marked out as the eternal ally or the perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.<sup>69</sup>

At least to the public, the concern over actions taken by other nations who potentially could be opponents of Britain in a future conflict appeared real. Still, it would not galvanize Parliament into action to take steps toward rebuilding the navy for a few more years. In the interim, although not yet formalized into policy, Britain had long used a metric of size over quality in building ships for the Navy. This was based on a premise of need to outnumber any other two navies combined. For maintaining and protecting a global empire this was not necessarily a bad metric, but it tended to sacrifice quality for quantity. As a result, “the navy, which looked so invincibly strong, began to have a hidden inherent weakness; its ships were not

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<sup>68</sup> Schofield, *British Sea Power*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Viscount Palmerston, Debate in the Commons Chamber, *Treaty of Adrianople – Charges Against Viscount Palmerston*, 1 March 1848, vol. 97 cc122 (Hansard, UK Parliament).



designed to form a coherent fleet, or to fit a strategic plan for a naval war.”<sup>70</sup> Various factors influenced the naval debate in the late 1880s on the number and type of ships the navy would need. Some argued, “The rise of the *Jeune Ecole* doctrine after 1885 led to the Admiralty’s reappraisal of its strategic options to counter perceived threats posed by [smaller warships and craft] espoused by Theophile Aube, the French Minister of Marine.”<sup>71</sup> In February 1889, the First Sea Lord, Sir Vesey Hamilton, in his report to Parliament on the Naval Defense Bill, “announced the formal adoption of the Two-Power Standard and a new era in naval policy formulation in the Admiralty, in which the wartime duties of the navy would serve as the basis for calculating future shipbuilding programs.”<sup>72</sup>

The Naval Defense Bill (No. 80) was read for a second time to the House of Lords on May 27, 1889, and after some short debate on the issues was agreed upon and forwarded on for Royal Assent. Among the many details contained in this bill, some of the key components laid out the requirements for a naval budget totaling more than £20 million over the next four years to grow the Royal Navy by ten battleships, thirty-eight cruisers, eighteen torpedo boats, and four fast gunboats. This growth would meet the requirement of the Royal Navy being as equally strong as two other opposing fleets combined. The opposing fleets in the discussion included Russia, France, and Germany. This requirement became known as the Two-Power Standard.<sup>73</sup>

The bill, known afterward as the Naval Defense Act, became official with Royal Assent on May 31, 1889. It was an important step toward a new era not only in shipbuilding and

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<sup>70</sup> Howarth, *Sovereign of the Seas*, 331.

<sup>71</sup> Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918* (London: The Boydell Press, 2012), 21.

<sup>72</sup> Robert E. Mullins, *The Transformation of British and American Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era: Ideas, Culture and Strategy* (Chevy Chase, MD: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 159.

<sup>73</sup> Naval Defense Bill (No. 80), HL Deb 27 May 1889, vol. 336 cc1059-1089.

technological advancement for the Royal Navy, but toward how naval policy was developed. The influences and motivations behind development of that policy signified and elevation of naval thought and a strategic mindset among the decision makers in the British Admiralty and the Royal Navy. Although this was an encouraging step toward a new and higher level of thinking among British navalists and the Royal Navy, it would require a dedicated effort by many to nurture this into a more mature process. It would need to be institutionalize in a formal setting with procedures and a manner of ensuring a new breed of senior officers and policy makers would understand the need for and be able to exhibit a professional level of strategic thinking continuously going forward<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Mullins, *The Transformation of British and American Naval Policy*, 159-160.

## Chapter 4

### The Sowing of Seeds for the Intellectual Transformation of American Naval Thought

During the Civil War, the U. S. Naval Academy was temporarily moved from Annapolis to Newport, Rhode Island in case Maryland chose to follow the influence of southern secessionists due to its location as a border state to the Confederacy.<sup>1</sup> In May of 1863, Edward Everett, the famous orator and politician, delivered the address at the graduation, or Annual Examination as it was called in that time, for the Naval Academy.<sup>2</sup> In his address, Everett remarked on loyalty, patriotism, the caliber of education, and the naval profession. He seemed to understand the circumstances facing the Navy during this period when the major land battles of the Civil War overshadowed any actions at sea. Everett noted, “The navy was considered, in times gone by much more than now, as something apart from the sympathies of landsmen...its field of action off on the solitary ocean or on distant shores, and those who belonged to it a class of honorable champions, set apart to peril their lives for the public, rendering indeed, all important service...”<sup>3</sup> In this statement, perhaps Everett was reaching back to the days of the famous engagements by the great frigates of the War of 1812 and their notable captains. At the least, it can be noted as an understanding of the great sacrifice of a life at sea, and the complex task naval officers faced in the performance of their duties far from home. Everett also acknowledged that one day, “the United States will take their place in the family of nations as a great naval Power, second to no other that navigates the ocean.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Cheevers, *The United States Naval Academy, 1845-2020*, ed. Sharon Kennedy (Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, 2020), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Everett, “Address Delivered at the United States Naval Academy, 28 May 1863,” Special Collections & Archives Department, Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

After the Civil War, the Naval Academy returned to its home in Annapolis where the discussion on the role of the Navy and the preparation of naval officers would continue. In an interesting twist in history, just over twenty years later, on the other side of Newport from where Everett made his remarks in 1863, the United States would take a significant step toward rising as a great naval power. On October 6, 1884, with General Order No. 325, Secretary of the Navy William Chandler established the Naval War College on Coasters' Harbor Island, "for an advanced course of professional study for naval officers."<sup>5</sup> Much was yet to happen, though, before the course of instruction began at the Naval War College.

Between the years 1868-1878, Cuba fought its first war for independence from Spain, but did not win the Ten Years' War, as it was called, setting the stage somewhat for another conflict twenty years later. However, one of the more noteworthy events of this war involved the capture by the Spanish of an American blockade runner, *Virginus*, and the efforts taken in response to recover the ship with her passengers and crew. In late October 1873, *Virginus*, flying the American flag and operating in support of Cuban rebels by bringing personnel, arms, and other equipment to the island, was captured by a Spanish corvette. Captain Joseph Fry of *Virginus*, an American, and several other American and British nationals were among the fifty-two prisoners executed by their Spanish captors. The act of the Spanish taking a vessel under the U. S. flag in international waters was deemed outrageous and calls for a military response began upon news of the executions reaching the United States and Britain, with some even talking outright war against Spain.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> US Department of the Navy, General Order No. 325, "Naval War College," October 6, 1884, in *General Orders and Circulars Issued by the Navy Department from 1863 to 1887*, compiled by M. S. Thompson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 236.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Ault, "The Virginus Incident," The Spanish American War, The Spanish American War Centennial Website, October 23, 2022, <https://www.spanamwar.com/virginus>.

Diplomatic efforts led by American Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, were carried out amidst growing sentiment in the American public to take military action against Spain. This attitude was not limited to the public, but also at the highest levels of the U. S. government. The *New York Times* reported, “The feeling of President Grant, and the Cabinet, there is every reason to believe, is harmonious and fully in accord with public sentiment in requiring prompt and absolute reparation for an act which is at once a blot upon civilization of the age, a disgrace to Spain, and an insult to our flag.”<sup>7</sup> The *Richmond Dispatch* reported an un-official statement from the *Times*, “If Americans are to be murdered publicly in Cuba at any time the authorities there may think fit we shall have to take possession of Cuba, a work which will cost us very little trouble.”<sup>8</sup> The problem however, with trying to take Cuba, is that it lies over the sea from the United States, thus requiring a capable and ready Navy to conduct the operation. At the time, this was simply not something the United States Navy could accomplish.

At a cabinet meeting on November 14, 1873, President Grant directed the consolidation of naval forces in Key West, Florida for potential response to Spain in light of the executions of *Virginius* crew. Ships began preparation and movement from all over the Atlantic, but the affair concluded before the fleet could assemble.<sup>9</sup> Cooler heads prevailed in the diplomatic sector, allowing a negotiated settlement among the nations and avoiding further bloodshed. This was indeed fortunate for the United States in more ways than one, for it was not the opportune time for a naval engagement between the forces of the United States and Spain. One simply needed to take note of the Spanish armored vessel in dry dock at the Brooklyn Navy Yard at this same

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<sup>7</sup> “The Case of *Virginius*,” *The New York Times*, editorial, November 9, 1873.

<sup>8</sup> “The Cuban Excitement,” *Richmond Dispatch*, editorial, November 15, 1873.

<sup>9</sup> James T. Rentfrow, *Home Squadron: The U. S. Navy on the North Atlantic Station* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 24.

time. The armaments and other advanced technologies on this ship far surpassed anything in the U. S. fleet at the time. The acknowledgment of how far behind in naval capability the Americans were served as a wake-up call to not only naval officers, but American policymakers as well.<sup>10</sup>

Adding to this concern were the observations and feedback from the fleet exercises in Key West as a result of the assembly order from President Grant. Although intended as a show of force and assembly for potential offensive action against the Spanish, the maneuvers ended up serving as a showcase of the utter lack of preparedness of the Navy on many levels, most of which lay in the ships themselves. In Secretary of the Navy George Robeson's report at the end of 1874, one would not find such evidence in his summary of the outcome of the maneuvers near Key West. Instead, Secretary Robeson glossed over the summary with nothing more than general highlights of what occurred, paying gratifying attention to the officer in charge and how the entire opportunity was "carried out in detail with much skill by Rear-Admiral Case and his officers...with great profit to the whole Navy, instructing a very large number of officers and men in the practice of duties hitherto known to most of them only in theory."<sup>11</sup> Regardless of his desire to improve the Navy, these were words of a political appointee and did not serve the Navy well in revealing the true outcome of the maneuvers near Key West. Those words came from the Admiral of the Navy, David D. Porter.

In his report to the Secretary of the Navy at the end of the year 1874, Admiral David Porter gave a thorough review of the many areas where the United States needed to improve the quality and caliber of the ships of their fleet. His comments in the beginning of the report were stark yet professional in saying, "I regret to say that the fleet showed itself very unsuitable for

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>11</sup> US Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1874* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), 12.

war purposes.”<sup>12</sup> Further into his narrative the remarks grow harsher and are thrown with greater sharpness. For example, speaking on the likelihood of failure in the event the Navy in its current state were to go to war, he states “It is simply what will occur...and it would be much better to have no navy at all than one like the present, half-armed and with only half-speed, unless we inform the world that our establishment is only intended for times of peace, and to protect the missionaries against South Sea savages and eastern fanatics.”<sup>13</sup>

Porter provides a very thorough capability review of various other world navies and attempts to compare them to that of the U. S. Navy. He draws conclusions on how those navies participated in the development of new technologies and implemented them in their ship design and manufacturing process. He spoke of how they considered the impact on naval warfare in the realm of strategy and tactics to determine the type and number of ships needed for the expected missions for the force. He points out how some navies, like that of Great Britain, learned from lessons of past conflicts to adapt their fleet to the evolving needs for the navy. This kind of evolution of the navy to meet operational needs and support national interests simply was not happening in America. Porter remarked, “I speak strongly on the subject because I know the real condition of the Navy and its present inability to meet the wants of the nation, and I may yet live to see my county humiliated, from the fact that no attention has been paid to the recommendations of those whose duty it will be to lead our ships into action or direct their movements in time of war.”<sup>14</sup> He is referring to the voice of the naval officer corps, and in particular, not just those with the experience at sea, but those with vision to understand what

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<sup>12</sup> Admiral David D. Porter, “Report of Admiral D. D. Porter, November 7, 1874,” Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1874 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 198.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 207.

would be needed for the navy in the future. That organization that would become representative of that voice came into being at Annapolis shortly before the *Virginius* affair with the founding of a professional society focused on improving and advancing the Navy.

### The United States Naval Institute

The early 1870s were not a happy time for the United States Navy. At the end of the Civil War the U. S. Navy was one of the largest in the world in number of vessels, but with many of those being more suited for riverine operations or blockades it was not necessarily a navy capable of projecting power to the far reaches of the globe. Technological development was stagnant compared to other navies of the world, and there were problems with morale among the officer corps due to a promotion system based primarily on seniority. These and other issues served as motivation for a group of naval officers to finally take matters into their own hands to try and have a voice in the professional development of the Navy.<sup>15</sup>

On the evening of October 9, 1873, fifteen naval officers of various ranks met for the first meeting of the society known as the United States Naval Institute, and “its object shall be the advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy.”<sup>16</sup> Some of the original members of the society would go on to write and present significant papers on critical issues within the Navy in that period and in the future. The *Virginius* affair brought diplomatic affairs between Spain, the United States, and Great Britain to a troubling state of affairs and revealed the sad state of the U. S. Navy in the process. The incident not only revealed much in the

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas J. Cutler, “With Worden in the *Monitor*...and Beyond,” *Naval History*, vol. 36, no. 2 (April 2022): 49.

<sup>16</sup> United States Naval Institute, “Constitution,” *The Papers and Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1874): 11.



manner of readiness and capability for the Navy, but also provided an opportunity to explore the ways in which the Navy could be used as a means of power projection in support of U. S. interests in a time where the world was beginning to grow closer than ever before.

The Naval Institute held four meetings between October and the end of the year 1873. The members met in a building on the grounds of the Naval Academy with participants coming from a wide range of officer ranks from lieutenant to rear-admiral and even some senior non-commissioned officers allowing “an open and independent forum for constructive – if sometimes critical – discussions of matters of great importance to the Sea Services and to the nation.”<sup>17</sup> The papers presented to the society and the discussion they generated were collected and published in *The Papers and Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, later simply referred to as *Proceedings*. They were superb sources on principle topics of interest and concern for the Navy of the day. This opportunity to present papers and provide or receive feedback with respect to rank yet as equal members of the society provided a prime medium for what would “become a primary vehicle for the advancement of professional and scientific knowledge among American naval officers.”<sup>18</sup> In this respect, combined with the initial education and training provided at the Naval Academy, the Institute became an important step toward continuing their education and raising the professional status of the naval officer corps.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first officers to write on the results of the naval exercises off Key West was Commodore Foxhall A. Parker was a founding member of the Naval Institute and first to read a

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<sup>17</sup> Cutler, 50.

<sup>18</sup> John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, III, and John R. Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U. S. Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1977), 4.

paper before the society.<sup>20</sup> In December 1874, he wrote “Of the boat exercises in fleet maneuvers, the less said the better. They were decidedly a failure, and showed clearly how little importance had been attached to the study of fleet tactics by the navy generally.”<sup>21</sup> After a thorough review of the performance of the ships in union at sea and a descriptive narrative of the positive and negative aspects of various items from torpedoes, gunnery, speed, navigation, and maneuvering capability, Parker further concluded, “That a naval force, no matter what elements composed, possessed but little strength unless properly organized and thoroughly exercised in tactical maneuvers,” and “it became painfully apparent to us that the vessels before us were in no respect worthy of a great nation like our own.”<sup>22</sup>

In January 1879, the Naval Institute held their first essay contest with ten officers submitting works on the topic of naval education.<sup>23</sup> The top three essays were published in the October edition of *Proceedings* that year. The winning essay, written by Lieutenant Commander Allan D. Brown, Naval Academy Class of 1863, focused primarily on furthering the skills and knowledge of officers recently graduated from the Academy and during their initial years in service. This would be accomplished through a selection of “post-graduate education” courses based on the common skills and desires for a competent naval officer and not necessarily to transform their mindset to a higher level of thinking overall.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “In Memoriam: Commodore Foxhall A. Parker, U.S.N.,” *Proceedings*, vol. 5, no. 5/10 (December 1879): 569.

<sup>21</sup> Commodore Foxhall A. Parker, “Our Fleet Maneuvers in the Bay of Florida, and the Navy of the Future,” *The Papers and Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1874): 164.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>23</sup> Commander Benjamin Armstrong, “Naval Education in 1879,” *Proceedings*, vol. 145, no. 11 (November 2019), <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2019/november/naval-education-1879>.

<sup>24</sup> Lieutenant Commander Allan D. Brown, “Naval Education,” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 1879), 312.

The second-place essay was written by Lieutenant Commander Caspar F. Goodrich, and was similar in many ways to the essay by Brown with the exception that Goodrich's description of post-graduate education for officers is more detailed and specific to the desires of the officer corps and needs of the Navy. He describes this system of education in two phases, with the first to occur after the officer served at sea for a few years to gain a better understanding of the ways of the service, and to gain an appreciation for what area of concentration they should want to pursue. The second phase would be a few years further into their career when they achieve the rank of lieutenant commander and can delve into even deeper subjects pertaining to higher levels of thinking and action. Goodrich commented, "This will be more easily effected when the establishment of the Naval College shall permit the postponing, to a later time, and for those only who are desirous of its benefits, the study of certain higher branches which go to form what may, by analogy, be called the naval officer's 'Superior Education.'"<sup>25</sup> This suggestion of a step toward a higher level of education at a naval college offering courses beyond simply those tied to the technical skills is significant.

Finally, the third-place essay in the 1879 contest was one provided by Commander Alfred T. Mahan. This was Mahan's first essay published by the Naval Institute and would become one among many works on the affairs of the Navy, strategy, history, and more. Mahan was no stranger to the realm of naval education in 1879, having already served once on the faculty of the Naval Academy and was then serving on the Academy's Board of Examiners.<sup>26</sup> The focus of Mahan's 1879 essay was on the ways to improve the curriculum at the Naval Academy. Perhaps

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<sup>25</sup> Lieutenant Commander Caspar F. Goodrich, "Naval Education," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 1879), 327.

<sup>26</sup> "Alfred Thayer Mahan, 27 September 1840 – 1 December 1914," Personnel Files in the Navy Department Library, Naval History and Heritage Command, November 6, 2022, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/research-guides/z-files/zb-files/zb-files-m/mahan-alfred.html>.

this is because of his time before and at the present affiliated with that task, but suffice to say he makes a case for reducing the amount of technical specialist instruction and instead add more in the arena of the humanities. Courses on history, languages, law, and tactics would teach the officer more on the human aspects of the profession which in many cases are just as important, and in some cases more so, as the technical ability to handle a ship. Mahan spoke of a higher call for the line officer. One that he called a “moral force,” signifying that, “When his ship is equipped and his knowledge of her powers complete, the most important part of the line officer’s work is yet before him...that which has been done is only preparation.”<sup>27</sup> Mahan’s later works would delve deeper into those other skills and traits he deemed necessary in a naval officer. While some of them would become his more noted published works, others would form the basis for many of his lectures later at the Naval War College.

In the discussion on the prize-winning essay provided by Lieutenant Commander Brown that followed, there was much debate over the merits and demerits of his proposed course of action. On the subject of the post-graduate courses of instruction, most officers agreed this would be a good path for the Navy to take, but there was no agreement on the specifics of the curriculum, who should go, when they should attend, or where it should take place. One of the senior non-commissioned officers present made a comment that pointed to the need for such a course in higher thinking due to the greater complexities present in the service of the day. He stated, “greater ability is demanded of the general of admiral who controls such an army or navy. I have no doubt that the successful commander-in-chief of to-day is a man of greater genius than

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<sup>27</sup> Commander Alfred T. Mahan, “Naval Education,” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1879), 352-353.

he who was successful in the time of Alexander – or even in the time of Napoleon.”<sup>28</sup> The Secretary for the Naval Institute, Lieutenant John C. Soley, endorsed “heartily the proposition for an officer’s course, and I hold that when a naval college for officers is established we shall have found the place to educate the commanders of the future.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, although it was not clearly the main focus of the essays on education reviewed in the contest of 1879, the prospect and concepts of a post-graduate form of education for senior officers was on the minds of many in the naval officer corps. The wheels of progress were turning, and it would not take much longer for a firmer idea of how this concept could become a reality. Of particular note with regard to two of the three essayists placing in the contest of 1879, two of them, Lieutenant Commander Goodrich and Commander Mahan would later on serve tours of duty as President of the Naval War College.

Many officers wrote and provided papers or articles for *Proceedings*. Some of them were already prominent voices in the Navy while others would come to make their mark in the years to come. Men like Charles F. Goodrich, Stephen B. Luce, James R. Soley, Daniel Ammen, and Alfred T. Mahan were frequent contributors whose writings formed the basis for many of the transformative initiatives in technology and in professional education for the Navy in the remaining quarter of the nineteenth century. Two of these officers, Commander Alfred T. Mahan and Captain Stephen B. Luce, held prominent roles in the field of training and education for naval officers. Already noted were Mahan’s experiences with the Naval Academy both at Newport, Rhode Island during the Civil War and with the Board of Examiners at Annapolis in

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<sup>28</sup> Master Staunton, “Discussion of the Prize Essay on Naval Education,” by Professor J. Russell Soley, *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1879), 392-393.

<sup>29</sup> Lieutenant John C. Soley, “Discussion of the Prize Essay on Naval Education,” by Professor J. Russell Soley, *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1879), 394.

the mid-1870s.<sup>30</sup> Luce's background in education and training was more broad than that of Mahan, having been the Inspector of Training Ships for the Navy, and commanded the training ship *Minnesota* and the U. S. Naval Training Squadron in the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>31</sup> These experiences would prove useful in their personal endeavors and for the Navy in improving the quality and caliber of education. Both men authored several papers on the subject of education for naval officers that were published in *Proceedings* by the Naval Institute. These experiences and the works they produced would help form the foundation for the development and execution of a level of advanced education for more senior officers in the United States Navy.

### The Naval War College

From the very founding of the Naval Institute in 1873 at least one member was thinking on the needs for education in the Navy. Captain Stephen B. Luce presented a paper to the Institute that month discussing the merits of education and training, and in particular to this subject, the technical skills and craft of those who live their lives at sea. He provided a comparison of the work force within various technical trades in the countries of Europe and included naval and other nautical training within that comparison to highlight the advantages that could be gained. Luce referred those present to the Land-Grant College Act passed in Congress in 1862 that allowed for the expansion of the American college system to include training and education in various technical fields including engineering. Luce reminded the members of the

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<sup>30</sup> "Alfred Thayer Mahan, 27 September 1840 – 1 December 1914," Personnel Files in the Navy Department Library, October 29, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> "Stephen Bleeker Luce, 25 March 1827 – 28 July 1917," Personnel Files in the Navy Department Library, Naval History and Heritage Command, October 29, 2022, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/research/library/research-guides/z-files/zb-files/zb-files-1/luce-stephen-b.html>.

Institute that the same bill also made instruction in military science and tactics a requirement, but nothing was in the bill pertaining to any similar obligation on naval sciences.<sup>32</sup>

Luce's argument in this paper is primarily focused on the training and education of young officers and seamen in both the naval and merchant marine services. He points out how American sailors, particularly in the merchant service, used to be the envy of the British merchant trade. However, in recent years that reputation was in decline. He remarked on how those in the maritime enterprise "are to a certain extent our representatives abroad...but the American seaman is becoming a dissolute and depraved being."<sup>33</sup> The reason for such a fall from esteem could be directed back at the lack of attention paid to their well-being, and by that meaning education, training, and professional development. Instead, "a large and indispensable class of our fellow-countrymen is suffered to fall into degradation and decay from sheer, heartless, and unwise neglect."<sup>34</sup> To reverse this decline, Luce argued for action by the naval establishment and the support of Congress to push for changes in this system to make the improvements desperately needed in the maritime force. Luce ends his presentation with a nod to the intent behind the founding of the Naval Institute by remarking, "If by means of this association our officers are induced to consider carefully the various questions affecting our profession, and to give the service at large the benefit of their reflections, the navy will owe you a deep debt of gratitude."<sup>35</sup> Although Luce's presentation that day was focused more on the improvements to training and education of the seamen in the Navy and merchant marine, it does

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<sup>32</sup> Captain Stephen B. Luce, "The Manning of Our Navy and Mercantile Marine, November 13, 1873," *The Papers and Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol.1, no. 1 (1874), 24-28.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

acknowledge a need for quality education of the officer ranks as well. His next paper would point to the desire of Luce to improve officer education.

In 1876, Commodore Foxhall Parker published a book entitled, *The Fleets of the World*. In it Parker provides a wholesale review of warships throughout history, beginning with the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians, to discuss their capabilities and tactics of the period. In his second paper published by the Naval Institute, Captain Luce, provides a review of Parker's work through the lens of applicability to the study of tactics and officer development. In his commentary, Luce notes how tactics change over time as advances in technology provide new weapons and enhanced capability. However, "the principles of strategy are immutable."<sup>36</sup> The foundational principles of war fighting throughout history carried over through time. It is one of the reasons warfare through the ages was taught in many military schools. To reinforce this point and combine how the teachings of tactical principles over time have value in the present, Luce remarked, "the true way to study naval tactics is to do so in connection with the study of Military and Naval history and the science of war as taught at the best military schools."<sup>37</sup>

As early as 1858, Luce held an interest in improving the education system for the Navy. He wrote notes in his journal while serving on the sloop *Jamestown* off Central America on his ideas for establishing a formal education system for young officers, ship's crew, and seamen in general. During the Civil War he furthered his interest in education and training during his assignment as an instructor at the Naval Academy during its tenure in Newport, Rhode Island and while in command of *Macedonian*, a midshipman practice vessel. Luce took *Macedonian* on a cruise to Europe in 1863 where he observed the training programs established by the British

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<sup>36</sup> Stephen B. Luce, "Fleets of the World, April 20, 1876," *The Papers and Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 3, no. 1 (December 1877), 22.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 23



and French for their respective fleets. He wrote a thorough report on his observations and later used those as the foundation for his recommendations for improving the system of education in the United States Navy.<sup>38</sup>

In the years following the Civil War, Luce developed relationships with various power brokers in Washington and around the Navy along with a reputation as a reformer. One of the friendships he developed was with Colonel Emory Upton from the U. S. Army Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia.<sup>39</sup> Luce learned from Upton about the curriculum taught to senior Army officers at Fort Monroe, including a course on the art of war. In August of 1877, Luce wrote a letter to Secretary of the Navy R. W. Thompson about his ideas for a graduate level course for naval officers where they would learn material similar to that taught to Army officers at Fort Monroe.<sup>40</sup> Luce noted the need for a post-graduate course based on the premise that “with the recent revolution in naval warfare comes a demand for a higher order of talent in the conduct of naval operation...The introduction of steam and the telegraph enabling military operations both on land and at sea to be conducted with great rapidity, and shortening to months great campaigns which had in times past consumed years, renders it absolutely necessary that to be a successful naval captain of the present day an officer must be a strategist as well as a tactician.”<sup>41</sup>

During this period, the desire to improve the Navy in a variety of areas was a popular and constant subject among naval officers as well as those in the political arena. It was common for papers on these subjects to be presented at the meetings of the Naval Institute. In 1879, the

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<sup>38</sup> John D. Hayes and John B. Hattendorf, ed., *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1975), 7-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> S. B. Luce to R. W. Thompson, August 8, 1877, in *Life and Letters of Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, U. S. Navy, Founder of the Naval War College*, Rear-Admiral Albert Gleaves (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 168.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

subject of the purpose of the Navy, naval affairs, and naval education headlined several of the editions of *Proceedings* that year. The recently retired Chief of the Bureau of Navigation for the Navy, Rear-Admiral Daniel Ammen, spoke to the Institute on the purposes of the Navy discussing how they “are more complex, important, and constant than are supposed by persons who only regard it as a means of offence and defense in war, and who are ignorant, in a great degree, of the training necessary to efficiency.”<sup>42</sup> However, although Rear-Admiral Ammen makes note of the need for a high level of training and skill required of naval officers, later in his paper he only brings attention in this regard to the training for junior officers. He speaks to their selection and training provided at the Naval Academy, followed by the practical application training gained via practice cruises and finally the trials and challenges of a life aboard a naval ship at sea. He does not venture into the need for a continuance of training for senior officers nor does he address the need for education of naval officers in subjects beyond those required for successful handling of a ship and crew. This paper, although valued at the time for the insight presented on various subjects pertaining to naval development, does not speak to any cultivation or development of operational or strategic thinking among the officer corps that would be or should be commensurate with the changing of American national interests and/or objectives coming on the horizon.<sup>43</sup>

The next presenter following Ammen in this meeting was Lieutenant Frederick Collins. This is a dynamic unique to the Naval Institute in that both junior and senior officers could present and respond to papers by other members of the Institute with total candor. Such a forum provided interesting and valuable discussion on important topics of the day. The topic presented

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<sup>42</sup> Rear-Admiral Daniel Ammen, “The Purposes of a Navy, and the Best Methods of Rendering it Efficient, February 13, 1879,” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 7 (April 1879), 119.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

by Lieutenant Collins was similar to that presented by Ammen, yet from a slightly different perspective. Collins addressed the purpose and needs of the Navy from a political viewpoint with regard to costs and support of national interests. He spoke about the expansion of American commercial enterprise overseas and the increasing levels of influence Americans held around the globe both in a commercial and cultural perspective. The presence of American citizens overseas demanded a level of capability of the U. S. Navy to provide protection for those citizens and their business interests.<sup>44</sup>

Collins discussed some of the experiences of the Navy during the Civil War and how much the Navy had changed since that war's end with regard to the lack of continued support for ships and personnel. He lamented over the manner in which public opinion seemed to disregard the importance of maintaining a capable and professional fleet after the war, thinking it was something that could quickly and easily be raised in the event of a future conflict. He wisely disagrees with this perception, commenting how the circumstances of the Civil War were "peculiar, and not likely to recur."<sup>45</sup> Instead, Collins argued that the more likely occurrence was that the United States would face a foe with a much stronger navy than the Confederacy. Given the advances in technology, world affairs, and warfare itself such a situation could have drastic implications for the United States given the current state of the U. S. Navy as a whole.<sup>46</sup> Collins argued it was time to take the lessons of observing others (like that suggested by Luce) in their developmental change and apply them in the United States. In his comments that followed he discussed at length the number and type of ships needed for the different offensive and defensive

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<sup>44</sup> Lieutenant Frederick Collins, "Naval Affairs, February 13, 1879," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1879), 160-161.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

missions of the Navy.<sup>47</sup> Collins makes an important point at the start of his discussion on the number and type of ships needed that incorporates both the anticipated high costs for construction of such a fleet, but also the changing conditions for naval warfare in this period. He states, “In inquiring as to the means best suited to accomplish the legitimate functions of a naval establishment in the most efficient and economical manner, at the present time, we find that modern means and methods of warfare point to the expediency of a radical departure from traditional systems.”<sup>48</sup>

In the discussion following the presentation, the older and senior officers in the room remarked on some of the ideas heard in Collins’ plan. Some were not necessarily against but also not exactly supportive of his plan. They were in general agreement, however, that it would be unwise to embark upon an expensive effort until a formal program of approach was in place. The most applicable comment was made on this issue by the President of the Institute, Rear-Admiral John Rodgers, when he said, “The great misfortune, it seems to me, has been, of late, the absence of professional influence and judgement in our naval constructions...”<sup>49</sup> Collins concurred with that assessment and added his own, saying, “it is our duty as Naval Officers to teach the public what they need in the way of a Navy.”<sup>50</sup> Educated officers must not only be educated in the means of handling ships at sea and in battle, but also in understanding the nature of a changing world in which strategy and looking at the long game were increasingly more important in determining the true needs of a navy.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 170-173.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Strategic goals and their alignment with national interests were essential. As such they were an integral part of the Monroe Doctrine when enacted in 1823 to prevent European powers from interfering in affairs in the Western Hemisphere. The author of the Naval Institute's prize-winning essay in 1880 understood the importance of naval power in the successful enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. Lieutenant Charles Belknap, in his essay entitled, "The Naval Policy of the United States," addressed this issue when voicing concern over the prospects of another foreign power constructing a canal across Panama connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. In light of this clear and present danger to the regional and strategic interests of the United States, Belknap remarked how "the American people as a unit demand the rigid maintenance of the principles of the Monroe Doctrine."<sup>51</sup> However, given the current state of the Navy and the lack of any improvement forecast in the near term, Belknap warned "we are likely to see the principles of non-intervention by any foreign nation in the affairs of the American continent, a policy we have never disavowed, violated at any moment, in contempt of our views, by some strong naval power whose interests conflicts with our own."<sup>52</sup> The primary focus of Belknap's argument is directed toward the physical needs of the Navy for new and advanced weaponry and ships for the fleet. Commensurate with those new ships comes the requirement for officers and men to man those ships. However, one other element in his list of recommendations to consider for the Navy was to prepare a set of operational plans for the conduct of offensive and defensive naval and military operations in support of national objectives. This would require officers

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<sup>51</sup> Lieutenant Charles Belknap, "The Naval Policy of the United States," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 6, no. 14 (October 1880), 379.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

educated in the skills and traits of strategic analysis and thought to complete such plans for that eventual time “when the nation will again enter the arena.”<sup>53</sup>

In December 1883, Commodore Stephen Luce presented a paper to the Naval Institute on the subject of “War Schools.” In this paper, Luce presents the argument for the need to expand the realm of knowledge taught within the education system for the United States Navy, citing examples from how the U. S. Army accomplished that mission through courses offered at their four schools of application for artillery, infantry and cavalry, and engineers. Luce acknowledged the value and benefit of the course of instruction taught at both Annapolis and the United States Military Academy at West Point, but understood “the need for a more extended course of study than [was] practicable at [either] Academy, or in the ordinary routine of service.”<sup>54</sup> Luce argued, “This is just what we need for the Navy. The naval officer, not less than the army officer, should possess a knowledge of the science and practice of war.”<sup>55</sup>

Luce made a case in his lecture on the need for developing a system of tactics and communications for ships assembled together in larger formations to use in time of war, for there would undoubtedly come a time again for the need of such skills. While some argued that the times of large fleet actions were history, Luce proposed quite the opposite; that although independent cruisers or destroyers may be a vital part of the Navy, they would not or could not remain the principal form of fighting ship in the fleet. Based on that assessment, Luce noted that “it cannot be assumed for one moment that...elementary tactics...good as the fundamental idea on which they are based..., comprises the whole art of naval warfare.”<sup>56</sup> Luce argued the need for

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 391.

<sup>54</sup> Commodore Stephen B. Luce, “War Schools, April 4, 1883” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 9, no. 5 (December 1883), 635.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 655.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 655.

a higher level of study for the naval officer beyond that required to just fight his own or a few ships together in action. An officer should know how to look at a broader potential field of operations and know how where to best array the forces at his disposal to achieve the greatest benefit while protecting resources or bases from the enemy. He must understand that the enemy would be doing the same to achieve his own advantage. In other words, an understanding of the basic principles and fundamentals of strategy.

Luce argued that it was incumbent on the officer or student of the naval profession to prepare themselves for this understanding. They would begin that education in their course of study at the basic military schools or academies, but for the next level:

He should be led into a philosophic study of naval history, that he may be enabled to examine the great naval battels of the world with the cold eye of professional criticism, and to recognize where the principles of the science have been illustrated, or where a disregard for the accepted rules of the art of war has led to defeat and disaster. Such studies might well occupy the very best thoughts of the naval officer, for they belong to the very highest branch of his profession.<sup>57</sup>

Luce made the case for locating such a school for post-graduate education at Coasters Harbor Island in Newport, Rhode Island. The Navy's Torpedo Station and School were already located there providing sufficient space and capability to house the new school with the facilities on hand, thus reducing the overall cost to the Navy. He also introduced the idea that, with the kind of level of courses taught at the new school, it could provide an opportunity to modify the curriculum at the Naval Academy and provide additional time on the schedule there for the remaining courses provided for midshipmen adding value and benefit to that experience. In the final point of his lecture, Luce noted such steps taken toward raising the level of professional education and development for naval officers were important as already indicated by the Army

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 656.

through their own officer development system. He also noted that based on reports within the Navy indicating desire to update the education system, and from papers presented at the Naval Institute this direction would also be a popular one.<sup>58</sup> However, this was not necessarily the case.

Rear-Admiral Albert Gleaves recorded:

Luce's lecture in 1883 commanded respectful attention but neither enthusiasm nor even much interest. The proposal of a "school" was coldly received. As a matter of fact the lecture went over the heads of the audience. The scoffers remarked that neither Farragut nor Nelson studied the Art of War.<sup>59</sup>

Based on the lack of energetic response to his lecture, Luce was forced to take matters into his own hands to further his idea for this new school. Two of his friends in powerful places, Admiral David Porter and Commodore J. G. Walker, were influential in guiding Luce's next step. Admiral Porter, although not a popular man at the time in the Navy Department, was the senior officer in the Navy, and Commodore Walker was the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation – possibly the most powerful officer in the Navy from a political perspective.<sup>60</sup> These two friends of Luce encouraged him to write a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, William E. Chandler, in March 1884 in which Luce presented a draft order for establishing the new school.<sup>61</sup> Chandler responded by inviting Luce to present his plan to the group of Bureau Chiefs for the Navy from which there were more than one opponent to the concept. At the meeting, "Luce explained that his plan was simply to give officers the opportunity to study the science of war at sea, to prepare themselves for the grave duties and responsibilities of high command."<sup>62</sup> Luce further explained how this would in fact be a school, but have no connection whatsoever with the Naval Academy.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 656-657.

<sup>59</sup> Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, 172.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Hayes and Hattendorf, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, 173-174.



The two would remain completely separate in focus of curriculum and composition of the student body. Following the meeting in Washington, Secretary Chandler appointed Luce to head a special board to further develop the plan and prepare specific recommendations for its implementation. The other members of the board included Commander William T. Sampson and Lieutenant Commander Caspar F. Goodrich.<sup>63</sup>

The board met aboard the *New Hampshire* in anchorage at Newport on June 13, 1884. For preparation, Luce suggested to Sampson and Goodrich to review his own paper on “War Schools” and Professor James Soley’s findings on the systems of naval education in Europe.<sup>64</sup> Professor Soley was commissioned by the Navy Department in 1878 to conduct a survey of the systems of naval education in England, France, Germany, and Italy. In his report to presented to the Senate in January 1880, Soley explained the course of an officer’s career in each navy to include the key professional development assignments and levels of education required to rise in rank.<sup>65</sup> These papers provided as a primer for what the board would discuss for their task in determining the organization for the future college.

In their recommendations, the board recommended that the Navy should have:

a place where our officers will not only be encouraged, but required, to study their profession proper – war – in a far more thorough manner than has ever heretofore been attempted, and to bring to the investigation of the various problems of modern naval warfare the scientific methods adopted in other professions.<sup>66</sup>

They understood there were many in the opposition who did not see the need for another course of instruction in the Navy system, thinking it would be competitive rather than supplementary to

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<sup>63</sup> Hayes and Hattendorf, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> James R. Soley, “Report on Foreign Systems of Naval Education,” 46<sup>th</sup> Cong. 2d ses. Senate Ex. Doc. No. 51, January 21, 1880, Washington.

<sup>66</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 18.

the overall educational offerings of the Navy. To assuage some of those feelings, the board suggested the Navy could combine the use of the facilities in Newport for the Torpedo Station on Coasters' Harbor Island and act, at least initially, as conduct courses in war, law, and history as an addendum following the instruction at the Torpedo Station. Specifically, "the courses in war would include study of strategy, tactics, and campaigns, from the military, naval, and joint standpoints."<sup>67</sup> The courses on history and international law being highly recommended as essential to the professional development of officers in preparation for the kind of positions in which they may find themselves in the future far from American shores.

The recommendations presented by the board were acknowledged and resulted in the issuance of General Order No. 325 directing, "A College is hereby established for an advanced course of professional study for naval officers, to be known as the Naval War College."<sup>68</sup> The school was organized under the general supervision of the Bureau of Navigation with facilities on Coasters' Harbor Island in Newport, Rhode Island with Stephen B. Luce promoted to Commodore and assigned to duty as the first President of the College.<sup>69</sup> The objective toward which Luce had strived for so long was finally a reality. However, although there were many in the Navy who agreed with Luce on the need for updating the education system to teach a higher level of strategic thinking in the officer corps, there were many who opposed it as well. The struggle to demonstrate the value of the teaching provided by the Naval War College and tie it to the emergence of American sea power was only just beginning. It would take another year before the first course was taught in Newport. The administrative tasks of identifying and assembling a staff and group of instructors, preparing the lectures, acquiring the necessary facilities and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> General Order No. 325, October 6, 1884, Navy Department, Washington.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

ensuring their readiness to house the activities of the College, and the typical hurdles of Navy bureaucracy to overcome in getting everything ready took time. The roster of lecturers was modified to make up for delays in assignment of the original officers, but the replacements proved more than suitable for the task given them.<sup>70</sup>

The first class that arrived in September of 1885 included only eight lieutenants sent over from the Torpedo School on Goat Island in Narragansett Bay, not far from Coasters Harbor Island, instead of the fifty officers holding the rank of commander or above envisioned by Luce. Still, even with the challenges and drawbacks noted in some areas, and the length of this first class being barely a month, it was still seen as a success by many. Professor Soley, who lectured in international law, wrote to Luce on what he perceived as a very positive reception to this first class. He wrote, "I find the public sentiment here is beginning to realize the importance and character of the work and I congratulate you upon having brought the first year's course to so successful a conclusion."<sup>71</sup>

The presence of one of the instructors in Newport, Army Lieutenant Tasker Bliss, certainly raised suspicion among some of those skeptical of the College. It was not without great effort that Luce was able to obtain this Army officer in the first place. Luce, acknowledging the Army was more advanced in the realm of the art and science of war based on his own review of the Army's schools of application when developing his concept for the Naval War College, wanted an Army officer as the instructor for military science. If not, "the absence of this officer would materially change the most important object of the curriculum...a comprehensive course of study of the art and science of war by a method which...will have the merit of being entirely

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<sup>70</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 27-28.

<sup>71</sup> James R. Soley to S. B. Luce, October 3, 1885, RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 3. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

original with our navy.”<sup>72</sup> Commander William T. Sampson, a former member of the Luce Board charged with making the recommendation to the Navy Department on the plan to establish the War College, supported this argument. In a letter filled with candor, enthusiasm, and optimism for the development of strategic thought in the Navy, Sampson wrote:

I see no reason to change the views which I held at the time we drew up the report. I think no one, who will look carefully into what is required, can question that an army officer is better prepared for the work than a navy officer. To employ an army man would be entirely to our advantage; possibly, at the end of three years some graduate of the College might develop a mastery of the work and be capable of giving the necessary instruction, so that afterwards he might fill the place. To start, however, I think we should lay aside any professional pride we may have in the matter. We require the army officer to instruct in matters pertaining to his profession not our own. I think there would be no difficulty in ‘getting rid’ of him whenever it was considered best to do so.

I am confident that the efficiency of both services would be greatly increased if the officers could be brought to discuss professional matters together. Each service might learn much from the other, and when they come to act together in defense of our common country, might do so with an intelligence and mutual understanding that we do not now possess. Let us be the first to recognize these facts and avail ourselves of them!<sup>73</sup>

The ability of Sampson to understand the need for the Navy to rely upon the Army, at least initially, to provide this expertise is admirable. However, more admirable was his ability to recognize the value that could be gained by the coming together of the two services to learn from each other. This is a mark of an evolved mind having the ability to think on a higher plane and understand the need to expand beyond a singular, or tactical, manner of thought and think in the strategic realm. The recognition by Sampson of the value the Navy could gain by having an Army officer temporarily lecture on these subjects is evidence of an honest self-assessment of the abilities of the Navy at that time. This is especially important as the intent for this position is

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<sup>72</sup> S. B. Luce to William E. Chandler, November 28, 1884, RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>73</sup> William T. Sampson to Stephen B. Luce, February 26, 1885, RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

that it would be a partner to the position soon to be held by Mahan for his lectures on naval history, and military and naval science. Not only did Bliss fill an instructor position the Navy could not at that time, but he provided the basis for the ‘comparative’ method of analysis upon which the War College would make naval warfare a science. As one historian noted, “He was the link between the new military science as developed in the European staff schools and the naval officers who were to apply it to sea warfare.”<sup>74</sup>

### The Rise of Mahan

Alfred Thayer Mahan was born on September 27, 1840, at West Point, New York. His father was on the faculty of the United States Military Academy as a professor of civil and military engineering. He studied for two years at Columbia in New York before gaining an appointment to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis and graduated second in his class in 1859. Over the next twenty-five years his naval career was nothing spectacular, but not without merit either. He served twice at the Naval Academy and won third prize in the Naval Institute’s essay contest in 1879 for his piece on education in the Navy. However, “It was not until 1886, when he was forty-six years old, that the life history of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, United States Navy, really began.”<sup>75</sup>

Shortly after the orders were published on October 6, 1884, establishing the War College, Luce began putting together the staff he would need for the school. Mahan was one of the first who came to mind as indicated in his request to the Secretary of the Navy on October 28<sup>th</sup> for officers to fill billets as instructors. Mahan’s name was first on the list in the Department of

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<sup>74</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Louis M. Hacker, “The Incendiary Mahan,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, April 1934, 263.

Science & Art of War.<sup>76</sup> Considering the level of importance Luce placed on the subjects within the art of war – military and naval science – as the central core of the curriculum at the War College, it is evident he held the intellect of Mahan in high regard and felt confident in Mahan’s ability to provide the caliber of instruction Luce desired.

At the time of the order establishing the War College in 1884, Mahan was in command of USS *Wachusett* in port in Callao, Peru. Although he was approved for assignment to the College he was not allowed to report until the end of his current command posting.<sup>77</sup> While in command of *Wachusett* Mahan was able to participate in some, although limited in scale, naval exercises with the other ships of his squadron off the Pacific Coast of South America. He wrote of how ships were assigned to various ports along the coast and only seldom came together for administrative functions or simple ship-handling exercises serving as competition among the crews to see who could do the drills in the fastest time, noting, “this rivalry was no substitute for the much more necessary practice of working together, in mutual support.”<sup>78</sup> Regarding independent ship operations, Mahan noted, “from time immemorial the navy had thought in single ships, as the army had in company posts. To the several officers their own ship was everything, the squadron little or nothing”<sup>79</sup> He pointed out how operations in the Civil War helped the Army expand its view to larger battlefield and theater implications, but the Navy did not experience the same transformation. Having never had the opportunity to assemble for a

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<sup>76</sup> S. B. Luce, “Request to Secretary of the Navy, William E. Chandler,” October 28, 1884. RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>77</sup> Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, 180.

<sup>78</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam, Recollections of Naval Life* (1907; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Outlook Verlag, 2020), 186-187.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

large fleet action and limited to mainly just engagement of shore batteries the Navy became apathetic, “[possessing] no continuity of system in either theory or practice.”<sup>80</sup>

During his time in Peru, Mahan read a substantial amount of the works on military and naval history and implications of strategy by the likes of Napier, Mommsen, and Jomini, among others.<sup>81</sup> Reading the theories and principles advocated by these luminaries of strategy helped shape Mahan’s perspective and views on the way to consider sea power in the grand scheme. Prior to this period, it was “a matter of record that...Mahan held views that in latter-day parlance would be termed isolationist...and that the Navy’s wartime functions properly should be limited to commerce raiding and coastal defense.”<sup>82</sup> In his own words regarding naval history, Mahan said, “I shared the prepossession, common at that time, that the naval history of the past was wholly past; of no use at all to the present.”<sup>83</sup> However, after reading *History of the War in the Peninsula and the South of France* (New York, 1873), a deep, multi-volume study by British officer and historian General Sir Francis Napier, Mahan said he found himself “in a new world of thought, keenly interested and appreciative...of the military sequences of cause and effect.”<sup>84</sup> Mahan sought to find more on this theme of the influence of history on the military art. This was not necessarily a popular or even accepted form of learning by many in the profession when Mahan was coming up as an officer, nor was it even widely accepted in the mid-1880s. Mahan said of his walk down this path:

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, 180.

<sup>82</sup> Captain H. Kaminer Manship, “Mahan’s Concepts of Sea Power,” *Naval War College Review* (January 1964), RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>83</sup> A.T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 189

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 188.

This point of view was held by very many. ‘You won’t find much to say about history,’ was the direct discouraging comment of an older officer. On the other hand, Sir Geoffrey Hornby, less well known in this country than in Great Britain, where twenty years ago he was recognized as the head of the profession, distinctly commended to me the present value of naval history. I myself, as I have just confessed, had had the contrary impression – a tradition passively accepted. Thus my mind was troubled how to establish relations between yesterday and to-day; so wholly ignorant was I of the undying reproduction of conditions in their essential bearings – a commonplace of military art.

He who seeks, finds, if he does not lose heart; and to me continuously seeking, came from within the suggestion that control of the sea was an historic factor which had never been systematically appreciated and expounded.<sup>85</sup>

This revelation would drive Mahan’s research and writing efforts for the next several decades and bring him fame and notoriety around the world. However, in his later years, Mahan would acknowledge that the thesis did not originate with him alone, but he would play a significant role in bringing the debate to the forefront through “analysis of history, attempting to show from current events, through a long series of years, precisely what influence the command of the sea had had upon definite issues.”<sup>86</sup> Mahan found evidence of this in another of his readings while in Peru – *History of Rome* (Leipzig, 1854), by the German historian, Theodor Mommsen. Mahan found in Mommsen’s discussion on the strategic use of sea power by the Romans in the Punic Wars, compared to the lack of any such activity by Hannibal in his invasion of Italy, an interesting lesson “less about tactics and more about broader historical implications.”<sup>87</sup> Mahan dwelled upon this and the other discoveries from his readings while in Peru enroute home to the United States in 1885, and determined that he “would investigate coincidentally the general history and naval history of the past two centuries, with a view to demonstrating the influence of the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ronald H. Carpenter, “Alfred Thayer Mahan’s Style on Sea Power: A Paramessage Conducing to Ethos,” *Speech Monographs*, vol. 42, no. 3 (August 1975), 193. RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.



events of the one upon the other.”<sup>88</sup> This decision would mature further in Mahan’s next role as instructor in naval history, tactics, and strategy at the War College.

Mahan was pleased when he learned of the establishment of the War College and the request by Luce to bring him there as an instructor. Long a believer in the ideas and efforts of Secretary of the Navy William Chandler to make changes in the policy and administration of the Navy, Mahan believed the War College was a positive step in the direction of providing sound and capable military counsel to the Department for military-specific issues. The issues to which Mahan was referring were primarily those where the study of military and naval operations of the past when compared to the conditions of the present could provide courses of action or concepts for planning consideration by the Department in support of national interests.<sup>89</sup> Based on the level of responsibility this placed on Luce, himself, and the others called to staff the College, Mahan held some trepidation at his own appointment. However, his own father put together a course on strategy and grand tactics when an instructor at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point that was well received. Mahan “trusted, therefore, that heredity, too, might come to [his] aid”<sup>90</sup> in the role. There were others besides Luce who held confidence in Mahan and his ability to fulfill such an important position. The new Secretary of the Navy, William Whitney, wrote to Luce with an update on the status of Mahan’s orders following a lengthy delay for operational reasons for him to finally proceed to San Francisco aboard *Wachusett* where she would finally arrive in September 1885. Secretary Whitney noted his approval of Luce’s choice

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<sup>88</sup> A.T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 191.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-188.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-189.

for Mahan saying it “is only another illustration of the fact that great men agree in their thoughts.”<sup>91</sup>

When Mahan arrived in San Francisco in September 1885, the first course at the War College was just underway with the curriculum including lectures on international law, military science, and naval science.<sup>92</sup> Mahan still did not proceed directly to the War College. There being no quarters available in Newport for Mahan, nor did his present work of preparing the lectures require him to be present, it was not until August the following year before Mahan would finally arrive on campus for duty.<sup>93</sup> In the meantime, “it is perhaps indicative of the pace and tenor of the times that Mahan was able to devote two years of study to preparation for his War College assignment.”<sup>94</sup> This time was well spent, for when he arrived in August 1886 he not only assumed duties of instructor, but those as President following the detachment of Luce to command the North Atlantic Fleet the previous June.<sup>95</sup>

In the two years prior to Mahan’s arrival in Newport, the War College faced many challenges, ranging from facilities to instructors to even students. The first course in September of 1885 with eight students lasted less than one month, but was successful, nonetheless. Luce stated in his report to the Secretary of the Navy that year, “Taken as a whole, there is every reason to be satisfied with the results of the term, and good grounds for expecting still better

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<sup>91</sup> William Whitney to S. B. Luce, July 27, 1885, RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 3. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>92</sup> U.S. Naval War College, Order: September 2, 1885, RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>93</sup> A.T. Mahan, *Reminiscences of Rear-Admiral A.T. Mahan, U.S.N., March 24, 1908*, RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>94</sup> Captain Manship, “Mahan’s Concepts of Sea Power,” RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>95</sup> A.T. Mahan, *Reminiscences*, RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

results in the future.”<sup>96</sup> By the time Luce was ordered back to sea for his new command, he and his staff were able to coordinate and prepare for the second course beginning in September 1886. This class would extend to almost three months for twenty-one students. Luce was able to be present, however, to deliver the opening address, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” where he expounded upon the ideas he included in his report to the Secretary of the Navy on the plans for the War College in June 1884, and from his article on the College in *The United Service* from January 1885.<sup>97</sup>

The speech delivered by Luce at the opening of the course in 1886 “is Luce’s most complete expression of the intellectual concept behind the establishment of the Naval War College.”<sup>98</sup> In the pages read by Luce that day he stressed the importance of studying the principles applied on battlefields of the past, as the lessons presented are helpful to the naval officer, and he discussed the rise of new technology impacting the science of the naval field. He remarked on the combination of the two, stating, “naval history abounds in materials whereon to erect a science, as science has been defined and illustrated, and it is our present purpose to build up with these materials the science of naval warfare.”<sup>99</sup> He goes on to say, “there is no question that the naval battles of the past furnish a mass of facts amply sufficient for the formulation of laws or principles which, once established, would raise maritime war to the level of a science.”<sup>100</sup> He used several illustrations to highlight how examples from the past provide a baseline or

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<sup>96</sup> Stephen B. Luce, “Report of Superintendent Naval War College, Newport R.I., Sept. 30, 1885,” RG-28, Naval War College President’s Records, Box 2, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>97</sup> Hayes and Hattendorf, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 45.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>99</sup> Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science, September 6, 1886,” *Proceedings*, vol. 12, no. 4 (October 1886), 531.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

foundation upon which new measures, policies, or practices could be developed, stating, “Thus, from the known, we may arrive at something like a clear understanding of what is now mere conjecture.”<sup>101</sup> He further described how observing the lessons from principles of warfare as demonstrated in the past, such as speed, and applying the comparative method for drawing conclusions, “we may formulate our own ideas on the subject of naval warfare.”<sup>102</sup> This was especially important in the age of steam for no material existed on how a navy should operate within the new world of steam power, steel warships, and the growth in destructive capability of new weapons. This view to the future by studying the past was evidence “that one first had to develop an understanding, a strategy, of what a navy was to do and why it existed, before one could properly select the means, the tactics, and the weapons by which it was to be done.”<sup>103</sup>

Luce not only realized how critical such an understanding of strategy and a blue-water navy’s purpose was for an aspiring power in this transformational era, but he also realized the importance of having the ability to develop officers with the capability of exercising such a level of strategic thought. He concluded his address that day stating, “knowing ourselves to be on the road that leads to the establishment of the science of naval warfare under steam, let us confidently look for that master mind who will lay the foundations of that science, and do for it what Jomini has done for the military science.”<sup>104</sup> That man was Mahan.

The extensive readings and study taken by Mahan in the period leading up to his arrival in Newport were valuable in preparing him to take on the role of advocate for the teaching of strategy and tactics at the War College. Specifically, the point of teaching strategy and tactics

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 534.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 542.

<sup>103</sup> Hayes and Hattendorf, *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 46.

<sup>104</sup> Stephen B. Luce, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” 546.

based upon historical examples of land battles and campaigns was important due to the lack of recent naval campaigns to illustrate the desired teaching points. In his report to the Secretary of the Navy in October 1886 he supported this position stating, “It is reasonably thought that the broad study of land warfare, so copiously illustrated in recent as well as earlier times, will materially aid the sea officer to correct conclusions as to the best use of the yet untried weapons...”<sup>105</sup> Where else but to the land wars of history could they look to find the examples needed for studying the tactical and strategical effect of decisions made in the manner of preparation or execution of battles or campaigns? Respected naval historian John Hattendorf remarked that the first form of naval history in the United States were biographies of great early naval leaders and their exploits in famous battles, while in Great Britain they relied upon operational histories.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the situation necessitated study of the great land campaigns of history upon which a foundational understanding of studying strategy could be laid before taking the next, and more complicated step of applying it to naval warfare. As Hattendorf stated when discussing the value of historical study, “Its application to navies involves a complex process by which one must first create a description of what occurred, then analyze it, compare and contrast it to fundamental theoretical ideas, examine it in relation to other similar experiences, and refine the fundamental theory with the generalizations that emerge.”<sup>107</sup> This was the task Luce envisioned for Mahan in his role at the War College.

Luce mentioned in his opening address to the College in 1886 the impact of Jomini on military science and the importance of bringing that kind of foundational application to the field

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<sup>105</sup> A.T. Mahan, “Report of Superintendent Naval War College, October 19, 1886, Newport, R.I.,” *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1886* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), 174.

<sup>106</sup> John B. Hattendorf, conversation with author, Newport, November 16, 2022.

<sup>107</sup> John B. Hattendorf, “Luce’s Idea of the Naval War College,” in *Naval History and Maritime Strategy: Collected Essays* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2000), 23.

of naval warfare. Mahan's notebook containing lecture notes on *The Art of War* as it pertained to coastal defense outlined many of the tenets of Jomini, among others, including principles of strategy, grand tactics, logistics, elementary tactics, and art of the equipment.<sup>108</sup> In one of Mahan's first lectures written for the War College in 1886 on naval tactics, he made a direct correlation between the two. In the introductory remarks to his lecture, Mahan stated, "Having thus the components of the fleet to deduce the best dispositions for developing the full power of each arm, and for combining all there at any stage of an engagement; so as to bring out the fullest power of the fleet as a whole."<sup>109</sup> This is an illustration of one of the key elements of Jomini's Grand Tactics. Mahan directly referred to notes by Jomini on several occasions in the lecture, for example, when discussing naval actions at close quarters and cavalry operations with speed and maneuverability as important requirements.<sup>110</sup>

There is a section in the middle of Mahan's lecture on naval tactics where he drifted, by his own admission, into a higher-level discussion on the issues surrounding the purpose and use of a navy. He stated, "It is well to keep in mind that there are two kinds of animus with which naval warfare may be waged, according as the intent of the two combatants is to control the sea, or simply to cover their aims upon the land."<sup>111</sup> During this discussion, Mahan explains how the French and the British both differed in their use of their naval forces in the previous two centuries. He highlighted how the French used their navy essentially as a subordinate element of the army in support of objectives in land campaigns. This relegated the navy to a lower level of

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<sup>108</sup> A.T. Mahan, Naval War College Notebook, MSC-34, Manuscript Items, Box 9, Folder 5. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>109</sup> A.T. Mahan, "Lecture on Naval Tactics at the Naval War College, April-May 1886," MSC-017, A.T. Mahan Papers, Box 1, Folder 1b. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 28-32.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 49.

esteem and funding having a detrimental effect on the overall professional status and capability of the French Navy. This improved some during the time of the American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars when they were able to ally with Spain and push the Royal Navy to its limits, but yet were never able to concentrate enough naval force and provide it with sound direction. Therefore, they were never able to soundly defeat the British fleet for, “there was always some strategic consideration which made it necessary to economize the fleet; and fair advantages, partial successes, were allowed to go unimproved.”<sup>112</sup>

The English, however, held the exact opposite point of view. Mahan explained how, although the goal of the British was to “possess the land; the sea in itself is but a barren highway; but they aimed to possess the land through control of the sea.”<sup>113</sup> The English used the sea as a basis of their operations upon which to extend her empire for commerce and trade. Royal Navy strategic doctrine entailed not only possessing the land, but constructing fortified ports and bases to support “the great principle of her naval warfare; which was to attack and destroy the organized forces of the enemy wherever she found them.”<sup>114</sup> Yet again, Mahan referred to Jomini in describing what Jomini called, “Napoleon’s favorite objective: ‘the destruction or disorganization of the enemy’s forces without giving attention to geographical points of any kind.’”<sup>115</sup> Mahan sums up this element of difference between the two forces stating:

The whole history of the French and English navies is a powerful illustration of what is one of the accepted maxims of war in all ages and under all conditions: the advantage gained by the initiative, whether in the general policy of the war, or in individual battles; upon the land, or upon the ocean at large.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 53.

Mahan further described the importance of maintaining a strong and capable fleet in order to achieve the stated objectives of a campaign or war using the example of the British ability to blockade the French Navy in port through superior numbers and overall capability. This is an example of successfully answering the questions of a navy's purpose, as well as that of ship types. He brought this point close to home in how it related to U. S. naval policy:

If our people really mean, what some among them say, to enforce a Monroe doctrine, or to control the Isthmus [of Panama]; it behooves them at once to decide what part the United States Navy is to be ready to play in the Gulf of Mexico, and by what numbers that part is to be sustained. (But they won't).<sup>117</sup>

The step from naval tactics to naval strategy and the implications that strategy could have on naval and defense policy of the United States was a dramatic one. The essence of studying and analyzing history to build the ability in the officer corps of the Navy to think on a higher plane was one of the chief aims of Stephen B. Luce in his drive to establish the Naval War College. This lecture formed the basis for direction of most of Mahan's work both at the War College and beyond for the next two decades and more. The lectures given by Mahan in his first two years at the College would later be published in a landmark work, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (1890).

The impact these lectures had on the College and the Navy as a whole were very eloquently and deliberately addressed in a letter from Luce to the Office of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation – one of the most powerful officers in the Navy. Amid a variety of administrative struggles surrounding the War College in the autumn of 1888, Luce lobbied to retain Mahan in Newport to continue his lectures on naval tactics under steam. In describing his contributions and his role in this important area of transformation for the Navy, Luce noted that if Mahan were allowed to continue it would “place us at once in the front rank of the Navies of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



the world in the Science of Naval Warfare.”<sup>118</sup> Luce voiced concern over the lack of understanding on the nature of this kind of work among those in the Navy and asked that the faculty of the College be kept in place to enable them to complete the important work they were undertaking to ensure its continuance and not left to founder. If not, he noted, “there are men in our own profession who do not comprehend the nature and extent of the work now being accomplished by the College.”<sup>119</sup> Mahan was only allowed to remain in Newport until January 1889, but he made the most out of his remaining time there to help the College remain in place.

Not long after Mahan arrived in Newport and assumed duties as the President of the War College, he faced what would become a seemingly never-ending struggle to maintain the College as an independent institution in Newport with the objective of training officers in the higher form of the art and science of war. Since its inception, many had acknowledged the value and benefit of what the College stood for and was producing in the officers who attended the courses, as evident by the reports of the Secretary of the Navy to Congress, reports by the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, the Admiral of the Navy, and officer graduates themselves. One of the most notable endorsements and arguments for appropriations to continue support of the College came from Admiral of the Navy David D. Porter:

If an officer wishes to stand well in his profession, he must acquire a knowledge of everything that is developed in the science of naval warfare. Not only the individual is benefited, but the Government, which is enabled to select the proper officers for particular service in case of an emergency.

We are about to construct a new navy, wherein the highest possible standard will be required for building, equipping, and managing the vessels. The college should therefore not only be maintained, but the Government should constantly enrich it with every available kind of information, and leave nothing undone to render it the pride of the Navy

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<sup>118</sup> S. B. Luce to Lieutenant J.F. Meigs, October 29, 1888, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

– a place where officers can assemble and compare opinions out of which will accrue benefits not possible from the Naval Academy alone.

It is this interchange of thought, this discussion of professional subjects, which most enlightens an officer in regard to his profession. That is exactly what we need a war college for – to discuss war problems which do not enter into the elementary instruction of the naval profession but embrace everything in science that pertains to the service.

I have then only to say on the part of the Navy that the War College is an absolute necessity if it is intended to bring the service up to that standard which it should maintain in professional matters.<sup>120</sup>

Despite this ringing endorsement, the College still did not have solid footing in the Department and with members of Congress, as indicated by a lack of dedicated funding to the sustainment of the College and maintenance of its facilities. In his opening address to the new class on August 6, 1888, Mahan paid tribute to those who graduated before this new class as being part of the movement in the Navy to understand and appreciate what the College was bringing to the Navy as a whole. However, he also acknowledged the warning signs of potential trouble yet to come as he described the difficulties in obtaining instructors for the faculty, the loss and lack of replacement for Army Lieutenant Bliss for lecturer in Military Science, and the failure of any other high-ranking Army or Navy leader to come to the College as a visiting lecturer, owing all to the still young status of the War College. He warned that it was still unproven that the College met an identified need and was nothing more than what some called a post-graduate course that could be fulfilled by or near the Naval Academy at Annapolis.<sup>121</sup>

Although the College was established under William Chandler as Secretary of the Navy, that position was held by William Whitney in 1888, who was not exactly a supporter of the

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<sup>120</sup> David D. Porter, “Report of the Admiral of the Navy, July 18, 1888,” *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1888* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888), 17-18.

<sup>121</sup> A.T. Mahan, “Address of Captain A.T. Mahan, U.S. Navy, President of the U.S. Naval War College, At the Opening of the Fourth Annual Session of the College, August 6, 1888,” *Proceedings*, vol. 14, no. 4 (October 1888), 621-624.

College. The Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, Hilary Herbert, was also not in favor of the College and refused to allow any direct appropriations for its support. Mahan sought a way to change their opinions of the College by taking aim at the strongest of accusations – that the War College was merely a post-graduate course. He felt that if the College were moved to Annapolis the material aspects of the Navy including steam, ordnance, power, and others would take priority in the curriculum over the study of warfare, “because the disposition, alike of the Navy of the age, is to insist upon material perfection as the chief end of military effort.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, Mahan took action to remove all aspects of material instruction from the curriculum for the College and focus solely upon the instruction on the art and science of war. The only exception being an interest “to know what the implements will effect in the conduct of war.”<sup>123</sup>

Despite the changes made to the curriculum to prevent any misunderstanding of the true purpose and intent for the War College, Congress again denied any appropriation for the 1887 fiscal year. Mahan’s greatest frustration with the situation was that “although no better argument for the need of the institution could be found than that furnished by the fact that a man so influential upon the interests of the Navy had no apparent conception of the necessity for studying the Art of War.”<sup>124</sup> Mahan found the same lack of appreciation resident in Secretary Whitney the following year when Mahan requested permission to appeal to the Committee for funding when Whitney replied to Mahan, “I will not oppose you, but I do not authorize you to express any approval from me.”<sup>125</sup> As a result of Mahan’s deliberations with the Committee on Naval Affairs, he was able to secure funding for the coming year for the College.

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<sup>122</sup> A.T. Mahan, *Reminiscences*, 3.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

In July of 1888, Secretary of the Navy Whitney dropped a bomb on Newport with a recommendation to the Senate Appropriations Committee to consolidate the War College and the Torpedo School into one facility under the guise of economic and administrative efficiencies. The Commanding Officer of the Torpedo Station would be the overall officer in charge of the consolidated facility. That officer was Captain Caspar Goodrich, a former member of the Luce Board that formulated the action plan for the establishment of the War College in 1884. Then in August, Whitney dropped another with an order limiting the course of study at the College to just three months based on an arbitrary review of the previous year's course schedule. Mahan was furious for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the class just about to start was set for four months, giving Mahan just five days to make the necessary changes to the course schedule and curriculum.<sup>126</sup>

Mahan wrote a long letter to his lifelong friend and classmate from the Naval Academy, Samuel Ashe, complaining in private about his feelings for and opinions of Mr. Whitney. None of them were all to favorable to say the least, but Mahan acknowledged he would never publicly oppose or refute the orders by the Secretary. He only wished Whitney had brought the matter to his attention for discussion prior to making it public. Mahan noted to Ashe that, "my administration here has commanded the approval of the Navy, converted opponents into friends, and that I am almost daily in receipt of evidences of appreciation which...clearly show that I have worked a doubtful experiment up into full professional favor."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1977), 182-183.

<sup>127</sup> A.T. Mahan to Samuel A. Ashe, August 10, 1888, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, vol. 1, 1847-1889 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 654.

Luce was angry as well and sent a letter to Secretary Whitney signed by himself, Admiral Porter, and six other senior officers. Luce reminded the Secretary of the approved plan from the 1884 board led by Luce, noted the growth and wide support of the College in the Navy, and that it should be allowed to continue on its present course. Luce warned that consolidating the two schools in Narragansett Bay would only lead to a degradation of both. The courses of instruction and purpose for each were so far apart any merger would nullify the value of both schools. He did acknowledge that combining the schools administratively only could make efficient use of resources, but they must leave the curriculum and execution separate.<sup>128</sup> Whitney acknowledged none of these warnings. Following the conclusion of the 1888 session, the War College for all practical purposes became a shell of its former self. The other unfortunate result of this incident was that it signified the start of what would become a never-ending series of debate over what to do with the War College that continues in some form or fashion even today.

Although the 1888 class was impacted by the changes, the controversy was not without value. While assisting Mahan in preparing the list of potential guest lecturers for the session, Luce reached out to Theodore Roosevelt regarding his book on the naval aspects of the War of 1812 published in 1882. Luce believed Roosevelt would be an excellent choice for providing a lecture to the College on this subject with the clear tie to the analysis of the history of naval warfare. He encouraged Roosevelt to reach out to Mahan directly to learn more about the opportunity. What transpired was not only Roosevelt's first lecture at the College, but a long association between Mahan and Roosevelt that would prove beneficial in various ways when Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy and later President of the United States.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> S. B. Luce to William C. Whitney, August 13, 1888, RG-01, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 14. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>129</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 28.

After the 1888 session, Mahan was transferred to Puget Sound to lead a commission to select the location for a new navy yard, ending his tenure as President of the War College. He returned as a lecturer in the summer of 1889. The session held at the Torpedo Station began with twelve officers, but finished with only six. The new administration under President Benjamin Harrison and Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy held a more favorable view of the War College and took steps toward restoring the institution in both physical and intellectual strength, starting with an appropriation for \$100,000 dollars for a new facility. In 1892, the Naval War College began again in its new home just across the street from where it started in 1884. The same building, now named Luce Hall, remains part of a larger and more modern facility for the present-day Naval War College.<sup>130</sup>

#### The Influence of Sea Power

Amidst all the furor over the changes to the College stemming from Secretary Whitney, Mahan was still thinking toward the future regarding the influence of naval power in history. As early as September 1888, he was reaching out to potential publishers for his collection of lectures from the War College on the subject starting with Charles Scribner's Sons.<sup>131</sup> This initial query failed to yield anything promising and started a long series of rejections from various publishing houses, with most responding that the work "was far too technical and specialized to appeal to most readers."<sup>132</sup> Mahan continued to seek someone with an interest to publishing the lectures, both from commercial houses and independent investors.

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<sup>130</sup> A.T. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 205-207.

<sup>131</sup> A.T. Mahan to Charles Scribner's Sons, September 4, 1888, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, 1847-1889, 657.

<sup>132</sup> R. Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 192.

Ironically, though, at the time Mahan was seeking ways to publish his lectures in a book, he was also responding to the U.S. Naval Institute as to why lectures from the War College should not be published.<sup>133</sup> Mahan commented on the theory that by publishing the lectures the work from the War College would then be able to reach a wider audience within the Navy, help develop a higher level of thinking across the board, and by extension increase the benefit of the College to the Navy as a whole. This was not a bad theory, but Mahan argued against it, pointing out the practical reality of the limits of a naval officer's time both ashore and at sea. When would they find the time to read lectures on the art of war when there was so much other material addressing the mechanical and physical realms of naval issues to consume their day? Printing lectures from the War College in *Proceedings* along with papers on the latest technological, mechanical, or logistical advancement would do nothing more than losing the War College lectures within the mix of the others. This was one of the reasons those subject areas were removed from the curriculum at the College during the post-graduate course debate. Mahan believed:

It can be set right, not by printing our work, however good it be, among a lot of papers on matters considered more important, but only by an *organized effort of the Government* to create and disseminate a system of naval war. The College is such an organized attempt.<sup>134</sup>

Mahan further described the value of giving and receiving lectures in person as a better means of teaching the subject matter. The discussion and debate present in a lecture hall would be absent in the pages of a printed book. Printing the lectures and making them available to all would again beg the question of the need for the College. If one could simply read the lectures in

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<sup>133</sup> A.T. Mahan, "A Letter of Captain A. T. Mahan, November 27, 1888," *Proceedings*, vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1889), 57.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

their off time then why would they and the Navy need to take the time to send them to Newport for three to four months away from the fleet? How much does a reader truly absorb or buy into the subject matter when not placed in a position where they would have to defend or attack a position in debate with others in the same room? These were values brought to bear at the College. Mahan remarked to the Naval Institute:

The College ensures an audience. It ensures the dissemination of such results as the lecturers obtain. It invests the whole with the sanction of superior authority, the weight of which with naval officers is indisputable. If it publish[es], the incentives are lost; most will be unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to attend, and it is known that some at least cannot be compelled. The uncertainties of the last year have taught me that when the audience is insecure, the lecturers feel indifference. The result would be a cessation of production; publication would cease because there was nothing to publish, and the College itself would come to an end because it no longer justified its existence. Yet without some such governmental care as is implied by an organized institution, it is vain to hope for the development of the art of naval war.<sup>135</sup>

While Mahan may have thought that way in the fall of 1888, it did not deter him from proceeding with seeking publication following his departure from the College in early 1889. When he seemed to be getting nowhere in that regard, Mahan sought the guidance and support from his old friend, Stephen Luce, who retired from the Navy in February 1889. Luce was supportive of the project, but was far more concerned with Mahan being able to get past it so he could resume his work on fleet tactics under steam – a subject far more important to the Navy in Luce’s opinion. He also felt it would be more productive to Mahan’s career going forward, but Mahan was determined to see his lectures published for a greater good. Besides, Luce could not have known that Mahan had a much greater “interest in the broader subject of the influence sea power had had on history.”<sup>136</sup> In September 1889, Mahan, somewhat dejected, wrote to Luce about his latest efforts with a house in Boston, stating, “With these efforts I purpose giving up

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>136</sup> R. Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 193.



the effort. I wish to publish for I am naturally a teacher and would like to increase my audience; but I don't care for it enough to continue applications which have to me all the appearance of personal solicitation for a favor."<sup>137</sup> In somewhat of a consolation, Mahan also noted of the opportunity for producing copies for various military schools and libraries for use in reference including copies for both ship's libraries, Army post libraries, and obviously the War College library. Beyond this, Mahan wrote, "I am not willing...to go on begging publish[ers]. It both distracts, vexes and hinders me in my other work."<sup>138</sup> What Mahan did not know when he wrote to Luce was that a publishing house in Boston found his work appealing. Soon after he learned of their plans, he wrote to Luce informing him that, "Little, Brown & Co have undertaken to publish the book."<sup>139</sup>

Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* was published in May 1890. The enormous reception of the book "was world-wide and almost instantaneous;"<sup>140</sup> however, it must be noted again that this was based on a collection of lectures and "not an original piece of work from either an intellectual or conceptual standpoint. It was a skillful analysis of the ideas of others."<sup>141</sup> Mahan understood and acknowledged this also. Ideas and concepts all have an origin, but they will never make an impact if not expressed or demonstrated to others. Sometimes it may take multiple times for an idea to take hold, or the timing just may

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<sup>137</sup> A.T. Mahan to S. B. Luce, September 21, 1889, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, 1847-1889, 707-708.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 708.

<sup>139</sup> A.T. Mahan to S. B. Luce, October 16, 1889, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, 1847-1889, 714.

<sup>140</sup> Captain W. D. Puleston, "Mahan: Naval Philosopher," *Scribner's*, vol. 96, no. 5 (November 1934), 294.

<sup>141</sup> R. Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 199.

not be right for it to make a notable difference in the way things are done or treated. This was similar to the case with Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power*.

Two officers in the Navy wrote about concepts similar to those analyzed and published by Mahan. Commander Robert Shufeldt wrote in the 1870s about the "direct connection between America's commercial expansion, her national power and security, and the existence of a powerful U.S. Navy and merchant marine."<sup>142</sup> Then in 1882, Ensign William Glenn David contributed an entry to the essay contest of the Naval Institute in which he "linked the potential growth of the nation's overseas trade with the need to revive the American merchant marine and provide a respectable navy to support and protect it."<sup>143</sup> David conducted a similar survey analysis as Mahan but using different nations and focusing more on the merchant trade and the role naval forces play in the protection of that trade and less on the use of naval forces in action against each other to achieve or support national objectives.<sup>144</sup>

The ideas expressed by men such as David and Shufeldt, among others, were popular in the mid-1880s and spurred discussion at the time regarding the modernization of the U.S. Navy. Again the questions of what is a navy for, what should a navy do, and what kind of ships should a navy have were at the center of many debates in Congress and elsewhere. These and other questions and theories on the purpose of sea power were at the center of Mahan's thought in preparation of his lectures for the War College. Mahan's work was much more extensive and provided a greater emphasis on the aspects of naval warfare with regard to command of the sea. Mahan said as much in the opening page of his work stating, "the history of sea power, while

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> William G. David, "Our Merchant Marine: The Causes of its Decline, and the Means to be taken for its Revival, March 9, 1882," *Proceedings*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1882), 151-186.

embracing in its broad sweep all that tends to make a people great upon the sea or by the sea, is largely a military history; and it is in this aspect that it will be mainly, though not exclusively, regarded in the following pages.”<sup>145</sup>

Mahan went to great lengths to explain his purpose and intent for publishing these lectures. In a letter accompanying a copy of the book he sent to Luce, Mahan reiterated his intent with the book was to “write a critical *military* history of the naval past, not a chronicle of naval events.”<sup>146</sup> Mahan sent a copy to the Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin F. Tracy, and provided a bit more description and justification of his “broad foundation for the study of naval warfare, under modern conditions, by a systematic presentation and analysis of the naval strategy and tactical methods of the past.”<sup>147</sup> He sent a copy to then Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge, a member of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, stating his intent was to “make the experience of the past influence the opinions and shape the policy of the future.”<sup>148</sup> He affirms this early in the book, comparing how Napoleon studied campaigns of the ancient past for application in his campaigns of the previous century, noting:

While many of the conditions of war vary from age to age with the progress of weapons, there are certain teachings in the school of history which remain constant, and being, therefore, of universal application, can be elevated to the rank of general principles. For the same reason the study of the sea history of the past will be found instructive, by its illustration of the general principles of maritime war, notwithstanding the great changes that have been brought about in naval weapons by the scientific advances of the past half century, and by the introduction of steam as the motive power.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, 1.

<sup>146</sup> A.T. Mahan to S. B. Luce, May 7, 1890, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 10.

<sup>147</sup> A.T. Mahan to Benjamin F. Tracy, May 10, 1890, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 10.

<sup>148</sup> A.T. Mahan to Henry Cabot Lodge, May 19, 1890, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 11.

<sup>149</sup> A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, 2.

Mahan followed up with another update to Luce again stressing his desire to ultimately see good come back to the War College through the success of the book. He remarked, “The reason why I did not mention the College in connection with my book was because I thought any serious harm to the one, in that case, affect the other.”<sup>150</sup> In the same letter, Mahan told Luce of other influential people to which he sent copies of the book, along with letters pressing the objectives of the War College through these lectures and the study of naval history. Some of those included the Secretary of the Navy and members of the Committee on Naval Affairs, but also Congressman Joseph Wheeler of Alabama, and Theodore Roosevelt. Others receiving copies were some of Mahan’s followers and friends in England including Admiral Phipps Hornby of the Royal Navy, Captain William H. Henderson of the Royal Navy, and British naval strategists Captain Sir Philip Colomb, Vice-Admiral John Colomb, and John Knox Laughton. Laughton read the book as soon as it was available in England that summer of 1890 and had laudatory comments on the work, remarking in a letter to Luce, “I think it quite the most important contribution to naval literature which has appeared for very many years.”<sup>151</sup>

Roosevelt, as it may be recalled, was one of the guest lecturers at the War College in the fall session of 1888, and would be a long-time supporter of both the College and Mahan.<sup>152</sup> Roosevelt, a naval historian himself, clearly understood what Mahan was talking about when he spoke of the ways government can influence a nation’s ability in the maritime environment. Specifically, when Mahan noted that influence “will be felt in its most legitimate manner in maintaining an armed navy, of a size commensurate with the growth of its shipping and the

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<sup>150</sup> A.T. Mahan to Stephen B. Luce, May 23, 1890, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>151</sup> J.K. Laughton to S.B. Luce, August 3, 1890, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

importance of the interests connected with it.”<sup>153</sup> Roosevelt wrote a glowing review of the book in the October 1890 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, congratulating Mahan and calling out to his readers to take note of what Mahan was espousing in his pages. It was evident the two shared the belief that the United States, “was destined to be a maritime state [and] to achieve [that] destiny, it needed a merchant marine and a powerful navy to protect it. The best protection, indeed, the only real protection, came from command of the sea.”<sup>154</sup> To provide that protection, Roosevelt said the United States needed, “a large navy, composed not merely of cruisers, but containing also a full proportion of powerful battleships able to meet those of any other nation.”<sup>155</sup>

Mahan received many notes of congratulations from friends and peers in the Navy further validating that what he was preaching was valuable to those in the Navy. He also recognized the importance of reaching men of influence and power with his book for it was there where the ability to enact real change lay. Whereas the majority of Mahan’s book is a series of lessons in history and the role sea power played in the rise and fall of the nations discussed, the first chapter, “Elements of Sea Power,” is a summary discussion of the issues and theories debated for years on the role command of the sea played in the success and / or failure of nations. One Mahan biographer described it as “the final stage in the flowering of Alfred Thayer Mahan as a mature and hardy imperialist.”<sup>156</sup> Is this a valid description? Possibly so because the biographer made that assessment based on Mahan’s discussion on the relationship between growth in the maritime enterprise and sea power. More specifically, Mahan’s analysis addressed the position of

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<sup>153</sup> A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, 82.

<sup>154</sup> Alex Roland, W. Jeffrey Bolster, Alexander Keyssar, *The Way of the Ship: America’s Maritime History Reenvisioned, 1600-2000* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 258.

<sup>155</sup> R. Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 210

<sup>156</sup> R. Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 205.

the United States in the time of publication of this book and the growing threat (real or not) to American national security from European advances in the western hemisphere.

Although published more than six months after *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, an article in *The Atlantic* in December 1890 likely contributed to this interpretation of Mahan and his imperialistic persona. In “The United States Looking Outward,” Mahan discussed in this article the situation facing the United States in that time regarding position among the global trading nations, maritime shipping routes, and the global security situation. From its birth, the United States had enjoyed a position of relative security in the world based on its geographic location with major bodies of water on three sides. This created an isolationist atmosphere by default for many years until growth in American production capability exceeded internal needs, and the international maritime trade enterprise increased as did the number of developing nations participating in that trade. As the world grew more developed in capabilities it became smaller in operational area. For Americans, this created “aspirations for commercial extension, for colonies, and for influence in distant regions, which may bring, and, even under our present policy, have already brought them into collision with ourselves.”<sup>157</sup>

Mahan went on to describe the situation developing in the world where trade routes that used to go in certain directions based on the products moved and the nations involved in that trade were changing. Security threats and cost were obvious factors influencing those changes. One of the greatest changes occurred in the Caribbean Sea where trade routes greatly diminished, but the future plans for a trans-isthmus canal across Central America connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific would change all that in dramatic fashion. Shipping of all kinds would increase in the

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<sup>157</sup> A.T. Mahan, “The United States Looking Outward,” *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1890), March 29, 2020, <http://sageamericanhistory.net/worldpower/docs/Mahan.htm>.

Caribbean commensurate with the aspirations and interests of trading nations. Mahan noted, “Every position in that sea will have enhanced commercial and military value, and the canal itself will become a strategic centre of the most vital importance.”<sup>158</sup> When this occurred it would become a significant threat to the United States due to the proximity of so many other potential threats and the dreadful state of American military preparedness – especially in the realm of naval capability. Mahan stated:

the United States is woefully unready, not only in fact, but in purpose, to assert in the Caribbean and Central America a weight of influence proportioned to the extent of her interests. We have not the navy, and, what is worse, we are not willing to have the navy, that will weigh seriously in any disputes with those nations whose interests will there conflict with our own.<sup>159</sup>

The United States was no longer in the position of luxury to remain isolationist in nature or in policy. The world was growing, and America had to grow with it and be prepared to compete in that race or risk being trampled by more powerful competitors who were willing to invest in the capability to be successful. Mahan noted, “To protect and develop its own, each nation will seek points of support and means of influence in a quarter where the United States has always been jealously sensitive to the intrusion of European powers.”<sup>160</sup> In other words, unless those in the government were to acknowledge the importance of the Caribbean region to the national interests of the United States, any proposed stance on the validity of the Monroe Doctrine would fail. Similar conditions growing in Europe resulting from the increasing strength of Germany and France were making Great Britain uncomfortable in its own security envelope behind the English Channel and North Sea. How soon before activities there made their way

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

across the Atlantic to interests closer to American shores was only a matter of time. Mahan's closing statement to the readers of *The Atlantic* was a warning:

Americans must now begin to look outward. The growing production of the country demands it. An increasing volume of public sentiment demands it. The position of the United States, between the two Old Worlds and the two great oceans, makes the same claim, which will soon be strengthened by the creation of the new link joining the Atlantic and the Pacific. The tendency will be maintained and increased by the growth of the European colonies in the Pacific, by the advancing civilization of Japan, and by the rapid peopling of our Pacific States with men who have all the aggressive spirit of the advanced line of national progress.<sup>161</sup>

Mahan spoke to this concern in his discussion on the need for a navy as dictated by the character of a government – one of the elements of sea power. He stated, “in a representative government any military expenditure must have a strongly represented interest behind it, convinced of its necessity.”<sup>162</sup> Another way of defining this can relate to the national interests. What are the national interests and how could they be achieved through the establishment of a blue-water navy? Again, what is the purpose of the navy, what does the nation need it to do, and what kind of ships does the navy need in order to succeed ring clear in this discussion. What drives a government to have certain interests? Many things, but within the context of Mahan's discussion on sea power and the development of strategic thought for the Navy it centers around the three questions noted above. In 1890 one of the motivating factors that helped drive this evolution of strategic thought within the context of the elements of sea power as outlined by Mahan included the developing situation in the Central American and Caribbean region. Mahan made a foretelling premonition when he said, “The motive, if any there be, which will give the

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, 88.



United States a navy, is probably now quickening in the Central American Isthmus. Let us hope it will not come to the birth too late.”<sup>163</sup>

#### Protected Cruiser No. 6 in 1890

During this same period of transition at the Naval War College and the awakening of America, the world, and the U. S. Navy to Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, the ship known then as Protected Cruiser No. 6 was laid down at the Union Iron Works of San Francisco, California, in the last quarter of the year 1890. She was one of the new steam-powered, steel ships for the Navy authorized by Congress in September 1888 with a range of 13,000 miles, four 8-inch and ten 5-inch guns among her armaments, a protective belt of armor, and still capable of reaching speeds up to nineteen or twenty knots. The Navy reported, “The combination of sustained speed, exceptional coal endurance, powerful battery, and a certain amount of armor protection make her a cruiser of no ordinary character.”<sup>164</sup>

The discussion on what type of ships to build for the Navy was in full furor in this period, and the publication of Mahan’s book energized the debate even further in many locations. In January 1890, Congress directed the Navy Policy Board examine the question of what kind of ships the Navy would need for the mission of coastal defense of American shores. The results of that report were presented to Congress on January 28, 1890, by Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin F. Tracy. In his report, Tracy identified as issues considered in their examination many of the same factors of concern noted in Mahan’s lectures from the Naval War College and that were to be published just a few short months later in May that year, even noting the concern over the

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1890*, 9.

position of the United States upon completion of a canal connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific. Tracy acknowledged that with rising commitments resulting from national interests abroad came responsibilities. The corresponding bill for construction of the required ships of various types to meet these needs came to the tune of an estimated \$9,000,000 in annual appropriations for a fifteen-year program. If completed, this force would be 100 vessels strong consisting of twenty battleships, twenty coastal defense ships, and sixty cruisers.<sup>165</sup>

At the end of the year, the Secretary provided an update to Congress on the increase of the Navy assuring them the types of ships planned or under construction were within the guidelines of what the Navy required for its assigned missions in defense of the nation. He provided an update on the assessment of defensive capability for the nation's coastline and key ports to include capability of the Army regarding coastal fortifications and artillery as part of those plans, as well as a summary review of how the alternative could appear if the assets and resources for defense of the nation were not provided – meaning, how a city like New York would suffer under capture by an enemy force. He provided this picture to illustrate how a 100% defense of the entire American coastline and harbors was impossible even given the increase in ships already authorized by Congress. Therefore, more specificity would be required in the ship construction needs for the Navy to meet its assigned missions per the national interests and established priorities. In summing up his report, Tracy concluded:

I repeat here the proposition that was laid down at the opening of my report last year, that 'the purpose for which the United States maintains a Navy is not conquest, but defense.' The best guaranty of peace is a judicious expenditure for the Navy, such as will meet the necessities of the country.

The price is not too high to pay if it affords the means whereby the United States, for the first time in many years, may be enabled to preserve and defend its rights. War is a great

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<sup>165</sup> Letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, 51<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., January 29, 1890, Ex. Doc. No. 43.

calamity, but it is not the greatest calamity that can befall a free, intelligent, and self-respecting people.<sup>166</sup>

Protected Cruiser No. 6, USS *Olympia*, would become part of that naval force to preserve and defend the rights of the United States when called upon. She and other ships like her were evidence of the increasing evolution of American naval strategic thought moving into the final decade of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>166</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1890*, 41.

## Chapter 5

### Physical Transformation Drives Intellectual Transformation in the Royal Navy

With the onset of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, it could be argued that the era of Pax Britannica was beginning to end. Decades of relative peace, or at least the absence of any major continental conflict, in Europe certainly came to a close with the war that resulted in the reunification of Germany. This was a monumental shift of power in Europe causing Britain to consider potential threats to her position as the foremost economic and industrial power in the world. During this period, “the balance of power was no longer an equilibrium of satisfied states, but the confronting accumulations of armed force...[and] for the first time, the British public began to fear a German, not a French, invasion.”<sup>1</sup> No other nation could claim to have within the realm of their control all the resources necessary to develop and sustain the ability to expand and defend that realm. During this period, the Royal Navy was the principal arm that placed Britain in this position of advantage, and provided the means of linking distant colonies and trading partners worldwide. As a result, “British policies of economic co-operation in terms of free trade, peace and prosperity, were generally acceptable. The established superiority of the Royal Navy discouraged competition.”<sup>2</sup>

However, this position of advantage would only last as long as other nations were content to remain in a lesser position than Britain, or at least until they gained the means to challenge that position. The technological and manufacturing advances of the Second Industrial Revolution not only gave nations the ability to modernize, but the motivation to seek the resources to supply that modernization in support of national interests. In other words:

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<sup>1</sup> Strang, *Britain in World Affairs*, 200.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald S. Graham, *The Politics of Naval Supremacy, Studies in British Maritime Ascendancy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 120-121.

When European states began to re-examine their national policies in the light of their prospective industrialization and when they started to build their own steam machinery, enlarge and re-equip their own factories, lay down iron rails, and construct iron hulls, the age of *Pax Britannica* was over...[Although] command of the sea was obviously beyond their reach...without much understanding of their use, they proceeded, in the manner of Wilhelm II, to build navies to support national policies that were initially a consequence of economic compulsions accompanying industrial revolution and technological change.<sup>3</sup>

The economic competition from other countries emerging into the international trade community challenged the dominance of Great Britain in a variety of markets. Along with the industrial and technological improvements brought by the Industrial Revolution came growth in the population of Britain. This strained the internal resources available, requiring further business abroad to meet the growing demand for commercial goods. Other countries began to out-pace Britain in their industrial capability and capacity. Exports of machinery and coal were two of the larger commodity groups increasing in order to help maintain the economy. The danger here was those same commodities were essential in building ships, and instead of using them at home in Britain they were being sold to potential competitors or even future adversaries.<sup>4</sup>

Among the critical elements required in order for nations to industrialize and build navies to advance or support national policies were resources. The larger or more advanced fleets became, the greater the requirement for resources to both build and sustain those fleets. The lines of communication between the sources of supply for the resources and the sites for construction also required protection driving the need for resources even higher. Thus, “as the science of naval warfare advance[d], the necessity for developing these resources at the great strategic points, and for efficiently protecting them, [increased].”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Strang, *Britain in World Affairs*, 200-201.

<sup>5</sup> Captain J. C. R. Colomb, *Colonial Defense*, 21-22.

Britain was facing a whole new world in the final twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Her naval and military strength enabled the empire to sustain its position as a global economic power. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Royal Navy's "most constant function probably was the nourishment and extension of...overseas trade."<sup>6</sup> However, as the empire continued to grow, new challengers to British superiority on the sea and in maritime commerce also grew. The world was changing and Britain had to adjust to new circumstances or get left behind. How would the advances of the Second Industrial Revolution impact the future of the Royal Navy? How would the Royal Navy adjust to operating in an operational realm affected by a wide variety of new and advanced weapons and ships? It was a world requiring a re-examination of the methods and policies for employment of naval forces in support of new and developing national interests. Captain John Colomb recognized the predicament in which Britain found itself:

The nation has vainly hoped to stumble across Imperial naval principles, and it now finds itself hopelessly confused as to what are great naval principles, and what are – however big – mere details. This has produced national weariness and apathy in naval affairs, and it may end in the decadence of national and naval spirit. Even the English mind cannot be interested in what it cannot comprehend; and once national interest in naval affairs passes into a certain stage of deadly dull disregard, we may well look at our Imperial future with dismay.<sup>7</sup>

Although Britain could still claim naval superiority over most of the world, the basis for that claim was growing weaker with each passing year. The growing challenge to Britain's economic might was evident in the recurring presence of foreign naval vessels in various parts of the world where formerly ships of the Royal Navy were most common. By the mid-1880s, vessels from the navies of Germany and France sailed throughout the trade routes of the Atlantic,

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<sup>6</sup> Captain S. W. Roskill, *The Strategy of Sea Power: Its Development and Application* (London: St James's Place, 1962), 98.

<sup>7</sup> Captain J. C. R. Colomb, *The Defense of Great and Greater Britain*, 246.

Pacific, and Indian Oceans charged with protection of their nations' merchant fleets along with colonial and business interests abroad. New patterns of trade and increase competition for resources drove this period of imperialistic growth by the industrialized nations of the world in the regions of the Pacific, the Far East, and Africa and included active participation from Germany, Italy, France, Russia, Japan, and eventually the United States.<sup>8</sup> To survive in such a competitive sphere with challenges increasing year upon year, Britain struggled to comply with the requirements of the Two-Power standard required by the Naval Defense Act of 1889 where, "She is...compelled to maintain...the most powerful navy in the world, at least equal in strength to the navies of any two other maritime Powers put together."<sup>9</sup>

The final two decades of the nineteenth century saw tremendous change in the structure and capability of the Royal Navy in response to the emerging regional threat from Germany, and the growing threat of competition to British dominance in the maritime trade enterprise worldwide. However, a major difference in the naval transformation in Britain versus that in America was that the conversion to a larger and modernized fleet occurred faster and without the higher level of intellectual transformation to accompany that modernization. There were some early advocates for intellectual change with the objective of encouraging strategic thought, but their voice was limited to forums such as the Royal United Services Institute and other similar societies or publications. The move toward a more formal mode of developing strategic naval thought began in this period with men the likes of John Knox Laughton, Philip Colomb, Cyprian Bridge, and Reginald Custance at the forefront of the effort.

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<sup>8</sup> Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1994), 200-201.

<sup>9</sup> E. F. Knight, *Over-Sea Britain*, 18.

### Discussions on British Strategy and Naval Power

There came renewed national interest in naval affairs following the Naval Defense Act of 1889 from which the Two Power Standard officially came into being. Public sentiment for a larger navy grew, somewhat aided in part by the publication of Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890). Although much of what Mahan wrote was not necessarily new to the British people, who had enjoyed the prosperities made possible by her Navy for several hundred years, the principles and lessons of the naval history contained in Mahan's pages were of great interest to others within the same geographical sphere of influence with Great Britain. The German Kaiser read the lessons and planned to build a new German Navy that would be capable of rivaling, if not overcoming, the Royal Navy.<sup>10</sup>

To bring an added air of urgency to the discussion on naval affairs and the purpose of a navy, Rear-Admiral Philip Colomb discussed the differences between command of the sea and disputed command of the sea in a paper on British defense matters in 1889. In his discussion, Colomb used examples from the Franco-Prussian War to illustrate his point. Colomb described it as a comparison of France defending her borders against German aggression and maintaining control of her own territory to Germany invading France and taking control of various regions or towns disputing French control of her own territory. The towns surrounded by German forces added no valid defensive capability to the French armed forces in their defense of French territory. Therefore, Colomb argued what he believed was a concept universally accepted by the Navy that "the frontier of our Empire is the enemy's coastline,"<sup>11</sup> inferring that the seas between Britain and the enemy's coastline should be considered part of the Empire. This would make the

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *The Nation and the Navy*, 239-240.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Colomb, "Imperial Defense," in *The Naval Annual, 1888-9*, Lord Brassey (Portsmouth: J. Griffin and Co., 1889), 13.



sea lanes contained therein analogous to the Imperial roads discussed by Captain John Colomb in his paper on colonial defense read to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1873. In that paper, John Colomb (brother of Philip Colomb) argued, “The command of the sea is nothing more nor less than the command of the Imperial roads, the securing of the first lines of Colonial defenses.”<sup>12</sup>

Philip Colomb continued in his paper by turning the discussion to the ideas of lines of defense. He noted that the Navy had fairly well accepted the application of ‘first line of defense’ to the Navy because, “it seemed to give to the Navy something of the pre-eminently defensive character which they had instinctively felt it to possess,”<sup>13</sup> but he disagreed with the premise. Colomb stated, “It is impossible to use the expression ‘a line of defense’ without conceiving a defensive chain, liable to be broken through...but such a conception is quite out of place in considering the functions of the British Navy.”<sup>14</sup> Colomb argued the function of the British Navy, similar to what was proposed for the French army against the Germans, was to not only protect the frontier from invasion and to defeat any enemy forces that may cross that frontier. Failure would lead to the conquering of the Empire much like what happened to the French in their failure against the Germans.<sup>15</sup>

This concept encompasses not only defensive capability but offensive as well to achieve command of the sea. Colonies and trading posts overseas connected by extended sea lines of communication (or sea roads) fall in the same category as towns and territory ashore. To control lines of communication requires the ability to defend and attack as needed when conditions change. Colomb noted how in Britain’s history, they were always successful in conquering

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<sup>12</sup> Captain J. C. R. Colomb, *Colonial Defense*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Colomb, “Imperial Defense,” 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

territories when they could gain control of the sea lanes connecting them. The same could be said for whenever they failed to control sea lanes; they would lose the possessions connected by those lanes. He presented historical examples of the role command of the English Channel played in British history as far back as the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the seventeenth century. Colomb remarked how it was, “a supreme element in the defense of the Empire,” and it was an example of the defensive status of all British overseas possessions like Gibraltar, Malta, Hong Kong, Bermuda, and Singapore, noting that to allow the home island or any of these possessions to be cut off from communication would ensure their falling into enemy hands.<sup>16</sup>

To support this argument, Colomb used further examples from naval history to explain how defense of the Empire required not only a naval force to control the sea lines of communication, but sufficient land forces and fixed defenses ashore to hold possessions in the absence of a supporting naval force long enough for the blue-water forces to return. He warned against the supposition of the supremacy of any one force alone to be successful. This was an important element to remember in defense planning to ensure funding was prioritized in the right place for the right reasons. If the Empire, or at a minimum those charged with the responsibility for the planning and programming of its defense, acted on the belief that military forces ashore in fixed defenses were sufficient to relieve the Navy of its traditional defensive mission in favor of a purely offensive force at the sacrifice of “a less complete fleet, then it should seem that we are not reading at all, or not reading aright, the teachings of naval history.”<sup>17</sup>

The lack of knowledge or appreciation of naval history was an issue being addressed during this period through various means. This was another indication of the renewed interest in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 20.

naval affairs and the state of the Royal Navy. It included the founding of societies to foster discussion and debate on defense issues and to educate the public in naval affairs. One such society was proposed in 1829 in a letter to the Editor of the *United Service Journal* as a means of gathering information and objects from those who served abroad in the service of the Crown.<sup>18</sup> It was later founded in 1831 by the Duke of Wellington for the purpose of discussion and debate of issues in military policy by professionals in the field.<sup>19</sup> The United Services Institution became the Royal United Services Institute (R. U. S. I. ) by an Act of Parliament in 1860. Throughout the nineteenth century, the R. U. S. I. served as a forum for the continuing study and debate of issues affecting British military and naval policy. It served as a platform for introducing new ideas as well as rehashing old ones as they pertained to current conditions. The membership was predominantly made up of those in the military service or those who previously served along with professionals from industry and academia. It was an important forum for issues pertaining to the physical and intellectual transformation of the Royal Navy in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

Philip Colomb was a frequent contributor to the R. U. S. I. *Journal* and speaker at the gatherings of the society on a wide variety of topics from the naval and maritime genre. He was known and respected for the depth and breadth of his knowledge in naval matters, and was a believer in the value of the lessons of history and their application in the present. In addition to his paper on Imperial Defense in 1888 and the 1878 Naval Prize Essay for the R. U. S. I. , Colomb published a collection of works “where the great principles of strategy and tactics are

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<sup>18</sup> Letter to the Editor, February 20, 1829, *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine, Part I* (London: S. and R. Bentley, 1829): 366.

<sup>19</sup> “Our History,” Royal United Services Institute Website, December 20, 2022, <https://rusi.org/about/our-purpose/our-history>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

placed side by side with the material and personal conditions which either govern or are governed by them.”<sup>21</sup> His *Essays on Naval Defense*, published in 1893, formed “a record of progress of naval ideas.”<sup>22</sup> However, among all of Colomb’s published works, his *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated* first released in 1891, is regarded as his most important to the field of naval history. As one historian noted, “It was the triumph of his career as a sailor and a historian.”<sup>23</sup>

A colleague of Colomb’s was John Knox Laughton. Beginning his Navy career in 1853 as an instructor, Laughton moved on to become a historian and professor credited with creating “the modern study of naval history, ensuring that it had an educational role in British Universities and Naval Colleges, as well as a central place in the development of naval tactics, doctrine and strategic thought.”<sup>24</sup> He played a prominent role in researching and teaching relevant subjects both at sea and ashore to naval officers especially at the Royal Naval College in Portsmouth through the 1860s-70s. On the advent of steam power and armored warships, Laughton became a strong proponent for the relevance of using lessons from history as a means of understanding the impact of present and future actions. After the Naval College moved to Greenwich in 1873, Laughton became the main academic spokesman to the Royal United Services Institute in London. In 1874, Laughton presented his lecture on “‘The Scientific Study of Naval History,’ which established history as the basis for doctrine development, secured a

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<sup>21</sup> P. Colomb, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated*, xviii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Barry M. Gough in, Vice Admiral Philip Colomb’s, *Naval Warfare*, xx.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Lambert, ed., *Letters and Papers of Professor Sir John Knox Laughton, 1830-1915* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 1.

place for the subject in the Naval College curriculum, and encouraged further study...[to create] an accurate understanding of the past as the foundation for naval thought.”<sup>25</sup>

The move of the Royal Naval College to Greenwich was advantageous for Laughton and the College by placing the two within the sphere of the power and influence found in London. Those powers included bodies like the Royal United Services Institute, senior leaders of the Royal Navy, and the accessibility of the records in the Admiralty Archives provided infinite material upon which to base lessons for the future built upon experiences of the past. Laughton’s activity in bringing the analysis of naval history into the discussion on matters of naval policy, and the success of his paper on scientific study were enough to encourage him to push for including naval history in the course of education for the young officers at the Naval College. It also served to influence Philip Colomb as he integrated the themes into his prize-winning essay for the *R. U. S. I. Journal* in 1878, “where he used historical examples to flesh out his brother’s theories on trade protection and imperial defense.”<sup>26</sup> They also impressed the President of the College and the Admiralty enough for them to approve adding a course in naval history to the curriculum at Greenwich, establishing a foothold upon which further advancements in the realm of officer education and development of strategic thought would be made in time.<sup>27</sup>

Laughton’s reputation grew during his time at Greenwich along with his network of personal and professional contacts. Many, like Philip Colomb, were influential advocates for the advancement of naval strategic thought through the study of history themselves. Two of these men were naval officers Cyprian Bridge and Reginald Custance. In the 1880s, Bridge and Custance were both affiliated with the still relatively new community of naval intelligence. This

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

organization was formalized in 1887 with the establishment of the Naval Intelligence Department and, “reflected the Admiralty’s realization that the increasingly complex strategic environment in the late 1870s required enhanced systematic planning and new solutions.”<sup>28</sup> Bridge, the Director of Naval Intelligence from 1888-1894 and noted for his intellectual awareness in matters of history, strategy, and tactics, had argued the need for a formal naval staff and naval college as far back as 1870. He once remarked to Laughton, “There can be no question that foreigners, e.g. Americans, are far better educated. It is even more certain that nevertheless, our ships are in infinitely better order than those of any other navy... This is, however, no reason why we should be ignorant.”<sup>29</sup> Bridge, Custance, and Laughton would “play a significant role in the development of the scholarly study of Britain’s naval past and strategic doctrine throughout the 1890s.”<sup>30</sup>

Another element in the building case toward further development of naval strategic thought in Britain was the foundation of the Navy Records Society (NRS) in 1893 “to promote a more serious and scientific study of naval history than had hitherto been possible owing to the lack of documentary material.”<sup>31</sup> The co-founders of the NRS, Laughton and Bridge, worked to ensure the Society “became an unofficial historical branch for the Admiralty,” serving the needs and interests of those researching and conducting analysis in the history of the Royal Navy.

Bridge and Laughton, long friends and former shipmates, had collaborated before on important

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Cyprian Bridge to J.K. Laughton, July 26, 1880, Letters from Admiral Sir Cyprian A.G. Bridge, 1877-1914, LGH/7; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Lloyd, *The Nation and the Navy*, 240.

historical works for the Royal Navy, including material on Nelson's career.<sup>32</sup> Bridge wrote to Oscar Browning in the summer of 1893 seeking his thoughts on the idea to "establish a small society for publishing naval historical documents."<sup>33</sup> Browning was a historian, fellow Cambridge alum and friend to both Bridge and Laughton, and known as an innovative educator for his time. He shared a long-time correspondence with both Laughton and Bridge often discussing matters of a personal and professional nature, and thus served as a confidant to both for ideas and other works.

The initial meeting of the Navy Records Society in 1893 drew wide attention from professionals in naval, military, political, academic, and newspaper circles and "helped persuade others that the exercise was valid, credible and durable."<sup>34</sup> The Society became another forum similar in format to the R. U. S. I. in being a forum for debate and discussion of issues of the day; however, the focus of the NRS was on intellectual discussion of issues relating primarily to the Navy and the collection and publication of important historical documents to ensure its legacy. As a result, membership attracted other academics and scholars new to the field like Julian Corbett, who would make his own mark in the development of naval policy and strategic thought after the turn of the century, and the American Alfred T. Mahan. Laughton and Mahan had known each other and corresponded for years over their work and were in fact friends. While Mahan referred to Laughton as the historian, "Laughton recognized the American as a strategist and commentator of the first rank."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cyprian Bridge to Oscar Browning, May 10, 1889, Papers of Oscar Browning, Archives Center, King's College, Cambridge [GBR/0272/OB/1/211/A].

<sup>33</sup> Cyprian Bridge to Oscar Browning, June 9, 1893, Papers of Oscar Browning, Archives Center, King's College, Cambridge [GBR/0272/OB/1/211/A].

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Lambert, ed., *Letters and Papers of Professor Sir John Knox Laughton*, 71.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

The Navy Records Society was immensely important to the advancement of naval history as a topic of lecture and debate for both those in the military service as well as those in the civilian world. The first form of naval history in Britain were limited mainly to operational histories of naval activity in war.<sup>36</sup> The collection of a much wider assortment of documents pertaining to naval activity assembled by the Navy Records Society provided an opportunity for historians and those interested to examine the material and draw conclusions from the impact of events and decisions of the past. This was a marked improvement from before when most historians writing on military events did so without a large body of documentary evidence upon which to base their analysis. The Navy Records Society was one of the early organizations in this kind of analysis that helped shape the study and teaching of, in particular, naval history.<sup>37</sup> The Society provided a forum where both admirals and academics alike could discover and discuss important aspects of naval history and how they could be of importance to events of the present, for example, in the era following the Naval Defense Act of 1889. This was especially important in helping “to strengthen the navy case in the growing competition for larger shares of the public purse that distinguished army-navy relationships between 1885 and the First World War.”<sup>38</sup>

Complimentary to the academic and professional lecture and debate process within the Navy Records Society, the British Navy League offered a forum for the discussion of issues and publication of papers and reports for the general public who otherwise were not normally aware of the happenings with the Navy. Founded in December 1894 in London, membership consisted of a variety of personalities ranging from Members of Parliament to naval officers to newspaper

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<sup>36</sup> John Hattendorf, interview by author, Newport, RI, November 16, 2022.

<sup>37</sup> D.M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co, 1984), 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



journalists to representatives from the lower to upper classes of society. They published the first issue of *The Navy League Journal* in July 1895 with the objective of circulating articles on naval affairs. The League established a library for housing various reports, papers, and other articles and the like all regarding naval affairs similar to the manner in which the Navy Records Society collected and maintained historical documents and records. One major difference between the two organizations was the Navy League's effort to establish other branches or chapters in other parts of the United Kingdom and abroad.<sup>39</sup>

This effort to mobilize a more informed populace to the cause of advancing British naval development was a hallmark of the Navy League. In February of 1896, the League sent a resolution to the editor of the newspaper *Pall Mall Gazette*, a popular source for publication of articles and letters regarding the state of naval affairs. The resolution noted, "The main object of the League is not to interfere in the organization of a Government Department like the Admiralty, but to spread information as to the vital importance to the British Empire...and thereby to ensure to the Government the support of the people for the expenditure necessary for providing an adequate Navy."<sup>40</sup>

The emphasis on advancing a naval agenda included reform within the Admiralty organization itself when later, in 1895 and in 1896, the League proposed changes to the duties and responsibilities of the First Sea Lord. Specifically, they were looking to professionalize the position. The League wanted to ensure that the appointees to the position were fully capable of understanding naval affairs and relaying the needs of the Navy to Parliament in a proficient manner. In essence, "The League was seeking to increase the influence and prestige of the

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<sup>39</sup> W. Mark Hamilton, "The 'New Navalism' and the British Navy League, 1895-1914," *The Mariner's Mirror* vol. 64 Iss. 1 (1978): 38-39.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

professional sea lords at the expense of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and preferred the instituting of a ‘Naval von Moltke.’”<sup>41</sup> However, in order to accomplish such a feat, even if accepted by Parliament, there would need to be a means for creating and/or educating naval officers to at some point be qualified under the conditions proposed by the Navy League. That system did not yet exist within the Royal Navy.

Spenser Wilkinson, an Oxford military historian and charter member of the Navy League, authored a series of papers that were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1894 and 1895 relating to naval affairs and were instrumental in the origin of the Navy League.<sup>42</sup> *The Command of the Sea* articles in 1894 focused on the importance of sea power. Wilkinson pointed out in this work how “the Peace of 1815 left England not merely with the command of the sea but with a monopoly of maritime force.”<sup>43</sup> However, by the end of the century, the world was a very different place, as some of the formerly powerful nations were restored and new ones arose. More important, all were able to assert their power and influence with the potential to contest British naval power and maritime trade. Wilkinson argued the case for the Two Power Standard as mandated by the Naval Defense Act of 1889, which required the Royal Navy to be equally strong as the combined strength of two other opposing fleets. In a situation where Britain faced such a combination of foes, Wilkinson described this as one of three kinds of conflict in his theory of war for the defense of the British Empire:

There is first the war in which Great Britain begins with the command of the sea and keeps it; secondly, the war in which, not holding the command of the sea at the first, she eventually acquires it; and thirdly, the war in which the enemy ends by gaining command of the sea. The third kind of war means the destruction of the British Empire, and, if the enemy wishes, the conquest of Britain. The second kind would put the British Empire into a condition of temporary dissolution for a longer or shorter time, the duration of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>43</sup> Spenser Wilkinson, *The Command of the Sea* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co, 1894), 17.

which cannot be determined in advance, and would bring irreparable loss to British trade. The first kind, and the first alone, would secure the continuous maintenance of the Empire and of British trade, and the possibility of the further expansion of both.<sup>44</sup>

In order to achieve the conditions for success in the war of the first kind, the Royal Navy would have to be large enough and capable enough to secure all British bases and trade routes worldwide. It would also have to be capable of shadowing the opposing fleets at all times and maintaining a position of advantage to prevent the enemy from gaining the opportunity to take the initiative and turn the tides of war against Britain. Wilkinson warned that, as vital as Britain's survival was upon this command of the sea, even a short slip in posture could provide the enemy with the opportunity needed to threaten that survival. Accordingly, "the supreme reason for making the navy equal to a war of the first kind is, that with such a navy there will be peace."<sup>45</sup> The capability to put such a navy to sea, in Wilkinson's opinion, was vital to the survival of Great Britain. However, with such a navy at hand, there had to be the knowledge, skill, and talent on hand in the halls of the Admiralty to manage it and properly direct its use to ensure success, and therefore, survival. That was the topic of Wilkinson's next work.

*The Brain of the Navy* in 1895 is an appeal for organizational reform in the management of the Navy and its use during wartime and in peace. Both were influential; however, it was Wilkinson's proposals in *The Brain of the Navy* that focused more on the specific issues regarding evolution of strategic thought and how to incorporate that into plans and policy for the Navy. Wilkinson discussed the structure between the Cabinet and the respective admirals or generals at the Admiralty and the War Office, but pointed out that none of these were necessarily professionals in planning for the next war. The men holding those positions were politicians,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 59.

managers, and administrators at the highest level charged with many duties and responsibilities and limited time in which to perform them all. To that point, Wilkinson stated, “there is not in the Cabinet a single man...whose name would secure consideration among competent judges for his opinion on a point of strategy.”<sup>46</sup> Wilkinson proposed to establish offices in both the Admiralty and War Office charged with the responsibility for analyzing and developing the plans for the next war. This would be their sole purpose and would require officers trained and experienced in the skills and talents to perform such an important task.<sup>47</sup>

Wilkinson used examples provided by Prussian strategist Helmuth von Moltke regarding the role and value of a planning staff within a military structure can provide to a civilian or military hierarchy of leadership. This staff of planners were led by a specifically assigned officer with the responsibility to provide the commander-in-chief with recommendations for courses of action for the campaign. These recommendations were based on the analysis and detailed planning by the staff given a particular set of circumstances or conditions for the campaign. The key point of Moltke’s noted by Wilkinson was that of the singular voice for advice based on analysis completed by the staff. Consistently following such a process typically led to positive results in the campaign. However, when the advice or counsel provided to the commander-in-chief came from too many sources, all speaking with an independent mind or objective, the chances for failure were much higher.<sup>48</sup> Wilkinson used an example of such an exchange of counsel between Moltke and King Wilhelm I during the Franco-Prussian War to illustrate this

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<sup>46</sup> Spenser Wilkinson, *The Brain of the Navy* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co, 1895), 25

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

point. Specifically, Wilkinson argued the need “to provide the Cabinet, or make it provide itself, with a naval Moltke.”<sup>49</sup>

This task was much easier said than done given the circumstances of the Royal Navy in 1895. Wilkinson was in fact asked about where to find such an officer, and acknowledged “The answer is not that by any known machinery you can turn out and select a genius, but that the first duty of the Government is to select...the best qualified...or, at least, to make sure that the officer appointed has the special attainments required.”<sup>50</sup> Wilkinson suggested a system of rotating younger officers through the offices of the Admiralty for exposure to the higher level issues and topics relating to naval warfare and prepare them for future positions of greater responsibility following additional years at sea. In this manner, officers could receive specialized training along with providing the opportunity for the admiral commander to identify those with the talents necessary for tackling the complex problems of naval warfare. In other words, “the office of the admiral commander would be the great school for the higher education of a picked group of naval officers.”<sup>51</sup>

Although Wilkinson’s primary argument in *The Brain of the Navy* was focused on structural reform at the highest level of the Admiralty, his suggestions on the need for an office dedicated to planning for the next war was equally valid. The Royal Navy had, indeed, already established such an office in the Naval Intelligence Department (NID) formed in 1887.<sup>52</sup> Wilkinson acknowledged and agreed with the forming of the NID, and with its primary mission to study other navies of the world while gathering and analyzing strategic and statistical

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>52</sup> Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy*, 1.

information pertaining to the same while advising on matters of maritime defense and strategy. However, he felt the purpose of the NID was diluted by it not having the power or authority to make recommendations on strategy or administrative policy unless specifically asked to do so. This shortfall, in Wilkinson's opinion, demonstrated a lack of vision in the senior staff of the Admiralty in a proper understanding of the importance the NID and that strategic planning should play in the development and functioning of a navy writ large.<sup>53</sup> Fortunately, the level of influence of the NID in the realm of British naval strategy development grew much stronger than Wilkinson could have foreseen in 1895.

#### The Study of Naval History and Development of Strategic Naval Thought

The resulting interest spurred by Laughton's paper, "The Scientific Study of Naval History," in 1874 was not lost in Greenwich. Before the end of 1875, the Royal Naval College proposed adding a course in naval history to the curriculum with John Knox Laughton as the instructor. The President of the College, Vice-Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key, believed the course "would be most instructive and valuable teaching on naval tactics," and voiced his confidence in Laughton stating, "I know of no one better qualified to deliver such a course."<sup>54</sup> This was an early endorsement of Laughton and the teaching of naval history to train officers to think broadly and apply lessons of the past to problems of the present and future. Over the next three decades Laughton and his method carried a strong influence on many officers of the Royal Navy. Laughton firmly believed, "When they really know and understand what the Navy has

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<sup>53</sup> Wilkinson, *The Brain of the Navy*, 84-88.

<sup>54</sup> Letter to Admiralty from the Admiral President, Royal Naval College, Greenwich, November 17, 1875, Admiral President's Correspondence, 1875-1876, RNCG/1/6, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

done in time past, they will be able to understand what the Navy may be trusted to do in the future, and will have gone far on the way to understanding the problem of national defense.”<sup>55</sup>

His biographer, Andrew Lambert, remarked, “Laughton was the most influential defense intellectual of the age because he knew everyone who mattered, was the acknowledged master of his profession, and spoke at a level where short-term controversy was irrelevant. He was, in essence, the voice of the past, passing on the wisdom of the ancients.”<sup>56</sup>

Historian Shawn Grimes noted in his work, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*, “An important factor in the development of the Admiralty’s pre-war strategic planning...was the role played by the academic study of British naval history throughout the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>57</sup> One of the key elements in the eventual success of the Naval Intelligence Department lay in the fact that all of its Directors between 1887 to 1905 were either students of Laughton during his tenure at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich or colleagues of his through the Navy Records Society. In the period after 1905, the Department benefited from association with Laughton’s protégé, Julian Corbett, during his tenure as a lecturer in naval history at the Naval War Course in Greenwich.<sup>58</sup>

Cyprian Bridge and Laughton often discussed the opportunities to study development of naval strategic thought through the study of naval history during their correspondence. In a letter to Laughton in 1887, Bridge commented on an essay Laughton sent him authored by Commander William Snell and discussed the value of naval war games reflecting present issues

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<sup>55</sup> John Knox Laughton, “Historians and Naval History,” in *Naval and Military Essays: Being Papers Read in the Naval and Military Section at the International Congress of Historical Studies, 1913. Cambridge Military Series* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 22.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), 193.

<sup>57</sup> Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

built upon lessons from the past. Bridge remarked in admiration of the perspective demonstrated by Snell in his assertion that strategy was more important than tactics based “on the opinion that all modern improvements have been more advantageous to our enemies than to ourselves.”<sup>59</sup>

Bridge commented on the significance of this point from Snell, in how history demonstrated shifts in the prevalence of various schools of thought. Within naval warfare, Bridge noted how the middle of the eighteenth century was an “era of strategists [while] the end, and the beginning of the nineteenth that of the tacticians,” leading him to believe “that strategical combinations are of more moment to us than ever. Is not our naval history something like this?”<sup>60</sup>

Bridge acknowledged in the response to Laughton that the essay prepared by Snell was “one of the ablest documents, in my opinion, ever prepared by a Naval Officer.”<sup>61</sup> Bridge’s comments regarding the importance of strategy in the present moment could be argued as a declaration on the need to further stress the teaching of naval history to naval officers to allow them to use the lessons of the past to show them the way for the future. That future included a heightened understanding of the naval art of war and naval strategic thought not stressed before within the navy as an institution. The mindset of the most senior officers in the Royal Navy was difficult to change after a lifetime in command of men and ships at sea. The junior officers new to navy life were challenged enough in just learning to do their job as a young naval officer. The target objective was to bring that level of understanding to officers at the mid to advanced state in their careers moving up to senior rank. This body of officers would benefit the most from such

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<sup>59</sup> Cyprian Bridge to John K. Laughton, February 8, 1887, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Admiral Sir Cyprian A.G. Bridge, 1877-1914, LGH/7/MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



education and provide the most return on investment to the Navy as a whole for the kind of positions and influence they had before them.

The decade of the 1890s did not see much in the advancement of education for officers in the Royal Navy along the lines hoped for by the likes of Bridge, Laughton, and others. However, in the interim, works published by the retired Vice-Admiral Philip Colomb helped bridge that gap at least in terms of keeping the subject of strategy and naval thought in discussion. His book, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated*, “was the first reasonably sound, and yet far-reaching, British historical work on naval history.”<sup>62</sup> Published shortly after Mahan’s *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* in 1891, yet far less popular than Mahan’s work, Colomb looked to the future arguing the security of Britain lay in its supremacy on the oceans of the world. He proposed, “The control of the sea, or what I shall now and hereafter call by its established title, the ‘Command of the Sea,’ was henceforth to be understood as the aim of naval war.”<sup>63</sup>

Some of the reasons or influences Colomb had for writing *Naval Warfare* included that there were no real naval histories prior to this work. Operational summaries or narratives of battles were available, but no real study on the causes or effects of the actions of naval war. He noted, “Of writers on naval strategy there were absolutely none; writers on naval tactics were few and far between; they generally wrote as if the tactics of maneuvering embraced the whole subject.”<sup>64</sup> Primarily for these reasons Colomb saw a need for this study. He firmly believed that the study of naval history would provide lessons for the naval officer and the country for both the present condition in the closing decade of the nineteenth century and for the future. He carried

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<sup>62</sup> D.M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy*, 52.

<sup>63</sup> P. Colomb, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated*, 47.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

this same theme in the second and third editions released in 1895 and 1899. Minor corrections were the main purpose of the second edition, but the third edition carried a stronger message of lessons learned in both the technical and strategic realm from the recent conflict between the United States in Spain in 1898.<sup>65</sup>

Colomb's discussion on the lessons learned in a modern war seemed lost upon the senior leadership of the Royal Navy. This kind of discourse did not exist in the halls of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. One observer noted, "its narrowly conceived, technically oriented syllabus which refused to admit any broader study, prevented it from becoming a genuine institution of higher education."<sup>66</sup> The program at Greenwich was still limited to the education of junior officers. However, the issue of education for more senior officers was a growing source of questions for many. Admiral Sir John Fisher, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station for the Royal Navy at that time (and later the First Sea Lord), and Admiral Reginald Custance, the Director of Naval Intelligence, agreed that the most senior officers of the Navy were woefully uneducated in the art of naval strategic thought. These two disliked each other intensely and rarely agreed upon anything, but in this matter, they held similar opinions of the failures in the naval education system in this regard.<sup>67</sup>

The fact that there was no formal method or plan for teaching or cultivating naval strategic thought within the Royal Navy was a serious issue; so much so that it made its way on to the agenda for discussion within the House of Commons in the summer of 1899 when the First Lord of the Admiralty, George Goschen, was asked:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 1-4.

<sup>66</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Education for Officers* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 148.

<sup>67</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 389-390.

SIR CHARLES DILKE (Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean)

; I beg to ask the First Lord of the Admiralty what provision is made for the instruction of naval officers in strategy: and what means are adopted to ascertain whether officers of the higher ranks have studied the subject.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (Mr. GEORGE GOSCHEN, St. George's, Hanover Square)

There is not now, nor has there ever been, an established school for the study of strategy by naval officers of the higher ranks; but the whole education of the naval officer from entry in the Service to the attainment of high command leads him to this study. The right hon. Member speaks of strategy only. Tactics, or the science of disposing naval forces in order for battle and of performing naval evolutions, are constantly taught in our Fleets and Squadrons.

MR. GIBSON BOWLES (Lynn Regis)

Is no instruction given in strategy at all? Is there no professor of naval strategy?

MR. GOSCHEN

Naval officers, when they assume high commands, study this question; but there is no professor of naval strategy to teach them. I do not know whether such a gentleman exists.<sup>68</sup>

#### The Senior Officer's War Course

By the beginning of 1900, the growing influence of Laughton and the Navy Records Society on Admiral Custance at the Department of Naval Intelligence to rectify the lack of study on strategy within naval ranks was evident. In an effort to correct this situation, "Custance proposed the creation of a maritime operations course at Greenwich that included the preparation of operational plans, the study and investigation of tactical and strategic questions, and naval history."<sup>69</sup> That summer the Admiralty Board requested proposals for a course in naval strategy. Notes provided by the Admiral President, Sir Richard Tracey, and Admiral Custance were considered along with input from Captain Henry May, the second ranking naval officer at the College.<sup>70</sup> It was anticipated that the Senior Officer's War Course, as it was called, would begin

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<sup>68</sup>Debate in the Commons Chamber, *Instruction of Naval Officers in Strategy*, 20 July 1899, vol. 74 cc1362 (Hansard, UK Parliament).

<sup>69</sup> Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy*, 15.

<sup>70</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Wisdom and War: The Royal Naval College Greenwich, 1873-1998* (London: Ashgate, 2012), 70.

in October of 1900; however, due to various reasons the start was delayed one month to November 1st. In the interim, a provisional course was arranged in accordance with the intent of the Admiralty while the final details of the curriculum and requirements for lecturers were prepared at Greenwich.<sup>71</sup> The subjects for study in the War Course included preparation of operational plans, attack and defense of fortified places, lines of communication and logistics, tactics, naval history, international law, naval architecture, steam power, practical navigation, and foreign languages.<sup>72</sup>

In January 1901, Captain May proposed the addition of lectures on the relations between naval and military authorities as they pertained to the defense of harbors and control of traffic in and out of the same during times of war. He encouraged the addition of instruction on the aspects of what characteristics were considered in the selection of strategic harbors and the steps taken to fortify their defense. This view from a combined arms perspective was a step toward strategic thought as it incorporated not only the applicable naval principles, but also those from the engineer and artillery branches of the military. Captain May recommended the former Director of Naval Intelligence, Vice-Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, as the instructor for these courses.<sup>73</sup>

The following month, the Admiralty received an interim report on the progress of the first session of the War Course for Senior Officers underway at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. The manner of instruction provided by Captain May to the officers included lectures on a given subject and provide situational problem examples to the students for them to examine and

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<sup>71</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, October 1, 1900, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1900, RNCG/1/42, 474-475, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>72</sup> Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, 71.

<sup>73</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, January 28, 1901, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1901, RNCG/1/44, 15-18, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

research for potential solutions. These problems were based on situations or conditions facing the Navy and Great Britain at the time using both classified and non-classified information as the basis for the example. The officers had access to a variety of source material for their research via the libraries available at Greenwich and in London as well as the resources provided by the offices of Naval Intelligence and Hydrographer of the Royal Navy. Solutions were played out on versions of James' War Game, but the game itself was found to be more complicated than useful and lacked the scale required for the number of players in the course.<sup>74</sup>

For the instruction on strategy, the class was divided into four sections with each given an area for analysis and report as it related to a theoretical campaign in the Mediterranean between Great Britain and France. Specifically, "The subjects chosen referred to the strategical position – strong and weak points, methods of offence and defense of the countries supposed to be at war, the strength of their fleets, magnitude of their commerce and resources of every kind."<sup>75</sup>

Following the analysis phase, the class was grouped into three sections for the conduct of the war game, with one group representing each of the opposing sides and the third performing as the umpire section to provide support to the game as required. Operating parameters for the game were set to resemble as closely as possible the actual conditions or capabilities of the locations, assets, and resources used in the plan. This was difficult to obtain for the information on the British maritime trade enterprise. Much of this information was either too difficult to obtain through traditional sources or it simply did not exist. Many ships included in the British carrying trade were not listed in the official records of the industry. It was decided to seek the

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<sup>74</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, February 19, 1901, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1901, RNCG/1/44, 131-134, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

participation of the British Merchant Marine in the form of a lecturer and war game participants in the future to better inform the officers in the course on this subject.<sup>76</sup>

Outside of the campaign analysis, planning, and wargaming of both strategic and tactical problems, the officers studied other subjects in the curriculum. Ten lectures on naval strategy were delivered by Professor John Knox Laughton, then a Professor of History at King's College in London. The same number of lectures on international law were delivered by Professor Thomas J. Lawrence. Lawrence was a graduate of and former professor in international law at Cambridge and former international law professor at the University of Chicago in the United States. Instruction on attack and defense of naval installations and other ports was provided by officers from the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers with Vice-Admiral Bridge completing the ensemble.<sup>77</sup>

The number of officers for this first session varied over the duration of the course but averaged seventeen with all being in the ranks of captain or commander. Initial feedback, as reported by the College, was all positive. However, this being the first iteration of the War Course there were some lessons learned:

In its first session much after work has necessarily been of an experimental character, and the war games and strategical combinations may in many cases have been crude and of no great practical value in themselves, but by opening up a train of thought and giving opportunities for discussion on the basis of facts and official information not hitherto easily accessible, ought in time to have a good effect on the service generally.<sup>78</sup>

This was not necessarily a glowing report of progress, but it must be remembered this update was only provided at the halfway point of the course. By July of 1901, the first iteration of the Senior Officer's War Course was complete. The feeling from the Admiral President was

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 136-138.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 141-142.

very positive on the success of the first class. The delays of the previous fall were due to the course materials and classrooms not being fully ready, but this was no longer an issue going forward. Captain May incorporated ways to compress some of the lectures to provide more time to the officers to work their tactical and strategic exercises without sacrificing any of the content. This would minimize the times of inactivity and with it the times for officers to lose interest in the problems presented. The ultimate aim of the course and the program of instruction was to demonstrate to the officers the amount of information and details required to plan and execute successful operations on a large scale.<sup>79</sup>

The letter also provided an interesting observation from Captain May and the Admiral President regarding the morale and interest of the officers while in the course. Most students in a class are motivated to score well on the examinations and assignments to demonstrate their prowess or talent for the subject. The Admiral President acknowledged that students who failed to score well on examinations could lose interest in the subject and hinder the progress of others around them. To avoid this becoming an issue the War Course was treated as a Gentleman's Course, meaning no examinations. The students all being officers in the rank of commander, captain, or higher were held to a higher standard of performance. It would be explained to them upon the start of the next class, "their progress and proficiency will be noted for their Lordships [at the Admiralty] information."<sup>80</sup> As a point of fact, the Admiral President pointed out that the officers from the first class for the most part took advantage of the opportunity presented by the War Course. He only once had to remind an officer of the purpose for his presence in Greenwich

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<sup>79</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, July 23, 1901, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1901, RNCG/1/45, 262-264, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

remarking, “which had the desired effect.”<sup>81</sup> The expectation was that would also hold true for the next class about to begin.

The report of the following July for the class session of 1901-1902 was not quite as enthusiastic in its introduction, but gradually ventured to a more positive outlook by the end of the document. Of the thirty-two officers appointed to the course, sixteen captains and sixteen commanders, barely even half of them were present for the majority of the course. Some were absent for more than half of the instruction. Captain May, the Captain of the College, voiced dismay in that, “under these circumstances the results were hardly as satisfactory as could have been wished. The officers joining late were at a disadvantage and those leaving early made a break in the continuity of work.”<sup>82</sup> The course was carried out in much the same manner as the first in the previous year with the exception of some modifications to the war game exercise. In this term two new antagonists were added to the game scenarios – Russia and Germany. These new planning scenarios were examples of bringing some of the current world situation into the mix for evaluation and analysis. Captain May was generally pleased with the improvements and the progress toward making the war game a better tool for study and practice of solutions to tactical problems. He made some changes to the manner of play and scoring based on actual ship capabilities to provide a more realistic setting for the class.<sup>83</sup>

The Admiral President, Admiral Sir Robert More-Molyneux, followed up the report from Captain May a few days later with his own endorsement of May’s summary and recommendations. In this, he encouraged the permanent position of a Professor in Naval History

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>82</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Captain Henry John May, July 21, 1902, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1901-02, RNCG/1/47, 490, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 491-495.



and that it be filled by a recently retired and distinguished naval officer to make the lectures more appealing and applicable to the officers in the class coming from one who was once in their shoes. He suggested the Admiralty send some of their strategic and tactical problems to the College for the officers in the course to decipher. This would offer them the opportunity to focus their planning and analysis skills to problems of the present day. In all, the Admiral President was encouraged by the direction of the course, but was concerned over the failure to ensure the integrity of the class for the duration of the course to provide the best and most effective learning environment possible for those attending.<sup>84</sup>

The Admiral President provided the Admiralty Board a strong endorsement for continuing the Senior Officer's War Course at Greenwich:

I think the War Course has been a thoroughly practical and useful one, and that much credit is due to Captain May for the sound times on which it has been started. It has been much appreciated by the senior officers who have joined it, and I believe has already had a good influence in the Service generally, by fostering a line of thought and study, which has been too much neglected in the past.<sup>85</sup>

The year 1903 brought additional progress for the War Course with the proposal to add a special course in tactics and strategy for flag officers in June of that year.<sup>86</sup> Julian Corbett, who started his tenure at the Naval College in 1900, was the lecturer at that time for naval history following the end of John Knox Laughton's tenure in Greenwich. John May, now a rear-admiral, tasked Corbett with teaching the first course for flag officers. In the three-week course, Corbett used the backdrop of the American Revolution to lecture on lessons learned for development and

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<sup>84</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, July 25, 1902, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1901-02, RNCG/1/47, 498-199, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

<sup>86</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, March 6, 1903, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1902-03, RNCG/1/49, 392, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

implementation of British strategy. Initially designed for a maximum of twelve students, three vice admirals and six rear-admirals completed the course.<sup>87</sup> This course was an early step for the Royal Navy toward correcting what was understood by many as a deficiency in the proper training of flag officers in the strategic decision-making process.

Admiral Sir John Fisher was one of those known to have strong opinions on the capabilities of flag officers, and one who was not afraid to voice that opinion. Although the courses in strategy for flag officers were already underway in Greenwich, Fisher, during his tenure as Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth and shortly before he was announced as the next First Sea Lord, prepared a list of notes for consideration on various areas of reform in the Royal Navy. Fisher was not one of those who followed the gospel of Laughton, nor was he a member of the Navy Records Society, but he heard of the success of the War Course for those officers just below flag rank and recognized what such training could do for the admirals in the Navy. The steps being taken in Greenwich to train officers in a higher level of thinking and skill in planning operations and then coalescing that into what could be a proper naval planning staff was not lost in his plans for future reform in the Royal Navy. Fisher noted in his notes from Portsmouth on the subject in 1904:

The least capable in the respective ranks of the Navy are the admirals. It's not their own fault solely, they have had no education, and this blot will continue till we have a Naval War College established at Portsmouth, and Flag Officers and captains, hoping for employment, can practically prove their capacity...<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, 92.

<sup>88</sup> Notes by Admiral Sir John Fisher on New Proposals for the Information of Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904, in *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, ed. Lieut.-Commander P.K. Kemp, vol.1 (London: The Navy Records Society, 1960), 21.

The success of the War Course was increasing almost with every iteration as indicated by reports from the Admiralty to the Royal Naval College to take steps to train larger groups of officers and the College requesting from the Admiralty additional funds to pay for outside lecturers to keep up with the demand.<sup>89</sup> The increasing number of officers attending the course combined with a larger group of lecturers provided opportunities to expand the practical exercises, or war games, that were becoming more popular and beneficial with each set of improvements made following each class. In the summer of 1903, the College reported plans for up to forty-eight officers to attend in two shortened classes in which the highlight would be a new strategic war game, “observing that the value of such exercises as are described in this report can hardly be overestimated.”<sup>90</sup> The Admiralty Lords even directed May to reach out to the press and others to develop a manner in which some of the lectures about the War Course and some of the subject studied within could be provided to a broader audience considering all the societies and influential bodies within the London area.<sup>91</sup> All of this was evidence of the value the War Course brought to the Royal Navy, and how this was not lost on those in the halls of the Admiralty in White Hall. As noted by their attention to the improvements in the Course, “their Lordships were clearly now convinced that not only was the idea of the course a valuable innovation, but also that it was being properly interpreted and successfully conducted.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, May 29, 1903, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1903, RNCG/1/50, 216, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>90</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, July 11, 1903, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1903, RNCG/1/50, 436, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>91</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, 92.

<sup>92</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, 92.

The success with both the Senior Officer War Course and the Flag Officer Strategy Course were encouraging steps for the Royal Navy, but also evidence of the great task that lay before them. Corbett, not long after he started teaching naval history at the War Course, remarked to Fisher on the “poor quality of naval strategic thought evident in the papers submitted to him.”<sup>93</sup> This was still a very new thing for the British. For centuries, the achievements of the Royal Navy were based on the skill and bravery of the officers and men fighting their ships and making the most of the conditions at the appointed time of battle. Therefore, they were not:

ready for strategy in the abstract, an approach alien to their traditions and background. This was the core of the problem. The Royal Navy did not engage in speculative and lateral thinking, it did not teach philosophy or logic, and left mid-career officers with the impression that there were simple, correct answers to any problem they might face. Little wonder Corbett’s carefully qualified approach to war, which followed Clausewitz in placing the emphasis on the higher direction by the political leadership, was so confusing.<sup>94</sup>

The concept of considering the political and diplomatic influence on war was one of the more difficult and complex tasks for naval officers of the nineteenth century to grasp. The training and education curriculum that most had been raised on was one spent at sea learning the vital skills and tasks of sailing and commanding a vessel of war. Many times, ships were on their own for extended periods without the weight of higher command or national policy hovering. Captains were given great latitude in how they operated as long as they remained within the parameters of their latest orders from the Admiralty. Naval warfare in the Age of Sail provided that freedom of maneuver operating environment. However, in the new age of steam and steel warships with communications moving at much greater speeds than ever before, the conditions

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<sup>93</sup> Andrew Lambert, “Education in the Royal Navy, 1854-1914,” in *The Development of British Naval Thinking*, ed. Geoffrey Till (London: Routledge, 2006), 54.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

were rapidly changing and the navies of the world were changing with them. Corbett's teachings of naval history and strategy in Greenwich were efforts toward introducing a new and higher manner of thinking to the officers charged with leading the Royal Navy into the next conflict:

In a period when much naval thinking was dominated by the technological complexities of new ships and their weapons systems and when it was assumed that success in warfare would be largely based on the application of superior practical skills, Corbett attempted to show that much more was required. In particular, he demonstrated that the identification of the enduring characteristics of sea power and the contribution they made to national strategy were important factors in the determination of future policy. While the study of history could not provide detailed answers to future problems, some knowledge of fundamental historical questions would mean the modern commander would be better equipped to cope with contemporary strategic problems.<sup>95</sup>

To keep the emphasis on this manner of higher education, the three-week Strategy Course for flag officers was offered again in June of 1904.<sup>96</sup> The list of graduates included one admiral, one vice-admiral, and nine rear-admirals.<sup>97</sup> The staff at the Naval College continued to work on improvements in both courses and improve the quality of the learning environment at Greenwich through new proposals to the Admiralty to meet the needs of the students and staff during this period of growth.<sup>98</sup> Although still a work in progress, as the Royal Navy continued to conduct not only the War Course for officers in the rank of Commander and Captain in growing numbers, but also the Strategy Course for flag officers it demonstrated serious progress toward furthering the development of strategic naval thought. However, change was on the horizon. Admiral John

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<sup>95</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, 92.

<sup>96</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, May 6, 1904, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1904, RNCG/1/52, 231, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>97</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, June 27, 1903, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1904, RNCG/1/52, 383, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>98</sup> Letter to Admiralty from Admiral President, November 22, 1904, Royal Naval College Greenwich Manuscripts Collection, 1904-05, RNCG/1/53, 240, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

Fisher became the First Sea Lord in October of 1904. Soon after he took over at the Admiralty, he began putting in motion his plan for reform of the Royal Navy. One of those items, among many, was the “formation of [a] Naval War College at Portsmouth for the education of admirals and post-captains in the practical handling of fleets, and the art of strategy.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Notes by Admiral Sir John Fisher on New Proposals for the Information of Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904, in *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, ed. Lieut.-Commander P.K. Kemp, vol.1 (London: The Navy Records Society, 1960), 24.

## Chapter 6

### The Naval War Colleges in the New Century

The decade of the 1890s was a turbulent one for both the United States Navy and the British Royal Navy. In America, the decade began with a struggle to find support in the Navy and Congress to keep the Naval War College alive, but ended on a strong note and solidly on a path to the institution's continued success and application. Instrumental in this change of course were the writings of Alfred T. Mahan in his landmark book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* in 1890. Mahan's book strongly influenced not only the United States but the entire world. Readers in Great Britain remarked "that Mahan's book signaled the beginning of the end of America's post-Civil War isolationism and the beginning of American imperialism, particularly in Central America and in the Gulf and the Caribbean,"<sup>1</sup> and eventually spread to the far reaches of the Pacific and China. The British started off the decade strongly, with the passing of the Naval Defense Act in 1889 initiating a new era of enthusiasm for British naval progress. The writings of the Colomb brothers and John Knox Laughton and their work with the Royal United Services Institute were significant catalysts in this movement. The influence and "over-riding importance of the three naval historians...was an approach that overturned the coast-defense, Army-based defense thinking that dated from the time of Palmerston and the Duke of Wellington."<sup>2</sup> To put it plainly, the start of the decade of the 1890s in Britain saw a change in British naval policy from one of reactionary to proactive policy.

As the world ventured into the twentieth century, the outlook for continued growth and development in the realm of strategic naval thought was promising. The United States was a

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<sup>1</sup> Seager, *Alfred Thayer Mahan*, 214.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy, The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008), 101.

newly minted world power following its victory in 1898 over the Spanish Navy, providing the nation a string of new territorial possessions in the Pacific and the Caribbean as evidence of that role. The Navy continued to modernize to meet the requirements of being a world power. In addition, “developments after the war with Spain continued to deepen strategy’s institutional roots within the Navy.”<sup>3</sup> In Britain, its role in the world economy was changing, and with it the British outlook on how to survive in that new world must change. In the new realm of globalization in the twentieth century, Britain could not “overstate the issue of choice. Maritime strategy was a necessity, not an option. Britain could not choose isolationism or protectionism, because the home islands were not self-sufficient. Britain had to be global to survive.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the Royal Navy had to institutionalize its method for strategy development.

#### Threats to the U. S. Naval War College and Development of Strategic Naval Thought

The Naval War College at Newport fell on hard times in the first few years of the 1890s. Admiral Stephen Luce, before he retired from active duty in 1889, envisioned the troubles coming and wrote to Admiral of the Navy Porter seeking his assistance in holding off those wishing to close the College. Luce remarked, “The enemies of the War College so far succeeded, under the late administration, in destroying that institution as to render the task of resuscitation somewhat difficult. If you will join this fight I think it will not be difficult to supply such arguments as will induce the new Secretary of the Navy to rescue the College from utter

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<sup>3</sup> Scott Mobley, *Progressives in Navy Blue: Maritime Strategy, American Empire, and the Transformation of U.S. Naval Identity, 1873-1898* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 268.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Lambert, “The Pax Britannica and the Advent of Globalization,” in *Maritime Strategy and Global Order: Markets, Resources, Security*, ed. Daniel Moran and James A. Russell (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 26.



annihilation.”<sup>5</sup> The new Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin F. Tracy, and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and Naval War College graduate, Professor James R. Soley, were very much supportive of the efforts and mission of the War College, but there were many enemies. Some of which included senior naval officers such as Commodore Francis Ramsay in the powerful position of Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, and influential members of Congress and the various committees holding the keys to the funding necessary to keep the College running.

The earlier debate on the need for a separate War College in Newport versus combining the course in with the Torpedo School in Newport or moving the College to Annapolis as part of a continuance of the course of instruction already taught at the Naval Academy were at the heart of this new fight. One of the issues in this on-going battle that did not help Luce, Mahan, Tracy, and the other supporters of the War College was the fact that most of the officers attending the College in Newport were from the middle ranks of the naval officer corps. This trait limited the influence that graduates could have on the direction of the Navy in this era. None of the senior and more powerful admirals within the Navy were graduates. This also, at times, limited the number of officers available to send to Newport. In 1890, “the usual courses of instruction at the Torpedo Station and at the Naval War College were omitted...as sufficient number of officers to form a class could not be spared from other duties.”<sup>6</sup> How much of this was truly due to other duties or simply lack of interest is difficult to determine, but the fact remained there were no classes at the War College in 1890 or 1891 and only a short seven-week course in 1892.<sup>7</sup> Mahan returned to Newport to assume his second term as President of the College that summer of 1892

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<sup>5</sup> S.B. Luce to Admiral David D. Porter, March 9, 1889, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>6</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1890*, 121.

<sup>7</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 30-33.

to lead the session that began in September. This was also the first class conducted in the new building constructed for the Naval War College. In the shortened format, the lectures were limited yet included naval history, naval strategy, strategic features of the Pacific, various topics on armaments and their application, modern naval architecture and design, engineering, coastal defense, lessons of the recent naval war in Chile, and the Nicaragua canal.<sup>8</sup>

In October that year, Mahan provided his report on the College to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Tracy. Mahan discussed the importance and the value of the program of lectures provided to the students even with a curtailed schedule. He made the case for a permanent staff at the College, along with the requisite supply of resources for the program of study envisioned going forward. This program included not just lectures, but a program of posing questions on naval strategy and tactics to the students for them to study and provide written solutions to each prior to graduation. The intent in this manner of instruction being to stimulate the minds of the students to think beyond the parameters of what they are accustomed. Mahan felt very strongly about this program and the success thus far achieved in the study of the art of war at the Naval War College. He stated, "I feel warranted and compelled to say that no sustained work has been done, nor is any now being done upon them, except by and through the College. Its claim upon the favor of the Government and Congress depends upon the importance of the subjects, with which it alone, among the organizations of the Navy, undertakes to deal."<sup>9</sup>

Secretary of the Navy Tracy believed in the work being done in Newport and provided strong support throughout his tenure in the office. In his final report to Congress, Secretary of the

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<sup>8</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1892* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 56-57.

<sup>9</sup> Captain A.T. Mahan to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, October 29, 1892, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 17. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

Navy Tracy made a strong endorsement of the work at the College, and an acknowledgement of the need for this work to continue:

The Department is deeply impressed with the importance of the college to the Navy as a means for insuring the development of the science of naval warfare, as distinguished from the development of naval material. Both are essential to the full attainment of the results to be expected from the Navy. The success of the college in the past has been recognized both in this country and abroad, and its usefulness may be expected to increase in the future.<sup>10</sup>

The year 1893 was a critical one in the life, and near death, of the Naval War College.

Mahan was ordered again to sea. Both he and Luce attempted to have the orders retracted in order to retain Mahan in Newport and continue the work of the College along with Mahan's own research in the naval art. Luce wrote to Theodore Roosevelt, a fan of both the College and Mahan, seeking his assistance to intervene with the Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt was able to gain favor with Assistant Secretary William MacAdoo, but could not get an audience with Secretary Herbert. Roosevelt responded to Luce, "[MacAdoo] was I think, on our side; but that infernal fool Ramsay worked on the Secretary, so that everything failed. As an American I feel mortified and indignant beyond measure."<sup>11</sup> All efforts to keep Mahan in Newport were denied. Mahan departed Newport in mid-May for duty as commanding officer of U.S.S. *Chicago* while the War College lay idle again. Commander Charles H. Stockton took charge in Newport with a skeleton staff remaining. He prepared a proposed schedule of lectures for the summer session that included expanded instruction in the area of naval strategy and maneuvers with a regional geographic focus in areas such as the Pacific, the West Indies, and Central America.<sup>12</sup> However,

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<sup>10</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1892*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to S.B. Luce, May 5, 1893, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>12</sup> Proposed Schedule of Lectures Summer of 1893, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 20. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

due to the lack of staff and no support from Ramsay in the Bureau of Navigation, the Navy canceled all plans for a course for 1893.<sup>13</sup> Instead, that summer brought the first of several very strong attacks against the College from its opponents in Washington. Ramsay was able to persuade the new Secretary of the Navy, Hilary A. Herbert, that the War College served no purpose and at best would better serve the Navy by re-locating to Annapolis as a post-graduation course for the Academy. Hilary, former Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, never was a proponent for the War College having opposed appropriations for it from the beginning.<sup>14</sup>

In August of 1893, on the advice of Ramsay, Herbert traveled to Newport aboard U.S.S. *Dolphin* ostensibly to conduct an inspection of the facilities, but his real intentions were to put an end to the Naval War College. However, word of Herbert's intentions reached the Captain of *Dolphin*, Lieutenant Benjamin H. Buckingham, who proceeded to provide a copy of Mahan's latest book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution*, to Herbert to read during the journey to Newport.<sup>15</sup> Upon his arrival, Herbert's attitude toward the College was changed. He is reported to remark, "if this institution has produced nothing more than this book it is worth all the expenses incurred for it."<sup>16</sup> Herbert even wrote to Mahan about his visit to Newport. In the letter to Mahan aboard *Chicago* in European waters, Herbert congratulated him on his books and for the credit brought upon the U.S. Navy as a result, "Permit me...to tell you of my change of opinion as to the War College...You deserve all the encomiums of the British and American press for this great work... You have conferred great honor, not only upon the American Navy,

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<sup>13</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 34-35.

<sup>16</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 62.

but also upon your country.<sup>17</sup> This was quite the turn of events considering Mahan had wrote to his wife, Ellen, on October 11<sup>th</sup> having not yet received the kind words of admiration from Herbert. In Mahan's letter of October 11<sup>th</sup> he complained to Ellen:

I have had another pessimistic letter from Stockton, elicited by one from Ramsay to Taylor in which he speaks most disparagingly – and most ignorantly – of the College and its work. I reply and cheer up as much as I can; but I am not, and *will* not, be fretted. I did what I could while there, I do what I may here and the result must be as God wills. In fact, I don't find myself caring how it turns out – and I try to have the same spirit about the future of the cruise.<sup>18</sup>

The trip to Newport and reading of Mahan's book had a significant influence on Herbert who from that point forward considered himself an advocate for the Naval War College. However, he still relied, unfortunately, on the counsel of Ramsay, who was still an ardent opponent of the College. Herbert did appoint Captain Henry C. Taylor, as the next President of the War College in November of 1893. Taylor was a believer in the ideas espoused by Luce, with a history at the College having been a speaker there, and was not considered out of favor with Ramsay and the rest of the Navy community. Thus, he was a respected and capable officer to put in charge in Newport. However, it was not long after that he encountered his first resistance to the College. His counterpart in Newport, Captain Bunce, in command at the Torpedo School, acting in conjunction with Ramsay and other efforts, began a new offensive to strip the College of its facilities and ultimately its funding.<sup>19</sup>

Taylor again wrote to Luce for assistance in lobbying support with members of Congress when he learned of the scale of the effort building against the College. Taylor explained the situation and noted his disappointment on the fact that much of this was initiated simply over

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<sup>17</sup> Seager, *Alfred Thayer Mahan*, 274.

<sup>18</sup> A.T. Mahan to Ellen Evans Mahan, October 11, 1893 in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 163.

<sup>19</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 38-39.

differences in belief on the value and purpose of training officers to think on a higher plane of naval strategic thought:

College affairs are at their lowest ebb. It is said that the principal opponents of the College appeared privately before the Naval Committee of the House last week, and made some headway towards having the appropriation for the College entirely omitted from the estimates.

Any strong official action on my part would be seized upon at once by the Chief of Bureau, and the Secretary made to believe it was an act of interference, complaint and insubordination.

The motive at the bottom of all this being largely a personal feeling of jealousy against yourself and Mahan, and a resolute intention to remove all traces of the excellent system founded by yourself.

I could not believe, until I had seen it, to what distances personal envy would reach.<sup>20</sup>

The existence of personal bias and jealousy over differences in opinion or technique were at the root of the fight by Ramsay and his followers against the Naval War College and what it stood to do for the Navy going forward. One could argue it was a case of the older officer corps not wanting to change, but the fact that Luce was older than most all of his opponents cast out that theory. This was more a case of traditionalists versus progressives in the realm of naval thought. One side was short-sighted in their vision of the role of naval warfare, while the other grasped the big picture along with the role naval forces would play in support of national interests. One could compare it to the capability of commanding a single ship or small squadron of ships versus command and control of an entire fleet in an area of operation. Officers like Ramsay and Bunce were victims of their own insecurities and failure to adapt to a rapidly changing world in which naval warfare would be radically different from the one in which they were raised when officer education beyond the Academy was limited mostly to what they would learn on their own or from their commanding officer aboard ship.

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<sup>20</sup> Captain Henry Taylor to S.B. Luce, December 28, 1893, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 19. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

In the early months of 1894, Captain Taylor and Luce continued in their efforts to garner support for the War College among those in Congress who controlled the appropriations process. Luce wrote to the Senator from Massachusetts, Henry Cabot Lodge, who was also corresponding with Taylor. Lodge notified Luce that he was working with Theodore Roosevelt and others on behalf of the College. He acknowledged that the effort was in fact led by Ramsay and Bunce, but did not know their motives. He also noted that while Secretary Herbert would not concur with cutting the appropriation, he was not willing to take any active role in support of the College. Lodge advised Luce, "The most we can hope is to keep the appropriation up and the college alive and wait for a change in the Bureau of Navigation and for better times."<sup>21</sup> Such was the power of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.

Captain Taylor, not feeling very confident in the current affairs within Congress, took up a public affairs campaign by appealing to the press and other influential members of society. With the permission of the Secretary of the Navy, Taylor reached out to civic groups, societies, and anyone who could voice their support for the College to their elected representatives in Congress. Taylor took care in not ever making direct criticisms against the Navy to avoid losing what support he did have within the service. However, he was warned by Secretary Herbert.<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Taylor in March 1894, in response to some of the news reporting that backfired against the College, Herbert cautioned him, "I regret to say that my conclusion is that you have exceeded the bounds of the permission given you by me to advocate the War College through the press,

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge to S.B. Luce, January 22, 1894, , MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>22</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 66-70.

and that you have in fact, although it may have been unintentional, instigated the attacks which have been made through the newspapers.”<sup>23</sup>

In the end game, though, Taylor was successful. All his efforts with the public relations campaign, along with the reputation and notoriety of Mahan’s works boosted the popularity and credibility of the Naval War College enough to solidify its position in the service for the foreseeable future. The opening address for the class in the summer of 1894 was given by Assistant Secretary of the Navy, William McAdoo. Taylor remarked how it, “was convincing as to the need of a school of war, where strategy, tactics, and coast defense could be studied and where a thorough course of international law could be pursued.”<sup>24</sup> Secretary of the Navy Herbert was a strong advocate and protector of sorts against any future attacks by Ramsay. This threat was further neutralized when Ramsay was replaced in October of 1895. As noted, personal bias, jealousy, and rivalry were at the source of the angst against the War College since its inception, but at the core of the issue was the fact that this novel idea was a difficult one to understand even for the most ardent Navalist. As one historian noted, “It was not difficult for a Congressman to grasp the implications of a battleship. The implications of the War College, though more far-reaching, were not so easily grasped.”<sup>25</sup>

Although the moment signifying the beginning of the conversion of Herbert from enemy to advocate for the War College began with his visit to Newport aboard *Dolphin* in August 1893,

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<sup>23</sup> Hillary Herbert to Captain Henry Taylor, March 13, 1894, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 1, Folder 21. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>24</sup> Captain Henry Taylor, Report of the President of the War College and Torpedo School, September 24, 1894, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1894* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 208.

<sup>25</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 70.



the report of the trip and its results were not included in his Secretary of the Navy report to the President and Congress that year. However, they were a key point in his report in 1894:

For some years after the subject was first brought to my attention I was not inclined to believe that the advantages to be derived from a war college as it was established were sufficient to justify the expenditure necessary to keep it in operation. A visit, however, to that institution at Newport, in the summer of 1893, and a careful study of the whole subject sufficed to change my convictions on the subject...Its proper purpose...is the study of strategy and tactics, the solution of war problems as affected by modern naval appliances, questions which can only be taken up with advantage by officers of more or less experience.<sup>26</sup>

Herbert went on in his remarks on the War College to commend the work done by Captain Taylor and his staff, and in particular highlighted the use of war games to play out the various strategies and plans developed by the students in the course. He was excited about the prospects in the future to conduct practical exercises with actual naval vessels of the North Atlantic Squadron as part of these games. Herbert left no doubt as to where his interests lie with regard to the sustainability of the War College. He was encouraged by the enthusiasm and interest shown by the students at the College, stating, "I attended one of the lectures last summer, and conversations with a number of the officers convinced me that they were all cooperating heartily with Captain Taylor in attempting to solve the complex problems of modern naval warfare."<sup>27</sup> This was an encouraging sign of the interest and seriousness which Herbert took the work of the War College going forward. His advocacy and support would help take the College far, and in turn, further enhance the development of American strategic naval thought.

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<sup>26</sup> Hillary Herbert, Report of the Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1894* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), 28-29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

### The U. S. Naval War College and Strategic Naval Thought Move Forward

Following the turmoil of the previous few years surrounding the Naval War College, the turn of events in favor of the institution in the mid-1890s, firmly established the work being done in Newport. Herbert went to great lengths to point out the significant importance to the Navy and the nation of the lessons learned and put to use at the College with regard to plans for the defense and security of the United States. In his report to the President in the fall of 1895, Herbert said of the Naval War College, “it now stands out clearly as an undeniably practical institution for the study of war as a science evolved from historical research and of war as an art applied to problems arising out of hypothetical and possible cases of attacks upon and defenses of our own country, its coasts, and cities.”<sup>28</sup> He went on to discuss how during the past century there were multiple examples of the study of land warfare, but nothing of the sort regarding naval warfare. He supposed the reason for this failure of attention to the naval art was due to the lack of any major maritime conflict during that time. However, naval officers being part of the profession of arms, the study of war should be a requirement whether in times of peace or war. The Naval War College provided the perfect setting for such an endeavor. Herbert explained, “It has been found necessary only to place before their minds such problems of war as would undoubtedly confront us in case of hostilities in order to excite in them the liveliest interest...”<sup>29</sup>

There were other indications of a greater level of importance being attached to the courses of study at the College. Of the twenty-eight officers on the roster for the class of 1895, there were two lieutenant commanders, six commanders, and three captains – a significant rise in status for what in the past consisted mostly of just lieutenants. Also in this class were an officer

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<sup>28</sup> Hillary Herbert, Report of the Secretary of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1895* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), XLI.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XLII.

from the Rhode Island Naval Reserve, one from the United States Revenue Cutter Service, and the second class with an international officer to attend the College (two officers of the Royal Swedish Navy attended in 1894),<sup>30</sup> a lieutenant from the Royal Danish Navy. The list of lecturers at the College also indicated a higher level of stature including four renowned gentlemen from the academic, political, and law communities including Mr. Alexander Porter Morse, the Honorable William E. Russell, Mr. Charlemagne Tower, Jr., and the Honorable Frederick R. Coudert, Sr. to lecture on various aspects of international law, foreign relations, government, and lessons in the same from history. Other lectures included those from an officer formerly of the Chinese Navy to discuss actions of the Sino-Japanese War, a visiting officer from the United States Army to lecture on strategy of American military campaigns, and the return of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan to deliver revised versions of his original courses on strategy and naval warfare.<sup>31</sup>

As noted earlier, war games were a relatively new part of the curriculum at the War College. With each passing session, the practice and value of the war games greatly increased and demonstrated their value in application at the tactical and strategic level. Captain Taylor noted on the strategic game, in particular, “With greater familiarity and skill in practice it will in time come to be regarded by the Navy, as it is already by the German army, as an essential factor in the perfection of war plans.”<sup>32</sup> This was especially significant with regard to the increasing importance of planning for regional areas of interest to the United States. Taylor indicated discussion was held at the College regarding strategy concerns connected to potential war

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<sup>30</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Captain Henry Taylor, Report of the President of the War College and Torpedo School, October 5, 1895, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1894* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 168-169.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

problems between various foreign nations and the United States. Significant in this discussion was how, “one in particular, intended to give effect to the Department’s expressed desire to begin the strategic study of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, excited great interest.”<sup>33</sup> Herbert’s final remarks on the Naval War College in his Report of 1895 summed up the importance and value of the advances underway in Newport and the manner in which the war games described by Captain Taylor were better preparing the United States for what may come in the not so distant future:

The successful development of the art of war by our Navy is especially gratifying now, when a respectable naval force of admirable ships will soon be at the disposal of the Government, and when the knowledge of properly disposing and combining them for war will be of the highest value. The Department for this reason regards the work of the Naval War College as especially deserving commendation.<sup>34</sup>

The year 1895 was important for the War College not only for the reasons already discussed, but for other reasons. As the status of the College was firmly established, its credibility for the work conducted by the officers studying there grew among the Navy community. There were still unbelievers and would be for many years to come, but there was momentum building behind the work in Newport that carried an influence like never before. One retired naval officer, Rear-Admiral Lewis A. Kimberly, former commander of the Pacific Squadron and President of the Board of Inspection and Survey for the Navy, was a frequent correspondent with Captain Taylor over issues related to the state of naval affairs and the work of the College. Kimberly was pleased with the positive gains made to advance the work of the College, but at the same time was concerned that some of the still powerful opponents would block these gains causing damage to the Navy and the Nation. Referring to papers produced by

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Hillary Herbert, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Year 1895*, XLIII.

the College on some of the Navy's war planning scenarios, he wrote to Taylor in January of 1895:

I feel very sure that if those in appreciation to the War College could, or would read these papers, they would be forced to acknowledge they were trying to bar the road to the Line of the Navy – of becoming familiar, or of mastering a science of the most vital importance to the future efficiency of the Navy, which in the future is to become the principal offensive arm of the country.<sup>35</sup>

Kimberly's opinion on the matter was somewhat anticipatory of the events building on the horizon in which the Navy would play a vital role. The war problems analyzed by the students at the Naval War College were built upon possible war scenarios between the United States and other potentially antagonistic nations. In the absence of any other official planning staff at the department level, the work done in Newport became the de facto Navy staff for war planning. As a matter of fact, Luce and Taylor had been pursuing the establishment of a staff to coordinate and execute all matters of the Navy both operational and administrative in nature. The teachings at the War College outlined the advantages of having such a system in place for the Navy. This effort would last years and finally come to fruition through the continued efforts of many other War College officers, but in 1895-1896 the issue was conducting analysis and preparing war plans. Through the process of war game exercises and the data collected as a result combined with the proposed solutions to the war problems examined, the War College "began to create a body of doctrine that could be used in the absence of a central strategic planning office in the Navy Department."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rear-Admiral Lewis Kimberly to Captain Henry Taylor, January 2, 1895, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>36</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 43.

In the summer of 1895, a dispute over borders between Venezuela and Great Britain inevitably drew the United States into the mix. The United States served as an intermediary and arbitrator for the dispute under the Monroe Doctrine. At the time, the United States viewed Great Britain as the most likely opponent in a war scenario due to the prominence of British naval strength, and the crisis provided an opportunity for the United States to establish its role of power in the western hemisphere by standing firm on the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine. There were some heated and blustery remarks made regarding the willingness of Americans to hold their position; however, it was unlikely the United States would have ever actually come to blows with Great Britain over such an issue.<sup>37</sup>

Regardless of the grounds for and the outcome of the crisis, it provided an opportunity to turn exercises into actual operational planning for the United States Navy. The majority of the planning effort conducted by Taylor and those at the War College focused on reviewing, revising, and updating war plans for the defense of the United States from an attack by Britain. In some respects, the efforts were similar in nature to what George Washington and his staff considered in their combined planning with the French during the American Revolution. The primary efforts were focused on preparing to defend against an invasion of American shores while planning interdiction attacks on British installations in Halifax to disrupt and destroy the British ability to use that as a base against the United States. The crisis in Venezuela was over by the spring of 1896, but the War College carried on with their work on the existing war plans. Although nothing to execute came of the crisis, in all, it was a good real-world exercise that

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<sup>37</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 109.

prepared them for what was coming next in preparation for possible conflict with Spain in the Caribbean over the insurrection in Cuba.<sup>38</sup>

By the spring of 1895, indications were brewing of something occurring in the Caribbean. In February that year, Cuban revolutionaries resumed their struggle against the Spanish that failed during the war of 1868-1878.<sup>39</sup> Secretary of the Navy Herbert wrote to Taylor regarding preparations for the upcoming war games exercise that summer and stated that, “Until some complications in the Caribbean sea pass away I shall not be able to know how many ships can be spared for exercises such as you suggest.”<sup>40</sup> Assistant Secretary McAdoo, in updating Taylor on the availability of the North Atlantic Squadron to support the exercises, acknowledged their importance, “I am now more than ever convinced that these evolutions are absolutely essential to make the Navy what it should be, and that they should go hand in hand with the teachings of the War College.”<sup>41</sup> The prospects of American involvement overseas or the defense of the homeland spurred other officers to look to the War College for interest in what was being taught there or, at a minimum, to voice their support and encouragement on the effort. The value and training provided by the war games were a strong draw of this positive communication from the fleet. Commodore Thomas O. Selfridge, the commander of the European Squadron in 1895, wrote to Taylor commenting on the summer war games and voiced a growing appreciation for what the College was doing to prepare officers for higher level command and provide solutions

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<sup>38</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 88-89.

<sup>39</sup> David Trask, “The Spanish-American War,” Hispanic Reading Room World of 1898, Hispanic Division Library of Congress, June 22, 2011, <https://www.loc.gov/r/hispanic/1898/trask.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Hillary Herbert to Captain Henry Taylor, March 21, 1895, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>41</sup> William McAdoo to Captain Henry Taylor, May 13, 1895, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

to war problems for the Navy's consideration.<sup>42</sup> These kind of comments were indicative of an overall growing level of strategic thought by the senior ranks of the Navy, and its influence in both operational and administrative affairs.

### The Naval War College as a Center of Strategic Planning

The practice of analyzing tactical and strategic problems and presenting potential answers or solutions to those problems was part of the curriculum at the War College for several years before the war with Spain in 1898. In his closing address to the session of 1895, Captain Taylor acknowledged the high level of interest shown in these games by the officers in the class and stressed the importance of them in the mission of the War College:

These problems and the strategic war games develop high professional qualities... There were occasions in the strategic war games when, after days of preliminary planning, officers, confronted during the game with some unexpected development of the enemy's force, demurred at being obliged in a few minutes to readjust their plans to meet the emergency... These situations... which as you know were based as to their methods upon the tactical situations placed before the German Army officers by Von Moltke and others... succeeded... as a most effective means of developing in our minds a thorough apprehension of the art of war.<sup>43</sup>

Using the war games as a method for devising solutions and potential plans for war, the War College was an ideal host for conducting preliminary study for war with potential adversaries. As early as 1894, prior to the rebellion in Cuba, some of the personnel at the College were thinking of scenarios where Spain may at a point in the future be an enemy of the United States.<sup>44</sup> Some students took it upon themselves to write papers on these potential courses of

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<sup>42</sup> Commodore Thomas Selfridge to Captain Henry Taylor, May 15, 1895, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>43</sup> Captain Henry Taylor, "Naval War College Closing Address Session of 1895," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 22, no. 1 (January 1896), 205.

<sup>44</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 89-90.



action. One of these, written by Commander C.J. Train, was quite detailed. He included details down to the composition of squadrons of ships and the logistics requirements for each across the operational area along with a timeline of events. He laid out the objectives of his paper as:

Consider the state of affairs consequent upon declaration of war against Spain, and under the supposition that Spain would exert her entire force, naval and military, against us. What would be the probable line of action pursued by Spain? What would be her principal objective? What would be our base of defense against such line of action? What would be our principal objective and plan of operations against her? Consider and discuss these situations thoroughly and in detail.<sup>45</sup>

In 1895, as the rebellion in Cuba began to raise tensions in the region, Captain McCarty Little advised Taylor to consider a larger scale exercise of potential conflict between the United States and Spain. In 1886, under the guidance of Mahan, Little was the officer who introduced naval war gaming at the College and lectured on the practice, using techniques offered by Philip Colomb. Heeding Little's advice, Taylor directed the class to consider two scenarios in which the United States went to war. One focused on the defense of New England against a British assault, and the other focused specifically on Spain. Two scenarios were considered for the problem on Spain – one solely between the U. S. and Spain, and the other in which Spain allied with Britain to fight against the U. S. and France.<sup>46</sup> This was occurring even as the attention of many in the government were focused on the crisis in Venezuela. It was fortunate that there were still some at the Naval War College keeping their eye on Spain. Rear-Admiral Kimberly again wrote to Taylor remarking on these activities that the War College was, "filling a most important place in

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<sup>45</sup> Commander C.J. Train, "Strategy upon a war with Spain," RG-08, U.S. Naval Operations, 1894-1895, Box 44, Folder 4. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>46</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 24, 45.

giving to the Navy an opportunity to advance its officers in the higher branches of their profession and to form more efficient and useful commanders for both single ships and fleets.”<sup>47</sup>

One of the more impactful aspects of the wargaming exercises conducted at the War College was the fact they included forays aboard small ships and boats out from Newport into the waters of Narragansett Bay and Long Island Sound where officers could, “study the strategic elements of the marine environment firsthand.”<sup>48</sup> The trips utilized navigational charts of the operational areas as a foundation, but provided officers the opportunity to produce a different kind of chart in the aftermath of the exercise. They were called “war charts,” and illustrated the outcome of the officer’s thinking, “about the environment’s strategic relevance and became the basis for the college’s system of war planning.”<sup>49</sup> It was that kind of thinking at a higher level and to a greater level of detail that was advocated on a regular basis at the War College. Through these exercises and the creation of staff planning products the staff in Newport were building the skills needed for future war planning efforts. In 1896, “for the War College, the harbors and coasts of the United States were as strategic as the waters of Cuba or the Philippines.”<sup>50</sup>

The degree of detail taken in these planning scenarios was exceptional. They went through numerous reviews and updates for correction before presenting to the senior leadership of the Department in Washington. Credit for authorship for most of these products was given simply to the Naval War College unless they were produced by a single officer. One plan that was originally prepared in 1895 went through the review process, culminating in a final product

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<sup>47</sup> Rear-Admiral Lewis Kimberly to Captain Henry Taylor, May 3, 1895, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>48</sup> Jason W. Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea: The U. S. Navy, the Marine Environment, and the Cartography of Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 188.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

in December 1896. The original proposal presented three courses of action. The first involved a direct attack upon Spain itself. This was projected to be the costliest and least confident for success. The second involved attacking Spanish possessions in the east; specifically, a campaign against the Philippines. It would require fewer resources and had a reasonable chance for success. However, it was believed that a victory in the Philippines would not be great enough incentive to bring Spain to terms. The third course of action involved a campaign against Spanish possessions in the West Indies, specifically Cuba and Puerto Rico. This was the most feasible from a resource perspective with the shortest lines of communication from the United States. Again, the likelihood of bringing Spain to a negotiating table over action in the West Indies was not necessarily very high, but it would place a greater burden on Spain to continue such a campaign given their distance from the place of action.<sup>51</sup> The third course of action was selected for, “The strategic relation of Cuba to the Gulf of Mexico is so close and intimate that the value of that island to the United States in a military and naval way is incalculable.”<sup>52</sup>

What followed in the remainder of the report was a well-analyzed, well-presented piece of staff work that covered all aspects of both operational and logistics planning. It included assessments for how to project military and naval force from its home bases against Cuba. Ports of embarkation, supply depots, temporary and forward bases, staging locations, force flow, identification of those forces, tasks for all activities, timelines for those activities, the enemy order of battle, and, in the case of the naval forces, the operational plan. It was an impressive effort and was forwarded to the Navy Department in February 1896 for consideration.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Naval War College, Situation in the Case of War with Spain, 1895, RG-08, U.S. Naval Operations, 1894-1895, Box 44, Folder 4. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Considerable work was completed and revised over time to ensure it encompassed the latest updates on force disposition, diplomatic relations, logistics, and intelligence.

One of the reviewers, taking a perspective in the Office of Naval Intelligence was Lieutenant W. W. Kimball. His analysis led him to the position of proposing a plan of a different variety primarily based on resources, “if the object of the war were to be attained in the most economic manner possible, the better policy for the United States to adopt would be one in which the utilization of its superior sea power were contemplated, on in which a purely naval war were intended.”<sup>54</sup> As a result, Kimball’s report was predominantly a plan for a potential naval conflict focused mostly on Cuba with supporting activity in the waters of Puerto Rico. His proposed plans of action addressed a variety of operational options from convoys, shore bombardment, blockades, and direct engagement of the Spanish fleet at sea. He even provided proposals for interdiction of Spanish commerce and naval vessels in European waters with American ships being supplied by contract support out of England.<sup>55</sup>

Kimball provided minimal discussion regarding action in the Philippines, but he did mention the value of controlling Manila and the surrounding waters of region. Doing so would provide the United States a base from which they could interdict Spanish trade and any other naval operation in the region. Kimball proposed, “It would seem that the United States could well spare from operations in Cuban and Spanish waters a cruiser fleet certainly sufficient to harass the Philippines and probably strong enough to reduce and hold Manila itself.”<sup>56</sup> He stressed the strategic importance of controlling Manila in order to properly support maintaining a

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<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant W.W. Kimball, “War with Spain, 1896,” RG-08, U.S. Naval Operations, 1896-1897, Box 44, Folder 5. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

long-term American presence in Philippine waters. The impact on Spanish trade was such that, if needed, the United States should be prepared to commit an armored ship or battleship to the effort for, “The ease with which the revenues of the island could at once be attained and the fact that these revenues might be held until a war indemnity were satisfactorily arranged for, both indicate that Manila should be made a serious objective.”<sup>57</sup>

The class entering the War College in the summer of 1896 took the notes on the Department review of the War College plan and Kimball’s plan for further examination. They concurred on the difficulties of any operations in European waters, and agreed upon a parallel operation in the Philippines; however, they disagreed with Kimball’s assumptions on the effectiveness of a blockade of Cuba.<sup>58</sup> The report published in November of 1896, along with an initial operational graphic, recommended:

that an attack on Cuba cannot be successful through a blockade alone, nor without a vigorous offensive, or in other words without a serious demonstration by ships and troops against Havana and the other cities, and that any closing of ports in the nature of an absolute blockade must be by the capture of the port itself and holding it by troops.<sup>59</sup>

The “Special Problem. Dec. 1896” report, finalized in December of that year, was the product of many months of effort by those at the War College and Naval Intelligence to produce a proposed plan in case of war with Spain.<sup>60</sup> This report included a much more detailed naval order of battle assessment for both the United States Navy and Spanish Navy. It also included

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 24, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Naval War College, Situation in the Case of War with Spain, November 1896, RG-08, U.S. Naval Operations Plans, 1896-1900, Box 48, Folder 1. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>60</sup> Naval War College, Special Problem, December 1896, RG-08, U.S. Naval Operations Plans, 1896-1900, Box 44, Folder 5. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

timelines and plans for assembly of the U.S. fleet and movement toward Cuba for their role in the invasion, support of land forces ashore, and engagement of the Spanish fleet.

The revised War College plan was not approved when submitted again to the Department. Secretary Herbert appointed a Senior Board, led by the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, Admiral Francis Ramsay, to review the plan. Joining Ramsay on the board was another officer known for his ill feelings toward the War College, as well as commander of the North Atlantic Squadron, Commodore Francis Bunce. The remaining members were the Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, Captain William T. Sampson, the Chief Intelligence Officer of the Navy, Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright, and, having been relieved of his post at the War College for this purpose, Captain Henry Taylor. Sampson was one of the members of the board in 1884 recommending the plan for the establishment of the War College. Although the plan presented by this board was somewhat similar to Kimball's plan, it was not a consensus view. Taylor submitted his own report on the issues with the plan. Secretary Herbert, on his way out of office with the old presidential administration, left the issue for his successor to resolve.<sup>61</sup>

Following the inauguration of President William McKinley, John D. Long took office as the new Secretary of the Navy. Under Long's direction, the Senior Board reconvened in the summer of 1897 with all new members save Lieutenant Commander Wainwright, although all the same offices as the previous board were represented. Commander Caspar Goodrich, who replaced Taylor in representing the Naval War College, was the third officer on the 1884 board with Sampson and Luce in making the recommendation for the establishment of the College. Long tasked this board with reviewing all the work done before, and to revise or prepare a new

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<sup>61</sup> Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 101-102.

concept of operations as needed. This board presented a revised plan that, “completely vindicated the War College’s previous efforts, while keeping the best of Kimball’s ideas.”<sup>62</sup>

The revised plan of 1897 was not a purely naval operation, but involved joint operations with the Army from the beginning and throughout. There was no plan for a blockade of Cuba as the primary effort. These components were in line with the recommendations from Captain Taylor. One of the ideas integrated from Kimball’s proposals was to conduct a demonstration operation in the region of the Philippines by the American Asiatic Squadron. This operation involved an attack upon Manila itself and the resident Spanish fleet. This was in line with the economic strategy proposed by Kimball for the United States to gain an influencing role in the Pacific with the control of the Philippines.<sup>63</sup>

The end result of the Senior Board activity in the summer of 1897 was that the Navy had a plan in place to act upon should the need arise. Movements in the political arena were beginning to take shape that would bring the work done by those at the War College and others to the forefront within a year. However, still in the summer of 1897, the new Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, was also brandishing his own influence both at and through the Naval War College. Roosevelt, an admirer of Mahan since the publication of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, reached out to Mahan, now retired from active duty, in the second week of May of 1897 to discuss items of a strategic nature. Mahan had earlier made known his beliefs on the need for the United States to break out of its isolationist tendencies of the past in the face of a rapidly growing world in the 1890s. This especially pertained to American influence in the Caribbean region and Central America. Roosevelt appealed to these beliefs when he wrote

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

to Mahan to inform him of, “three actions he hoped to persuade McKinley to take: annex Hawaii, construct a canal across Central America and add a dozen battleships to the Navy’s fleet.”<sup>64</sup>

In the following month, Roosevelt delivered an address at the Naval War College in which he described, “America’s destiny as a great global power,”<sup>65</sup> creating a furor across the country. Roosevelt opened his address quoting George Washington, “To be prepared for war is the most effectual means to promote peace.”<sup>66</sup> This had only one meaning to Roosevelt, “an immediate, rapid buildup of the American Navy.”<sup>67</sup> Roosevelt was a firm believer in the value and purpose of a strong navy. His own book, published in 1882, on the history of naval operations in the War of 1812 was acknowledged as a principal work on the subject. In describing his purpose for telling that story, he noted, “It is worthwhile to study with some care that period of our history during which our navy stood at the highest pitch of its fame; and to learn anything from the past it is necessary to know...”<sup>68</sup> What he wanted Americans to know about that war was how important it was to the United States to have a capable navy ready to stand up against the might of the Royal Navy. Bear in mind that Nelson once said, “that the British fleet was the best negotiator in Europe.”<sup>69</sup> Roosevelt placed great emphasis on the successes of the American Navy against the British as a chief reason for the United States’ victory in that war, and a chief reason for building a strong navy again, “Then, as now, it was the

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<sup>64</sup> Gregg Jones, *Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America’s Imperial Dream* (New York: New American Library, 2012), 26.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Address of Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Before the Naval War College, Newport, R.I., Wednesday, June 2, 1897* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (1979; repr., New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2010), 593.

<sup>68</sup> Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Roosevelt, *Address Before the Naval War College*, 4.



Navy upon which the country had to depend in the event of war with a foreign power; and then, as now, one of the chief tasks of a wise and far-seeing statesmanship should have been the upbuilding of a formidable fighting navy.”<sup>70</sup>

Roosevelt acknowledged his firm belief in the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine and made clear his belief that diplomacy was useless without the capability to use supporting armed force. Such means provided Americans with the ability to not only protect themselves at home, but bring the threat of action to foreign waters, if necessary, to avoid war. A strong navy was critical in this regard, because, “If we possess a formidable navy, small is the chance indeed that we shall ever be dragged into a war to uphold the Monroe Doctrine. If we do not possess such a navy, war may be forced on us at any time.”<sup>71</sup> It was not without forethought that Roosevelt chose to deliver this address at the Naval War College. The majority of his audience were among those developing and teaching theory and the art of warfare for the Navy, as well as preparing war plans for consideration. As a result, at least in some circles, the Naval War College was considered “the nerve center of American strategic planning.”<sup>72</sup> Again, the timing of Roosevelt’s address and the location at which he delivered it could not have been planned any better, with the War College completing work on the revisions for the latest plan for war with Spain under the direction of the Senior Board. Roosevelt’s role and influence as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, along with his relationship with Mahan, and the theme throughout his address on the importance of preparing for war, “could not possibly have been a stronger hint as to what kind of thinking the new war plan should contain.”<sup>73</sup> Some would argue further, given Roosevelt’s advocacy of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>72</sup> Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 597.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 597-598.

the War College and the work in the realm of naval strategy produced there, that his address could be “interpreted as quasi-official United States Navy policy.”<sup>74</sup>

Roosevelt, although an expansionist by his own admission, was also a realist. He understood the nature of the changing world and the ramifications if the United States was not willing to take steps to ensure their position among the competitive powers. This was about honor, credibility, and responsibility. His closing statement in Newport revealed his motivation:

In closing, let me repeat that we ask for a great navy, we ask for an armament fit for the nation’s needs, not primarily to fight, but to avert fighting. Preparedness deters the foe, and maintains right by the show of ready might without the use of violence. Peace, like freedom, is not a gift that tarries long in the hands of cowards, or of those too feeble or too shortsighted to deserve it; and we ask to be given the means to insure that honorable peace which alone is worth having.<sup>75</sup>

As a historian himself, Roosevelt understood the value of studying the past for developing policy and preparedness for the future. Much as how Mahan’s lectures on naval strategy were based on historical lessons of the past, Roosevelt used his own teachings from the War of 1812 to demonstrate the need for a strong and capable navy in 1897. The relationship between the two was based on mutual admiration of their work in the academic realm of naval history, and they both had studied the same theories and histories of warfare in the preparation of their own. A biographer of Roosevelt noted, “In Mahan with his sweeping interpretation of sea power as the decisive force in modern history Roosevelt found a mentor, friend, and confidant.”<sup>76</sup> The correspondence between the two regarding issues facing the Navy and the United States serve as evidence of this relationship. The letters from May of 1897 are filled with discussion not

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<sup>74</sup> David H. Burton, *Theodore Roosevelt Confident Imperialist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 44.

<sup>75</sup> Roosevelt, *Address Before the Naval War College*, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Burton, *Theodore Roosevelt Confident Imperialist*, 31.

only on the items already noted regarding Roosevelt's agenda with the President on rebuilding the Navy, but also about strategy and disposition of naval forces.

The concern Roosevelt held over the perceived threat to Hawaii by Japan was on shared by Mahan who at the beginning of May wrote to Roosevelt voicing his concern:

That there is danger of trouble with [Japan] towards Hawaii, I think beyond doubt; if this administration is not able to put those islands under our wing, Mr. Cleveland's name will be immortalized a century hence by one thing only, that he refused them when he could have had them. Closely related to this is the need of strengthening our Pacific squadron. In my opinion, rendered decisive by the Venezuela affair, we have much more likelihood of trouble on that side than in the Atlantic....Corollary: in building war ships, build on the Pacific side. Also, your best Admiral needs to be in the Pacific. Much more initiative *may* be thrown on him than *can* on the Atlantic man. I would suggest also, as bearing upon the general policy of the Administration, that the real significance of the Nicaragua canal now is that it advances our Atlantic frontier by so much to the Pacific, & that in Asia, not in Europe, is now the greatest danger to our proximate interests.<sup>77</sup>

It should come as no surprise that those same three topics were the ones highlighted by Roosevelt as key in his agenda with President McKinley. He went so far as to ask the experts at the Naval War College to prepare an operational plan focusing on the Hawaii issue. He presented the following situation to the President of the College, Captain Goodrich:

Special Confidential Problem for War College  
Japan makes demands on Hawaiian Island. This country intervenes. What force will be necessary to uphold intervention and how shall it be employed? Keeping in mind possible complications with another Power on the Atlantic Coast (Cuba).<sup>78</sup>

The issues Roosevelt discussed with Mahan were principal elements of his approach toward a national strategy with the Navy as an essential element in that effort. It is no wonder the same elements were at the heart of the theme of his address at the Naval War College the following month. Later in that same year, Mahan published a collection of articles written

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<sup>77</sup> A.T. Mahan to Theodore Roosevelt, May 1, 1897 in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 506.

<sup>78</sup> Burton, *Theodore Roosevelt Confident Imperialist*, 52.

previously for various news magazines all addressing issues of sea power, the United States, and its role in the world. All of the articles included in his *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* pertained to one or more of these same elements in some form or fashion. All carry some semblance of or point to a common theme – the importance of having a capable navy and the ability to use it in support of national interests. Mahan best summarized this, stating, “Every danger of a military character to which the United States is exposed can be met best outside her own territory – at sea. Preparedness for naval war...is preparedness for anything that is likely to occur.”<sup>79</sup> A biographer of Mahan noted, “These had one distinct advantage over his previous books in that they applied his broad principles directly to his own country and contemporary problems in an easily understandable way.”<sup>80</sup>

As 1898 came onto the world scene, the Naval War College faded from participation in the final planning efforts of the previous three years. However, Roosevelt continued to rely upon Mahan for counsel on naval strategy in the months leading up to the outbreak of war with Spain. Roosevelt kept Mahan up to date on the latest developments with the plans being set in motion following the sinking of the U.S.S. *Maine* in Havana Harbor on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Mahan was recalled to active duty to advise Secretary of the Navy, John Long, on naval strategy during the war with Spain. During this time, Mahan also lobbied to Secretary Long for changes in the Navy War Board in favor of an organization more akin to an office of strategic planning. These efforts were ultimately unsuccessful yet laid the groundwork for changes that would eventually come about in the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> A.T. Mahan, “Preparedness for Naval War,” in *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1898), 214.

<sup>80</sup> W.D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 183.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-189.

At the same time, although the Naval War College was no longer an active participant in the development of plans and strategy for the war, the work done by the staff and students at the College in the years leading up to the war with Spain was not in vain. The example set by those in Newport demonstrated the value of teaching officers to think at a higher level to see the big picture and understand how to develop strategy and plans to overcome whatever set of conditions were presented to the Navy. The “strong belief in advance planning, detailed preparation, and rational consideration coupled with rapid execution in the event of war”<sup>82</sup> was what men like Luce, Mahan, Taylor, and others argued all along to build into the fabric of the Navy.

#### A Short but Significant War

Mahan advised Roosevelt in May of 1897 that the admiral in charge in the Pacific needed to be one of the best. Being the best is subjective in the mind of the one making such a declaration. In the event of who the best man was for the job of commanding the Asiatic squadron in the Pacific heading into 1898, Roosevelt wanted one he could trust to be fearless, exercise good judgment, and act responsibly when the need arose. However, the decision was not his to make, but that of Secretary Long. Through a series of calls and conversations with the right people on the political side of the administration, Roosevelt succeeded in getting who he firmly believed was the right man for the job endorsed by the President for the Secretary of the Navy’s approval. That man was Commodore George Dewey.<sup>83</sup>

This was a significant event for Dewey, not a widely known officer nor was his service record distinguished any more than most others of his age and grade. However, it was reported

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<sup>82</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 111-113.

that gentlemen of the Metropolitan Club in New York, where Dewey was a member, “no more realized the fire in him than his neighbors saw a general in Ulysses S. Grant.”<sup>84</sup> Regardless of any political maneuvering required to put Dewey in the position, the comparison to Grant was a good one. War with Spain was on the horizon and getting more likely. As a result, “Dewey would have one of the most desirable commands with sole responsibility for dealing with the enemy forces in his theater.”<sup>85</sup> In October, the Secretary of the Navy ordered Dewey to detach from his present duty as President of the Board of Inspection and Survey for the Navy Department on November 30<sup>th</sup> and proceed to Yokohama, Japan to relieve the retiring Rear-Admiral Frederick McNair as the new Commander-in-Chief of the Asiatic Station.<sup>86</sup>

U.S.S. *Olympia*, formerly Protected Cruiser #6, preceded Dewey to the Orient by two years. She arrived in November 1895 to serve as the new flagship for the Asiatic squadron. Dubbed, ‘Queen of the Pacific,’ *Olympia* was a symbol of American military might and industrial prowess of the “New Steel Navy.” Her mission was to show the flag of the United States to provide “visible evidence of America’s interest in protecting lives and property abroad.”<sup>87</sup> Dewey arrived to raise his pennant aboard *Olympia* on January 3, 1898, but did not have to wait long for orders from Roosevelt in Washington changing that mission.<sup>88</sup> He was to assemble the squadron in Hong Kong and, “In the event of declaration of war Spain, your duty

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<sup>84</sup> Ronald Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 39.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>86</sup> Commander Nathan Sargent, *Admiral Dewey and the Manila Campaign* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Foundation, 1947), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire*, 36.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Erwin Johnson, *Far China Station” The U.S. Navy in Asian Waters, 1800-1898* (1979; repr., Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 257.

will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast and then offensive operations in the Philippine Islands.”<sup>89</sup>

Upon receipt of these orders, Dewey immediately took steps to prepare his ships for potential operations in the Philippines. His predecessor in Asia, Rear-Admiral McNair, failed to prepare any kind of assessment on the Philippines or coordinate the proper resources for such an operation; therefore, this task was left to Dewey and his new staff. His reputation for being aggressive became evident in his drive to ensure the squadron had the fuel, ammunition and other stores needed for the effort, as well as painting over the peacetime white of all ships with wartime grey. Dewey also contracted for ships to accompany the squadron for resupply. This was in case Japan or China, in the event of war, denied American warships entry to their ports. Notification of this condition came on April 23, when Dewey was notified by cable via the British Governor of Hong Kong that war was declared between the United States and Spain. All preparations were completed within the next forty-eight hours and shortly after noon on April 26, the American squadron departed Hong Kong for the Philippines.<sup>90</sup>

Following an uneventful transit from China, the American squadron bore down on the capital city of the Philippines on the last day of April. Late that night, with the plan prepared and briefed to his captains, Dewey led the squadron in column with *Olympia* in the lead toward the entrance of Manila Bay. The ships sailed slowly and quietly in the dark to avoid being seen by Spanish shore batteries to enter the bay shortly after midnight. Tensions were high aboard the ships as no one knew for sure if the waters were mined or not and at any moment, they could be discovered by observers ashore or unseen patrol boats. Aside from a few minor incidents the

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<sup>89</sup> Sargent, *Admiral Dewey and the Manila Campaign*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Erwin Johnson, *Far China Station*, 257-261.

transit deep into the bay went remarkably well, with the American squadron reaching the head of the bay shortly before daylight. The guns surrounding the city of Manila numbered almost three hundred of various calibers, reinforcing the need for the Americans to remain undetected. They discovered the Spanish fleet at anchor near the naval station at Cavite under the protection of additional shore batteries and a floating boom. Dewey ordered a turn to starboard to proceed back south to engage the enemy. The time was just after five a.m. on May 1, 1898.<sup>91</sup>

A short time later, Dewey communicated a simple order to *Olympia's* captain, "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley."<sup>92</sup> According to the *Olympia's* logbook, "At 5:35 the order was given to commence firing at the Spanish fleet and a rapid fire was maintained until the close of the action."<sup>93</sup> The American squadron proceeded in column taking the Spanish ships under fire as they came into range. They encountered a few mines and at least two small torpedo boat attacks, but suffered no damage as a result. After two hours of firing from distances ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 yards inflicting visible damage to numerous Spanish ships while receiving strong but ineffective fire in return, Dewey broke off the engagement to consult with his captains and redistribute ammunition as needed.<sup>94</sup>

During the pause in the battle, the gun batteries near Manila kept up a harassing fire upon the American ships. None of the fire was effective; therefore, none of the American ships returned fire upon the batteries. Dewey, nonetheless, sent a warning to the governor-general of

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<sup>91</sup> Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire*, 74-78.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>93</sup> Deck Log of USS *Olympia*, May 1, 1898, 02/01/1898 – 07/31/1898 [Logbooks of U. S. Navy Ships, ca. 1801–1940]; Record Group 24: Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1798–2007; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C., ARC Identifier 148847615 at <https://catalog.archives.gov>; February 25, 2023.

<sup>94</sup> Commodore George Dewey, Report of Engagement of Squadron with Spanish Forces at Manila Bay, May 4, 1898, *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1898, Naval Operations of the War with Spain* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 70.



the city that if the batteries did not cease their fire the American squadron would fire upon the city itself. The batteries of Manila went silent. Upon confirming all ships still retained sufficient supplies of ammunition, Dewey re-engaged the Spanish shortly after eleven a.m. and discovered most of the enemy vessels were on fire.<sup>95</sup> The battle ended when, “at 12:15 the Spanish Admiral surrendered...The engagement resulted in a decided victory in which no lives were lost for the U.S. Naval fleet. At 1:50 the *Olympia* came to anchor.”<sup>96</sup> Dewey noted in his report on the battle that casualties were heavy among the three Spanish ships sunk, eight burned, and two tugs and some small launches captured. American losses were quite the opposite, with no lives lost, only seven slightly wounded, and no significant damage to any ship of the squadron.<sup>97</sup>

Dewey’s aggressiveness in pursuing the fight while maintaining calm amidst the fray distinguished him as the man Roosevelt believed he was when he pushed for his appointment to the command in Asia. His victory in Manila Bay was a dramatic success and example of how dutiful preparation and planning in advance could reap reward:

This Battle of Manila Bay was fought in Hong Kong harbor. That is, the hard work was done there; the execution here was not difficult. With the cooperation of the officers of the fleet, my plans were carefully studied out there, and not detail omitted. Any man who had a suggestion to offer was heard, and if it was a good one it was adopted. After the indications of war were so strong that it appeared inevitable, I devoted my time and energies to making every preparation possible.

The United States Navy concurred with Dewey’s assessment of his preparations in the weeks leading up to the battle:

[Dewey’s] exhaustive preliminary studies of the situation, to his careful foresight and preparation at Hong Kong, to his wise consultations with his captain and their mutual consideration of every contingency which might arise, to his analytical diagnosis of all

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Deck Log of USS *Olympia*, May 1, 1898.

<sup>97</sup> Commodore George Dewey, Report of Engagement of Squadron with Spanish Forces at Manila Bay, May 4, 1898, 71.

the ominous rumors of Spanish preparation, and finally to his celerity and virtual surprise of their position at an hour when he was least expected.<sup>98</sup>

Barely two months later, a similar victory was achieved in the waters off Santiago, Cuba, when an American fleet destroyed an out-gunned and out-classed fleet of the Spanish Navy. Following elements of the plans developed prior to the war, the U.S. Navy assembled a fleet in Key West around the North Atlantic Squadron under the command of Rear-Admiral William Sampson and the Flying Squadron of Commodore Winfield Scott Schley. Unlike the Asiatic Squadron composed mainly of cruisers, this fleet included armored cruisers and four of the newest battleships in the Navy. A fifth battleship made the voyage from California around the tip of South America to join the fleet in the Caribbean prior to engaging the Spanish.<sup>99</sup>

The Spanish fleet moving toward Cuba from Europe was commanded by Admiral Pascual Cervera. His small force of just four armored cruisers and two destroyers was in the Cape Verde islands when war was declared and he was ordered to move to defend Puerto Rico. Cervera and his captains were not comfortable with this situation and voiced their concern to the Spanish government. However, a council of admirals voted fourteen against four to overrule their concerns and send them on to the Caribbean. Mahan, it was noted, agreed with the position of Cervera and his captains that the political pressure forced them into a position of disadvantage. Unfortunately, “the insurmountable problem for the Spaniards was that, unlike the Americans, they had very little except public outcry to support them.”<sup>100</sup>

The next two months of naval activity in the Caribbean that followed seemed like cat and mouse games, with the American fleet searching for the Spanish as they journeyed from the

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<sup>98</sup> Sargent, *Admiral Dewey and the Manila Campaign*, 48.

<sup>99</sup> Jim Leeke, *Manila and Santiago: The New Steel Navy in the Spanish-American War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 90-93.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Cape Verdes. Logistics problems slowed the Spaniards, causing the Americans to misjudge their time of arrival in Puerto Rico, which did not play well in American public opinion on the heels of Dewey's victory in Manila. Still believing the Spanish were headed for Puerto Rico, Sampson placed a blockade line of ships across the approaches to the island to intercept Cervera. Instead, when learning of the American blockade, Cervera made for the base at Santiago de Cuba on the southeastern end of the island. They arrived there in the early morning of May 19.<sup>101</sup> By the end of May, Cervera's fleet was discovered in its anchorage at Santiago and Sampson ordered a blockade of the port to keep them confined in that location. American forces landed in Cuba just east of Santiago in the last week of June. This move forced Cervera into making a decision to either disembark his guns and men to fight ashore or make an effort to break the blockade line of American ships and try to escape to sea. Cervera made his decision and informed his captains to prepare to depart on the morning of July 3.<sup>102</sup>

Sampson reported the Spanish ships sortied from Santiago harbor between 9:35 and 10:00 a.m. the morning of July 3. Sampson himself was actually ashore conferring with the American land force commander, General Shafter, at the time; therefore, it was actually Commodore Schley who fought the fleet that day.<sup>103</sup> The Spanish ships came out of the harbor at speed and began firing on the closest American ships of the blockade as they came within range. The smoke from their guns helped conceal the ships following behind while signals were hoisted for the Americans to close with and engage the enemy ships. The momentum built by the Spaniards as they came out helped them clear the initial blockade line, but the Americans gave

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 98-103.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 109-110, 125-126.

<sup>103</sup> George Edward Graham, *Schley and Santiago: An Historical Account of the Blockade and Final Destruction of the Spanish Fleet under command of Admiral Pasquale Cervera, July 3, 1898* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1902), 282-283.

chase and rapidly closed the distance. Within four hours of the first Spanish vessel exiting Santiago harbor all six vessels were either destroyed or ran aground and captured with heavy casualties in killed and wounded. American losses, again, were extremely light. Although several ships received more damage than those in Manila Bay none of it was serious, and with only one killed and one wounded. Sampson attributed the results to superior American gunnery along with the heavier armor and speed of the American ships.<sup>104</sup> Admiral Cervera acknowledged the manner in which his fleet was outmatched by the Americans in the Battle of Santiago when he reported to the Spanish Governor-General in Havana, Captain General Ramon Erenas, “I left Cuba yesterday morning with my squadron and after an unequal combat against forces more than treble mine all my squadron were destroyed.”<sup>105</sup>

In the aftermath of Dewey’s victory in Manila, the powers in Madrid ordered a reserve fleet to the Pacific. However, on learning the news of Cervera’s destruction off Santiago, the reserve fleet was recalled to defend Spain itself from a potential American assault.<sup>106</sup> The effects of the two victories, occurring within two months of each other in two separate oceans thousands of miles apart was significant. The advances in shipbuilding and commanders with a grasp of the strategic impacts of their decisions were evident on both occasions. In Manila, it was demonstrated when *Olympia*, “designed to engage an enemy fleet before it could approach American shores...inaugurated the United States’ fateful transition into a global power – just a few years after showing the flag in the Pacific – when it served as the flagship of Commodore

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<sup>104</sup> Rear-Admiral W.T. Sampson, Report of Battle with Spanish Fleet, July 15, 1898, *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1898, Naval Operations of the War with Spain* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 506-511.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Admiral Pascual Cervera to General in Chief Havana, undated, MSC-041, French E. Chadwick Collection of Letters, Box 1, Folder 9. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>106</sup> Jim Leeke, *Manila and Santiago*, 150.

Dewey's Asiatic Squadron."<sup>107</sup> Off Santiago, the heavy guns and speed of Sampson's battleships inevitably made any further efforts to subdue the Spanish garrisons in Havana and Santiago moot. The United States Navy, with its victory over Cervera, "had total control of the sea, and thus, according to Mahanian doctrine, had won the war in an afternoon."<sup>108</sup>

### Ahead into the Twentieth Century

The Navy itself was then an established institution growing and changing to reflect its role in support of U.S. national interests following the war with Spain. In 1899, the United States found itself essentially a colonial world power with territorial possessions in the Caribbean Sea and across the Pacific all the way to the Philippines. Whether the United States would retain control of these possessions or for how long made no difference. At least at that time, the support and security of the country and its imperial possessions across the globe required a strong and capable navy for protection. The Spanish-American War also validated the need for a two-ocean navy. The battles in Manila and Santiago occurred on separate sides of the globe within two months. This was a capability that only a navy with forces positioned on both coasts of the United States could accomplish. The outcome of the war with Spain would likely have been different had the United States not had the navy it did in 1898.<sup>109</sup>

In the period between December of 1901 and September of 1902, Mahan published a series of articles addressing various world situations that could influence action taken by the United States. All had a naval flavor to some extent, but one in particular addressed the central

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<sup>107</sup> Jon Guttman, "USS Olympia: Symbol of a Sea Change," *Military History*, vol. 31, no. 2 (July 2014): 23.

<sup>108</sup> Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 466.

<sup>109</sup> Captain Edward L. Beach, *The United States Navy, 200 Years* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 385-387.

issue of naval expansion of the United States. Mahan pointed to the fact that regardless of the war with Spain, a naval expansion for the United States was a requirement sooner or later. The onset of the war in 1898 simply expedited that need for expansion in the public eye. In his treatment of the various geopolitical and economic conditions surrounding American interests abroad, Mahan sought to make a key point for the United States:

She is confronted, in short, by a general movement of the nations resting upon a spirit spread among their peoples, which seeks to secure commercial advantages in all quarters of the world; peaceably, if may be, but, if not, by pressure. In this collision of interests, force will have a determining part, as it has in all periods of the world's history; and force, in such remote localities, means necessarily naval force. It is upon the spread of this spirit and the action ensuing from it, that the necessity for a great navy rests, and not upon the fact of having assumed oversea charges. Porto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, and if there be any other acquisition at present, have not created the necessity; on the contrary, they have reduced the weight of the burden, by contributing to support it.<sup>110</sup>

In the year following the American victory over Spain, life at the Naval War College continued as before, with a new class arriving for the summer session in 1899. The schedule of lectures covered a list of standard topics including orientations of sea power for England, France, and Germany; preparations for war, and the ever present lectures on naval strategy by Mahan. However, it also reflected the events of the recent past with new topics covering lessons learned from the war with Spain, the impact of the acquisition of the Philippines on naval requirements, and the effect of tropical conditions on naval operations. The exercises of war games, especially strategic games, continued to be a large part of the schedule.<sup>111</sup>

The recognition of the value of the lessons learned from the Spanish-American War was obvious even to those not involved in the conflict. Colonel Sir George S. Clarke of the Royal

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<sup>110</sup> A.T. Mahan, "Conditions Determining the Naval Expansion of the United States," in *Retrospect & Prospect: Studies in International Relations Naval and Political* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 52-53.

<sup>111</sup> Schedule for Summer Session, May thru July 1899, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 2, Folder12. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

Engineers authored and presented a paper on the subject to the U.S. Naval Institute. Clarke, one of the appointees to the Colonial Defense Committee in 1885 to 1892, was also on the Royal Commission on Army and Navy Administration between 1888 to 1890. He addressed several important lessons of the war in his paper and noted that many of them are old lessons that are often forgotten. Two of these within the realm of naval policy were revealing in the era of new expenditures on naval forces. One spoke to the need to have a capable navy ready prior to the opening of hostilities, noting that “the greatest energy on the outbreak of war [cannot] atone for want of an organization which is essentially the product of careful study in time of peace.”<sup>112</sup> The second observation of significant importance by Clarke was related to the need and purpose of a navy in general. He noted, “Americans who have marked the vigor and the initiation, the skill and the daring displayed by their navy in the recent war, cannot fail to understand where lies the true defense of their coast-line.”<sup>113</sup> The main take-away in this lesson was a Mahanian one. The true purpose of the Navy is to defeat any enemy before it can ever reach the United States.

During the 1890’s, as a result of its role in war planning, the Naval War College was essentially performing the role of a general staff for the Navy. This was something Luce feared would come happen. Due to the organization of the Navy around its eight functioning boards, there was no single organization within the Department with the personnel trained to perform the functions of a general staff outside of the Naval War College. Some of that changed in 1900 with the establishment of the General Board of the Navy by Secretary Long. The General Board was charged with advising the Secretary of the Navy on war plans, bases, and general naval policy.

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<sup>112</sup> Colonel G.S. Clarke, “The War and Its Lessons,” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, vol. 26, no. 1 (January 1900), 141.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

The role of the War College shifted to that of a center for research on naval policy issues and to test and refine war plans prepared by the General Board.<sup>114</sup>

This relationship of the War College and the General Board would have its ups and downs over the course of the next decade and beyond, but it was another sign of the maturing of the United States Navy. The fact that the Department willingly acknowledged not only the need for a singular body of officers to perform the vital functions of a general staff on war plans and policy, but it also acknowledged the expertise resident in Newport at the Naval War College to support the same. This dynamic would eventually evolve into a formal staff under a Chief of Naval Operations later during World War I.

As the Navy Department continued to evolve in its organizational structure and accompanying mindset to address strategy and policy, so did the courses of lectures in the subject evolve at the War College. In 1906, Rear-Admiral Luce was ordered back to active duty to lecture on naval tactics and strategy. During this stint in Newport, Luce lobbied for the return of Mahan to update and revise his series of lectures on naval strategy for the College considering recent events and their influence on the subject. Luce, trying to convince him of the value of the effort, wrote to Mahan, “The work will contribute more to your reputation than many ‘pot boilers’ however desirable the latter may be. They (the strategy lectures) are the culmination of your exhaustive studies in naval history.”<sup>115</sup> Luce carried his pursuit of Mahan to the President of the Naval War College, Rear-Admiral J. P. Merrell, making a strong case for bringing Mahan back to Newport to update the lectures:

There is no one so well qualified to do this work as the author of the lectures himself – Rear-Admiral Mahan. Indeed it was for this very purpose, the purpose of reaching the highest

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<sup>114</sup> Spector, *Professors of War*, 101.

<sup>115</sup> S. B. Luce to A.T. Mahan, July 15, 1907, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 3, Folder14. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.



plans of the naval profession, that the Navy Department called the College into being. It was for this very purpose – the purpose of an intelligent discussion of questions of naval strategy as affecting our naval policy in times of peace, as well as of war, that Rear-Admiral Mahan was called by the Department to the Chair of Naval History. [His] works which profoundly affected the naval policy of foreign powers and made up mainly of lectures delivered at the College, were but so many studies preparatory to the work under consideration. These great works, so highly appreciated abroad are but the foundation, broad and deep, upon which the author erected the Science of Naval Strategy. ...In a word Rear-Admiral Mahan has done for Naval Science what Jomini did for Military Science. This is high praise; but it is deserved.<sup>116</sup>

Merrell did write to Mahan requesting him to take up the project, albeit not until May of 1908 to allow Mahan to recover from an illness. Merrell stated, “I venture to urge that for the good of the College and the service you will undertake this work.”<sup>117</sup> Mahan did return to the War College. Over the next two years, Mahan worked from his home in New York and in Newport to update and revise his collection of lectures on naval strategy. Upon completion, Mahan worked with his publishers and the War College to get the lectures published in printed form so the Navy would have copies of them to distribute at the College and within the Navy itself for the professional development of officers and other Navy personnel. Mahan took care to point out in the Introduction to the book how the changes of recent years impacted the original material of the lectures. The result was a lesson in the continuing evolution of the theories and principles of strategy itself and how that influences strategic thought:

The most notable of these changes are external to the subject of Naval Strategy in itself; and necessarily so. They affect it much; but they do so from the outside. Based as Naval Strategy is upon fundamental truths, which, when correctly formulated, are rightly called principles, these truths, when ascertained, are in themselves unchangeable; but it by no means follows that in elucidation and restatement, or by experience in war, new light may not be shed upon the principles, and new methods introduced into their application. This will constitute development; alike in the practice of Naval Strategy, and in that statement of its laws and principles which we call theory. The physical sciences supply us here with apt analogies. The laws governing them, for example electricity, are immutable; but, in

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<sup>116</sup> S. B. Luce to J.P. Merrell, November 18, 1907, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 3, Folder14. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>117</sup> J.P. Merrell to A.T. Mahan, May 29, 1908, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 3, Folder15. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

the application of the laws, the lifetime of a generation testifies how great modification and progress are possible. They are possible, and are effected, through many minds acting upon them, and through numerous experiments being made; the analogy to which, in our profession of war, is the experience of warfare.<sup>118</sup>

Following the publication and printing of the book, Mahan was detached from active duty with the Navy effective June 6, 1912.<sup>119</sup>

Prior to his final retirement from the Navy in 1910, Luce authored several papers on the history of the War College and its role in the development of the new Navy. He also wrote a paper discussing the state of the service and the role of the United States in the world. The theme of this paper was evident in many of his lectures during the same period. In it, Luce remarked, “It is only by looking back a few short years that one can realize the great changes that have brought this country prominently before the notice of the world. The year 1898 has been called the year of Europe’s discovery of America.”<sup>120</sup> Forever going forward, Americans and the rest of the world would look upon the United States in a different light. Luce described naval policy, “in its broadest sense, comprehends Statesmanship. It is the relative rank, as a naval Power, which the State aims to assume and maintain in the family of nations.”<sup>121</sup> The new American Navy of the twentieth century was a signal to the world of the place taken by the United States in that family of nations.

That signal to the world was never stronger than in December of 1907, when the sixteen battleships of the “Great White Fleet” of the United States Navy set sail for their around the

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<sup>118</sup> A.T. Mahan, *Naval Strategy Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land: Lectures Delivered at U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I., Between the years 1887 and 1911* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1911), 2.

<sup>119</sup> Secretary of the Navy to A.T. Mahan, May 24, 1912, RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 4, Folder 5. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen B. Luce, “The Fleet,” *The North American Review*, vol. 188, no. 635 (October, 1908): 564.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

world cruise as a display of American might.<sup>122</sup> The effort, born of an idea to practice or demonstrate the Navy's capability to move a fleet from one ocean to another, "appealed to Roosevelt as diplomacy, as preventive strategy, as technical training, and as a sheer pageant of power."<sup>123</sup> The cruise of the Great White Fleet from 1907 to 1909, the first of its kind in history, served as a symbol of American power projection capability and an elevation in strategic naval thought to a higher level for the twentieth century.

### The Royal Naval War College in the Early Twentieth Century

In 1903, Commander Herbert Richmond of the Royal Navy was assigned the flagship of the Royal Navy's Channel Squadron. Having entered the Navy in 1885, Herbert spent the bulk of his early career in the Mediterranean where he developed an interest in the study of British naval history. This would become an important element in both his personal and professional life and for the Royal Navy. Recognized early on for his character and abilities, Herbert went on over the next ten years to hold several highly desired and influential positions in the Navy, including assistant to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher, during his era of transformation of the Navy, Captain of H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, and Assistant Director of Operations on the Naval Staff at the start of the First World War. Richmond's term with Fisher would prove both valuable and detrimental to him in more ways than one, but still allowed Richmond to have an impact on the quality of training in the Royal Navy while still serving. It also helped prepare him for his post-naval life as an author and academic.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Henry J. Hendrix, *Theodore Roosevelt's Naval Diplomacy: The U.S. Navy and the Birth of the American Century* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 155.

<sup>123</sup> Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001), 494.

<sup>124</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 17-21.

Education became a hallmark of Richmond's career when serving with the Channel Squadron where he was assigned to a committee to investigate the system of training for warrant officers. During this time he learned valuable lessons on the state of the education system in the Royal Navy for officers and began forming his own opinions and theories for improving the system. Richmond, having served aboard ships at sea, understood the requirements for a naval force capable of rapidly ramping up to prepare for war, but he also understood the ability to accomplish that was limited by available funds. In the world of increasing military budgets to pay for ships and other equipment, little seemed left to pay for proper training and education of the force to operate that equipment. To make the best of limited funds, Richmond proposed focusing educational improvements on the leaders of the navy – the officer corps:

Here the bedrock on which to lay the foundations of success is beyond doubt 'Education.' It is a problem never entirely satisfactorily solved, and upon that alone lies the future of the British Navy.

Unfortunately those broader principles, such as strategy and tactics, whereby the destinies of empires are decided, are almost entirely omitted from our education. The problem of what to teach and what to omit is becoming more and more difficult as mechanical appliances increase ever more rapidly in numbers.

The predominant factors now are the strategy and tactics of the opposing leaders, precisely as in land warfare... It may from this be argued that only officers of higher rank would need to study such subjects, but the great difference at sea is that commanders of units are infinitely more independent and must act more upon their own responsibility. Hence it seems evident that even lieutenants should be possessed of an elementary knowledge of strategy and tactics; also of international law, and foreign warships, with which the former are inseparably connected.

It may be thought that this discussion is irrelevant in connection with strategy, but it is introduced to draw attention to the fact that education is the groundwork of every profession. As our officers are taught, so they will fight, and it must not be forgotten that on their success or failure hangs the destiny of the empire.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Commander Herbert Richmond, Notes on Education & Training 1903, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

While some of what Richmond proposed was already then being taught at the Royal Naval College Greenwich, it was limited to the Senior Officer's War Course and Flag Officer's Course on Strategy. Richmond's notes from his time on the committee indicate his belief in a much broader application of those subjects. His notes on education and training were timely in that this was an area of emphasis that the new First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher, would address when he was appointed to the post in 1904.

Admiral Sir John "Jacky" Fisher was an agent of change in a variety of ways. It is noted by some that, "Probably the most important contribution to the efficiency of Britain's armed forces was the reform of the Navy by...Fisher...from 1904 to 1910."<sup>126</sup> When Fisher was appointed First Sea Lord in October 1904, he had already been preparing the field for all he wanted to change. Earlier that year in May, from his post as Second Sea Lord, Fisher sent a memorandum to the Committee of Seven outlining his new proposals for transformation of the Navy. This was a hand-picked group of seven trusted naval officers below the rank of admiral and considered the smartest in their field in the Navy with which he could share ideas for consideration while being, "absolutely relied upon for secrecy."<sup>127</sup>

One of the ideas Fisher shared with the Seven regarded a reconsideration of strategy. The admiral noted four things critical to the ability to enact the transformational changes he had in mind. They included eliminating all outdated vessels from the Navy, redistribution of all fleets and squadrons, and a reduction in the total number of ships in the Navy without reducing the fighting capability overall. At the top of his list was to reconsider British naval strategy. Fisher

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<sup>126</sup> David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, 2d ed. (Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 65.

<sup>127</sup> Letter from Admiral Sir John Fisher to Lord Selborne, October 19, 1904, in *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, ed. Lieut.-Commander P.K. Kemp, vol.1 (London: The Navy Records Society, 1960), 6.

stressed, “Strategy cannot be conveniently dealt with in this paper. National policy is largely involved, but it is unmistakable that we can effect large rearrangements of our naval force, and indeed we *must* do so!”<sup>128</sup> An essential ingredient in the Royal Navy’s ability to address this monumental task was a staff with the skills and talents to tackle the difficult and complicated analysis required for such an effort and the ability to make sound recommendations for decision to the Admiralty leadership. The Royal Naval War College at Greenwich was the source for officers with that kind of talent and skill.

Although he endorsed the work of the War Course and Strategy Course at the Naval College, Fisher was not a proponent for its location in Greenwich. He had long advocated for its removal from the current location and relocation back to Portsmouth. The principal issues Fisher had with the location in Greenwich were primarily due to financial costs of maintaining the facility and staff in a borough of London, but he also noted the distance from any active naval port with access to ships and the other technical tools and opportunities that could have provided. In referring to the War Course, he confirmed, “The strategic part of the course can naturally be carried out in lecture rooms, &c., but the tactical part of the course *should* be carried out partly ashore and partly afloat.”<sup>129</sup> Although one of the advantages of establishing the War Course in Greenwich was the proximity to the libraries and other academic opportunities available in London, by 1904 there were other issues of concern. The bottom line with Fisher was he wanted to centralize the basic and advanced education programs for Royal Naval officers, other than the school at Dartmouth, at the Royal Naval Base in Portsmouth.

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<sup>128</sup> Notes by Admiral Sir John Fisher on New Proposals for the Information of Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904, in *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, ed. Lieut.-Commander P.K. Kemp, vol.1 (London: The Navy Records Society, 1960), 25.

<sup>129</sup> Admiral Sir John Fisher on New Proposals for the Information of Committee of Seven, May 14, 1904, in *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, ed. Lieut.-Commander P.K. Kemp, vol.1 (London: The Navy Records Society, 1960), 25.

Fisher had another goal in mind with the consolidation of the colleges at Portsmouth. Julian Corbett's articles on educational reform in British news magazines drew Fisher's attention. Corbett and the staff at the War Course were just adding to the program in Greenwich topics on staff and planning functions; therefore, Fisher invited Corbett to join one of Fisher's unofficial advisory groups. Fisher "wanted the War Course to help develop policy, war plans and strategy through the intelligent analysis of pressing issues, many reflecting the shift of strategic focus from France to Germany."<sup>130</sup> The Department of Naval Intelligence (DNI) normally would provide such counsel and products, but Fisher valued the unbiased assessment provided by such a group and the integrated efforts synergy created between the War Course and the Admiralty increased with each new iteration.<sup>131</sup>

A change in leadership of the Royal Naval College occurred in the 1904-1905 period when the Admiral President at Greenwich, Rear-Admiral Henry May, died unexpectedly in May 1904, leaving the program without a leader. He was replaced by Captain Edmond Slade in the spring of 1905. During this period, the relationship between the War Course and the DNI grew closer on the discussion of strategic thought and conduct of war planning for the Royal Navy. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain Charles Ottley, wrote to Corbett about the lack of strategic thinking found in naval officers strongly encouraging Corbett to continue his work in teaching this valuable skill to those attending the War Course, and indicated that Slade's relationship with those in the Admiralty would be helpful in obtaining any support needed to continue that endeavor.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Andrew Lambert, *The British Way of War: Julian Corbett and the Battle for a National Strategy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 104.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>132</sup> Donald M. Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922: Historian of British Maritime Policy from Drake to Jellicoe* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), 41-42.

This dearth of strategic thinking within the Royal Navy was at a critical point in the early years of the twentieth century. Relations at this time between the United States and Great Britain were growing stronger with each passing year, and the navies of the two nations were soon to become almost peer status with each other. As a result, Britain looked to the Americans more as friend than potential enemy. By 1908, “official Committee of Imperial Defense and Foreign Office doctrine assumed that the possibility of war with the United States was so remote that it need not be considered as part of serious defense planning.”<sup>133</sup> The naval race between Britain, France, Russia, and Germany in 1900 was gathering momentum such that, “British strategists realized that their country no longer had enough ships to be strong everywhere.”<sup>134</sup> In April 1904, Britain agreed to the *entente cordiale* with France effectively calming foreign and military relations between the two nations. It would be a few more years before Britain and Russia would agree to terms of détente following the Anglo-Russian Convention in August of 1907. Therefore, the efforts of British defense planners in 1905 were focused more on Germany.<sup>135</sup>

Corbett, Slade, and Ottley worked on various concepts for war with Germany as a result of the shift in British defense posture, and the development of their relationship signified an important, yet disturbing aspect of the culture of the Royal Navy in this period. Considering the roles Slade and Corbett played in Fisher’s strategy advisory group, and the fact that Ottley and the DNI were often unable to perform their duties of war planning were, “real evidence that strategic thought in naval circles did not exist in quantity, [and] that *some* naval planners were at work, but that they were not in a sufficiently powerful position to completely capture the head of

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<sup>133</sup> Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 70.

<sup>134</sup> Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 213.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-338.



the Admiralty, let alone the War Office.”<sup>136</sup> It was also evidence of the need for a naval staff to properly perform these functions for the Navy much like the General Staff did for the Army.

However, Fisher, never a fan of the Army, was not yet convinced of the need for a naval staff.

Fisher did move forward, though, with his plans to shift the War College to Portsmouth. After a brief stint in Devonport, the College was established in Portsmouth in the spring of 1906. Shortly afterward, Fisher wrote to Corbett to gauge his interest in a plan for extending the War Course, to which Corbett enthusiastically responded in support of the idea. The War College would host the primary course at Portsmouth, with some extension lectures presented in other locations in a supporting role to other institutions to enhance their offerings. One of the largest expansions of the course under the guidance of Slade and Ottley was the war games exercise. The exercise at Portsmouth brought together the participation of forty to fifty officers of both the Army and Navy to consider and discuss a specific war problem presented to them for analysis. The expansion of the exercise brought a broader perspective on the issues and some ideas not previously considered. It further defined the relationship between the DNI and the War College and benefit gained for the Navy.<sup>137</sup>

In the summer of 1906, Corbett wrote two articles with the assistance of Slade for publication in *The Times* discussing the background, origins, and initial organization along with the current program of instruction, staff functions, and future plans for the War College. The articles also pointed out collaboration of not only the War College, Naval Intelligence, and the Admiralty, but also the participation of officers from the Army in the war games exercises. The success of the war games, being a particular high point for the College, was said to provide a

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<sup>136</sup> Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922*, 43.

<sup>137</sup> Lambert, *The British Way of War*, 105-106.

“increase of sympathy and mutual understanding between the two services.”<sup>138</sup> In the second article, Corbett explained in great detail the circumstances surrounding the matter of the College performing the functions of a General Staff and preparation of war plans. He stressed, “It was, of course, never intended that it should supply war plans in the authoritative and originating manner of a General Staff. This function, as everyone is agreed, cannot wisely be separated from the person of the First Sea Lord.”<sup>139</sup>

Corbett went on to discuss the arguments on where the Naval War College should be located, Greenwich or Portsmouth. He laid out the advantages and disadvantages of each, including even making a point to housing the War Course in the halls of the Admiralty itself. However, any benefits gained by that option would be overwhelmed by the weight of normal departmental business. Corbett made his choice quite clearly in explaining the advantages of remaining in Portsmouth. Aside from the standard tactical advantages of being at a naval port:

It must be remembered that a tactical and strategical school – a school of the art of war at Portsmouth – would not be alone. It would be surrounded by the other great schools, torpedo, gunnery, navigation, and the rest, so that by locating it there we should be putting the coping stone on a great naval University, where every line of naval thought would react on every other, and produce a balanced whole of incomparable value and steadiness. It would be in the midst of this atmosphere – permeated with all that is most sound and advanced in naval lore and practice – that our war plans would be quietly worked out and the soul of our material weighed.<sup>140</sup>

Although Corbett and Fisher, among others, may have approved of the College locating in Portsmouth, there was one old admiral very much against that course of action. Admiral Sir Reginald Custance did not favor the College in Portsmouth. Custance, one of those early on who was instrumental in helping the War Course get started in Greenwich, was not a friend of Fisher.

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<sup>138</sup> Julian S. Corbett, “The Naval War Course,” *The Times*, June 5, 1906.

<sup>139</sup> Julian S. Corbett, “The Naval War Course, II,” *The Times*, June 9, 1906.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

The two had a spectacular falling out in 1901 with a disagreement over a strategic assessment of the situation in the Mediterranean region.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, it was not unanticipated that Custance would clash with Fisher over the location of the War College. In his own book on naval policy later, Custance pointed out the inconsistencies in the case for moving to Portsmouth and made his own case for Greenwich:

They did not understand that this higher education should be based on the idea that, as a subject of study for the naval officer, war is more important than the ship herself. Still imbued with a sense of the importance of the materiel, and believing that instruction is inseparable from ships and dockyards, they removed the 'war course' from the Greenwich College to the three Home ports. They did not realize that the study of war required concentrated attention, and is not to be prosecuted with success by men whose thoughts are continually diverted to the care of their ships... Instead of confining the course to the close study of war – to thinking, which is hard and difficult – attention is being diverted to the more easy and therefore more congenial task of toying with cruisers and destroyers... The 'war course' should return to Greenwich, whence it should never have been moved.<sup>142</sup>

#### British Strategic Naval Thought in the Edwardian Era

Regardless of the location of the War College or how many different locations lectures for the War Course were given, the fact remained during this time that the level of strategic thought within the Royal Navy was maturing with time, albeit not always within the right levels of the Navy. With a few exceptions, the larger number of officers taking a stronger approach on developing a British school of naval strategic thought at the time were not flag officers. Those attending the War Course provided mixed reviews on the applicability of the lessons or the rigor of the agenda. Up and coming officers like Herbert Richmond and Kenneth Dewar were of this mold. Although later in their careers, both would hold positions of great influence in advancing

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<sup>141</sup> Lambert, *The British Way of War*, 99.

<sup>142</sup> Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, *Naval Policy, A Plea for the Study of War* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1907), 51-52.

the level of strategic thought within the Royal Navy, at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, neither was very confident in the ability of the War Course to take the Navy where it needed to go in that regard.

Richmond, the young officer with insight from the investigation on officer training in 1903, held much stronger views during his tenure as assistant to Fisher and beyond. Regarding his experience with Fisher's practice of forming and chairing his own special councils for tasks, Richmond's expression of his views were viewed, perhaps, by some as somewhat too candid given the ego of the First Sea Lord. He was seen as "one of the very few naval officers to see clearly the important role which staff work would play in future maritime warfare [and] his heretical views and forthright character caused him to be transferred."<sup>143</sup> Richmond, while Captain of H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, wrote of Fisher's War Council:

It is the most absurd bit of humbug that has been produced for a long time. It pretends to be the basis of a General Staff, but its constitution shows that whoever devised it has no ideas of what a staff is wanted for, or the particular functions of such a body. The result of the Committee of Enquiry has therefore merely been to produce an absurd anomaly called a War Council, which means nothing. The study of war forms no part of its work. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sea Lord remains supreme & imposes his crude strategical ideas on the nation.<sup>144</sup>

Richmond was a prolific writer. He kept notes and a diary for many years. These provide insight to his thoughts on a variety of issues, but two topics that figured prominently in his papers are education and strategy. He referenced an article by Sir Cyprian Bridge from the 1910 *Brassey [Naval Annual]* where Bridge asserted that the terms 'war council,' or 'general staff' held no value in the halls of the Admiralty. Bridge discussed the merits and demerits of a War Council or General Staff for the Admiralty, asserting that the Admiralty itself was a War Council

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<sup>143</sup> Paul Haggie, "The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 8, no. 3 (July 1973): 117.

<sup>144</sup> Herbert Richmond, October 27, 1909, in *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, 62.

and did not need an additional organization added to the structure. The Admiralty Lords simply wanted to be free of the staff work necessary to make decisions and left to perform their daily functions.<sup>145</sup> This could be considered somewhat contradictory to the position noted by Bridge earlier in 1907 that, “the center of strategic authority will lie in the seat of government. It is there that the general plan must be formed.”<sup>146</sup> However, with regard to the formulation of those plans, he led that statement with the caveat, “The picture must convey a correct impression of all the main conditions, minutiae being left to be dealt with by subordinates directed to conduct particular operations.”<sup>147</sup> It should be noted that in this same time Bridge was working on another book of his own, *Sea Power and Other Studies*, addressing these issues, confiding to Oscar Browning, former Fellow of King’s College at Cambridge and advocate of education reform, that it related primarily to the principles of naval defense.<sup>148</sup>

Richmond noted that he felt the points made by Bridge were, “mostly sound, but he does not understand the scope or composition of a General Staff. It is not a department grafted on to the War Office – it is a system of reorganization which includes every department necessary at Headquarters and ensures that each...does its proper work.”<sup>149</sup> In essence, a restructuring of the current resources within the Admiralty to build an organization capable of dealing with the minutiae and leave the Lords free to perform their primary duties.

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<sup>145</sup> Herbert Richmond, Notes on Naval Strategy and Naval Education, 1910, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Strategy and War Policy, 1908-196, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/17.

<sup>146</sup> Bridge, *The Art of Naval Warfare*, 200-201.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>148</sup> Bridge to Browning, August 6, 1910, Letters of Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge to Oscar Browning, 1 February 1877 to 1 August 1912, Archives Centre, King’s College, Cambridge, GBR/0272/OB/1/211/A.

<sup>149</sup> Richmond, Notes on Naval Strategy and Naval Education, 1910.

As noted, Richmond was especially tied to education in the Navy and how that related to development of strategic thought for naval officers. This was a conundrum for him because:

The precise value of academic teaching of the Art of War is very hard to estimate. The great strategist must possess high moral as well as intellectual qualities. And the former are by no means the least important, but they cannot be developed in a school.

At the same time the school will vastly improve the mental qualities without which the others are useless, and it will further indicate to students the lives on which the moral qualities are required to be developed.

Nothing could be worse than our position at present, where the moral characteristics of our leaders are well trained and unimpaired indeed – but their intellects are totally undeveloped.<sup>150</sup>

Richmond continued his notes with thoughts on the value provided by other naval schools compared to that of Britain. Of particular interest, he noted that a goal for the schools in France and Germany was to identify those officers who excelled in the training and employ them either right away or in the future on the staff in their respective headquarters or with an admiral. That was not the model for the graduates of the War Course in Portsmouth. Richmond held strong opinions on the value and need of higher education, and the failure to take it seriously to increase the professional development of the officer corps of the Royal Navy. Some of these opinions are what held him at arm's length from some of the higher ranking leadership within the Navy in this period, but his beliefs were not wrong. His conviction was:

Not only are strategy and tactics considerably neglected, but brains are generally looked on with extreme suspicion. It would seem as though senior officers adopted the Shakespearian maxim 'He thinks too much, such men are dangerous!'

Thus, the men who rise to the top, and indeed have the best chance of riding to the top, are often either 'old women,' or 'S.O.Bs.' A certain able Captain has stated that half the Captain's list could be cut out without any loss to the Service! For the remainder, we have men who in all respects are worthy to rank with the best of Nelson's captains. They are fearless, self-reliant and intelligent, trusted and respected by all. But in nearly all cases the march of science has left them behind. Not 1 in 100 has a clear conception of the intricacies of modern naval warfare. Hardly any possess so much as a rudimentary knowledge of the principles of strategy & tactics. But the fault is not theirs, it lies in the system that envelopes them.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

The study of the ‘Art of War’ is the duty mainly of the older officers: they have not yet started to attend to it, and not one among them has the energy & clear-sightedness to begin the revolution. But a revolution we must have.

The ‘Art of War’ must be studied high & low, & our Admirals and Captains must become ‘specialists’ in Strategy & Tactics. This is the keystone of the situation, & the result in our next war will depend on how we solve this problem.<sup>151</sup>

Richmond was not one to confine his feelings on these subjects to his diary alone. During his tenure as Captain of H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, he took opportunities to make his opinions known to various officers senior to him, including the Commander-in-Chief of the Home fleet, Admiral Sir William May. Richmond complained in his diary of a lack of trust and communication within May’s command group. He also noted May’s distaste for commentary on plans from officers junior to him. For example, Richmond provided comments on a proposed plan for patrolling the North Sea with destroyers in the event of war, but “Since I wrote that paper...I have not been consulted on a single strategical question, not one. None of the papers relating to war have been sent to me, and my connection with that side of the work has entirely ceased.”<sup>152</sup> Not accustomed to keeping his thoughts to himself at all times, “his intolerance and intellectual arrogance caused him to be regarded as an unsettling gadfly, increasingly isolated and mistrusted by his superiors.”<sup>153</sup> As a result, he was posted to less conspicuous commands following his departure from *Dreadnought* in the spring of 1911.

Richmond found himself in command of the Torpedo School at Portsmouth in the fall of 1912. His disappointment on the continued lack of development of strategic thought within the senior ranks of the Navy remained, and, if anything, were further reinforced by that time:

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Herbert Richmond, March 4, 1911, in *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, ed. Andrew Lambert, 75.

<sup>153</sup> Barry D. Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, 1871-1946* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1982), 25.

We still crawl. We have still not learnt to walk, much less to run. The handling of large bodies of ships of different classes is still a secret to our Fleet Commanders, and I doubt there is one Captain in the Home Fleet who knows how the Fleet would be fought in action, even if the Commander-in-Chief himself does – which I have good reason to doubt.<sup>154</sup>

During this period, however, Richmond was joined by a fellow believer in the person of Commander Kenneth Dewar, another naval intellectual. Dewar, was the winner of the *Royal United Service Institute's* gold medal prize for a naval essay in 1912 for his work on the war value of overseas commerce and its effect on naval policy.<sup>155</sup> His first experience at the War College was in 1909 when as a lieutenant he presented a lecture on Japanese naval operations in their recent war with Russia. His time at the podium was cut short when he used the opportunity to criticize current British practices and praise the Japanese for their approach, “in which common sense prevailed, where juniors were given responsibility and allowed to learn from experience.”<sup>156</sup>

Dewar's thoughts on the value of the strategic war games conducted in the War Course were that they provided only little value. He felt they lacked in imagination in the scheme of operations and did not necessarily always incorporate the other operating systems coming into the Navy like control of communications. In Dewar's opinion, it was all very practical and elementary and the instructional staff failed to challenge the actions or plans developed by those playing the game to the point that it was simply just a practical exercise of standard fleet and squadron maneuvers and nothing more. In the end, he felt the War College could have done more to prepare the officers for what was coming in the future. He did, however, acknowledge the fact

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<sup>154</sup> Herbert Richmond, October 27, 1912, in *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, ed. Andrew Lambert, 87.

<sup>155</sup> “The Royal United Service Institution, The Gold Medal,” *The Times*, March 5, 1913.

<sup>156</sup> Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar*, 29.



that due to the short daily schedule and opportunities to take leave there was ample time to conduct individualized study.<sup>157</sup>

Richmond, shared the opinions of Dewar on lack of imagination in developing a proper training and educational environment. He firmly believed this was an institutional issue in that, “our system of education is the outcome of the traditional English habit of following the line of least resistance, meeting difficulties as they arise and never thinking ahead,” and that as a result of this failure, “imagination fails rapidly, and with it the power of conceiving or forecasting the execution of great enterprises.”<sup>158</sup> Richmond noted points used in an essay on the subject of education written by Dewar in 1912 and referenced a maxim of former First Sea Lord and higher education proponent, Lord George Goschen. Richmond’s notes on the training of staff officers in reference to the value and effectiveness of an education system were, “its success in inspiring an interest which would cause its scholars to go through life teaching themselves. Is the system thorough, is it intelligent, above all it is rousing?”<sup>159</sup> After all, education is supposed to stir the soul to want to learn more and develop a deeper understanding of the principles of one’s chosen profession. Without such a system, the Royal Navy could not move forward in the new era.

The failure of imagination, lack of understanding of the basic principles of strategy and tactics, and lack of appreciation from senior admirals to adopt the fundamental organizational benefits of a functioning war staff revealed themselves in an alarming manner in 1911. The Committee of Imperial Defense met in August that year to consider planning options for Britain’s support of France in the event of war. The Army plans presented by Sir Henry Wilson,

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<sup>157</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919*, vol. 1, *The Road to War 1904-1914* (1961; repr., Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2021), 400-401.

<sup>158</sup> Herbert Richmond, Notes on Naval Education, 1912, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

the Director of Military Operations for the War Office, proposed a force of four to six divisions on the Continent with the French held the potential for preventing any German advance. First Sea Lord Arthur Wilson presented the Navy plans calling for a close blockade of the German coast along with some minor operations by the Royal Marines. It was obvious to all present that the plans for the Navy were prepared in secret by the First Sea Lord alone without the aid of any formal staff – unlike the Army method of operational planning – for the Navy had no staff at that time. The difference in quality and caliber of the two presentations was plain to all in attendance including Prime Minister Henry Asquith. The disappointing effort led to a change in leadership at the Admiralty. Winston Churchill was appointed as the First Lord of the Admiralty and charged with leading the establishment of a full and properly structured naval staff.<sup>160</sup>

Churchill had a tough task ahead of him respecting the traditions of the Royal Navy, integrating with the reforms made by those in the ten years before him, and continuing on the road of reform from an institutional perspective. He understood the challenges and took steps in short order to set things in motion. Within just four days of taking office Churchill set about establishing a naval war staff because time was not a resource he could afford in this period. The prime minister and the king both signed off on the proposals Churchill presented for the organization in early 1912, opening the door for progress. The staff was assigned under the First Sea Lord. This and other reforms were met with resistance, as expected, but Churchill resolved those obstacles by replacing several old-school admirals, including the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet (twice), along with bringing about the resignations of four sea lords all in his first year in office. All were indications that Churchill was serious in his efforts to reform the Admiralty and build an organization that could handle the work before them. The fact that

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<sup>160</sup> Christopher M. Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 14-15.

Churchill was friends with John Fisher made it difficult to enact some of his reforms regarding the formation of a naval staff, given Fisher's long resistance to such an act. However, Fisher remained a confidant and advisor to Churchill during this period. Even the war staff eventually evolved over time to prove to be an effective and wise step in the continued reform of the Royal Navy in the early twentieth century.<sup>161</sup>

Coinciding with the procession of reforms led by Churchill in the Admiralty was the formation of another reformist organization with its own publication focused on the advancement of naval knowledge and professional development. Under the leadership of Herbert Richmond, a small group of naval officers, Dewar among them, gathered to form, "a Correspondence Society for the Propagation of Sea-Military Knowledge...to develop the mental habit of reasoning things out, getting at the bottom of things, evolving principles and spreading interest in the higher side of our work."<sup>162</sup> He wanted the collective members to author articles on subjects of interest that he would assemble and take to Custance for assistance in getting them printed and distributed. This society came to be known as the *Naval Review*. Although in the era of multiple reforms it did meet with some resistance within Churchill's Admiralty, but renewed its publication following World War I, and it still exists today as the professional journal of record for the Royal Navy on military maritime issues.<sup>163</sup>

Richmond's efforts in establishing the *Naval Review*, among his many other projects, could be seen as trying to reverse the stereotype of Englishmen he at least considered in his

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<sup>161</sup> Carlo D'Este, *Warlord: A Life of Winston Churchill at War, 1874-1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 186-188.

<sup>162</sup> Herbert Richmond, October 27, 1912, in *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, ed. Andrew Lambert, 89.

<sup>163</sup> "About the Naval Review," About Us, last modified September 2022, <https://www.naval-review.com/about-the-naval-review/>.

private papers. Richmond noted, “When an Englishman attempts to look into the future he fails dismally.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps this was a trend he was attempting to reverse with the work of the *Naval Review*. Perhaps it was an opinion he shared based on his personal observations and experiences with the old-school admirals who could not see the future beyond the end of their noses. It is difficult to determine for certain, but one thing is for certain, Herbert Richmond and his colleagues did appreciate the influence of reading history for lessons on how to prepare for the future. Much like some of his predecessors including Colomb, Laughton, and Corbett, Richmond understood the importance of reading history to learn from the past. While acknowledging the efforts of those visionaries and historians, he noted still, “In theory and the Art of War we are nowhere; we have not made a start. Here lies our danger.”<sup>165</sup>

Richmond stressed the value of learning about the main principles from the recognized masters of the theory and Art of War: Clausewitz, Nelson, Napoleon, Moltke, Jomini. He pointed out:

It should be both interesting and instructive to observe to what extent these principles were applied with success, when and why they failed, what results arose from violating them, and generally whether or not they justified their claim to be included among those principles of strategy which we accept as fundamental and unchanging.<sup>166</sup>

Richmond took care to point out still that, in wartime, a variety of factors, including the fog of war, could influence or even violate the fundamental principles espoused by the masters. This was when it is most difficult for the strategist. Therefore, to avoid potential clashes over the viability of this school of thought, Richmond proposed making, “a plain elementary treatise on

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<sup>164</sup> Herbert Richmond, Notes RE Temperament, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginal Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

<sup>165</sup> Herbert Richmond, On Reading History, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginal Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Naval Strategy,”<sup>167</sup> that could be used by even the most junior officer to assist in expanding their minds outside the narrow lanes of conventional training as existed at the time.

It is debatable if the treatise published by Julian Corbett in 1911 was the work or kind of work to which Richmond was speaking, but what is not debatable is the impact that Corbett’s *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* had on the naval world. In this landmark work, Corbett addressed topics on the theory of war, theory of naval war, and the conduct of naval war.

Although he used examples from history to illustrate or drive home points, it essentially is more like a manual than a history book. Corbett addressed the topics of maritime and naval strategy as separate entities. Maritime strategy was simply, “the principles which govern a war in which the sea is a substantial factor.”<sup>168</sup> For naval strategy, he provides a little more depth:

Naval strategy is but that part of it which determines the movements of the fleet when maritime strategy has determined what part the fleet must play in relation to the action of the land forces; for it scarcely needs saying that it is almost impossible that a war can be decided by naval action alone.<sup>169</sup>

Although Corbett’s work was predominantly on theory, it did address application in part. As such, it was imperative it meet with Admiralty approval prior to release for publication. There were a series of war plan iterations from 1907 with which he needed to avoid any possible conflict, theoretical or practical. This proved to be a non-issue. After all, he was not drawing any conclusions with the theories or applications presented. He was not “telling naval officers how to wage war, instead he provided them with the intellectual equipment they needed to make plans and debate strategy with soldiers and statesmen.”<sup>170</sup> This proved to be more applicable than he

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 15.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>170</sup> Lambert, *The British Way of War*, 268.

possibly could have imagined. When the Committee for Imperial Defense met in August of that year, Corbett's work was at that time, "the only credible basis for strategic planning"<sup>171</sup> for the Navy. Unfortunately, the manner in which the Army presented their strategy with forces on the Continent meant the Navy would always be tied to their support leaving a gap in their ability to secure command of the sea. It did affirm the definition of naval strategy in describing actions that must be taken by the fleet in relation to land forces.

Other nuances surrounding the publication of the book lay in the connections of the author with the Royal Naval War College and the book's obvious central theme since Corbett himself was not a naval officer, but a lawyer by trade. To avoid that perception, he had any notation of his connection with the College removed from the front matter of the book. This was important to various people, let alone Corbett himself, because the book was, "the first public statement of British strategic doctrine...designed to inform high-level decision-making, integrating naval, military and civil action to deter or, *in extremis*, wage war."<sup>172</sup> It also provided an explanation of the "intellectual basis of current [British] naval thinking, making a powerful case that national strategy was limited and maritime, built on sea control and economic warfare,"<sup>173</sup> even though the results of the August 1911 meeting demonstrated otherwise through the tie of the Navy to the support of the Army forces in France.

An important aspect of strategic planning brought out at the time Corbett's pivotal work was published was the fact that the Royal Navy could not do anything on its own in the new era. The supreme power for influence and decision-making lay within the Cabinet and its sub-committees made up of representatives from other branches of the government, such as the

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, who could also “influence its decisions, and thus circumscribe the freedom of the Admiralty.”<sup>174</sup> The fact that multiple departments within the government held influence or control, to a certain extent, over the Navy’s ability to prepare for war required detailed steps to guide the proper coordination of that effort. What followed was, “the creation of the ‘War Book,’ a series of instructions to be followed by appropriate government departments and industrial concerns upon the declaration of a precautionary period and consequent announcement of an order to mobilize.”<sup>175</sup> In an effort led by Captain Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, the “War Book” first appeared in 1912 and was updated annually until 1914. Hankey’s intent was to help simplify and streamline some of the work required of the personnel in the War Office, but it fell short of the goal. It did, however, set in motion the actions that ultimately led to a *Staff Manual (War)* used by personnel in the War Office.<sup>176</sup>

Corbett’s work was a major advancement of British naval strategic thought, but it was primarily of his own thought. It still took the rest of the British naval community to embrace his theories and put them into practice which, like most new things, took a while. However, some of the elements of his book held a broader influence on the community of naval intellectuals. Namely, his work was one of the first to bridge the gap between military and naval strategic questions by merging elements of the two together. Corbett even used Clausewitz as a foundational brick upon which he built his theories. Most studies on the art of war were army-

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<sup>174</sup> Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (2009; repr., Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>175</sup> Chris Phillips, “Henry Wilson and the Role of Civil-Military Cooperation during the Planning of British Mobilization for War, 1910-1914,” *Ex Historia*, vol. 5 (2013): 123.

<sup>176</sup> John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974), 120-121.

centric, but Corbett provided a product that overcame the intellectual gap between works on military and naval strategy. He also demonstrated new processes in which naval forces may be employed in war.<sup>177</sup> Corbett's impact, with *Some Principles* and his other works on naval history and study of strategic theory and thought was monumental for the Royal Navy in the beginning of the twentieth century. Not only was he one of the most influential scholars of all time for the British, but also in the world in this field. Because he addressed so many different concepts at an important and transformational time in military and naval history, his contributions to the field, "furnish the tools to grasp and comprehend maritime war and naval warfare as a whole."<sup>178</sup>

In early 1912, there was another restructuring of the War College at Portsmouth. This time, the War Course was expanded to include not just senior officers as before, but also lieutenants who qualified for staff appointments. The Staff Course, as it was called, held its first session in March 1912. However, instead of it being an improvement in the level of instruction and incorporating strategy and art of war lessons for the betterment of the junior officers, it was nothing more than a watered down version of the original War Course plus the addition of more technical classes. It was not exactly what Richmond, Dewar, or even Churchill was hoping for to educate and train officers for positions on the naval war staff at the Admiralty.<sup>179</sup>

It would take longer for the War Course and the Royal Naval War College to gain a firmer stance within the culture and practice of the Royal Navy. The older and senior leadership of the Navy with Fisher, Jellicoe, Wilson, and Jackson at the helm held a firm grip on the institutional direction and physical transformation of the Navy leading into the years of the First

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<sup>177</sup> J.J. Widen, *Theorist of Maritime Strategy: Sir Julian Corbett and his Contribution to Military and Naval Thought* (2012; repr., London: Routledge, 2016), 155.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>179</sup> Christopher Lloyd, "The Royal Naval Colleges at Portsmouth and Greenwich," *The Mariner's Mirror: International Quarterly Journal of The Society for Nautical Research*, vol. 52, no. 2 (May 1966): 155.



World War. Some could taste the elixir of strategic naval thought being offered by Corbett and others, but the grasp was not yet strong enough at that time to effect any real change. It remained with those of, “the historical school – Corbett, Richmond, Dewar, et al. – [who] correctly saw that the sublime aspects of the profession, strategy and tactics, went undernourished in comparison with the energies focused upon the ship, the gun, and the torpedo.”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, vol. 1, 401.

## Chapter 7

### Comparison and Contrast of the Two Schools Evolution of Naval Strategic Thought

This dissertation examines how the American and British schools of naval strategic thought matured in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Specifically, it is an ideological and institutional comparison of the two navies through the development of higher education for senior officers focused on strategic thinking. These programs helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection and influenced the ideology within each navy from a perspective of emphasizing command of the sea in support of national interests and objectives, but how did they compare or contrast to each other in the process? What were the important ties between the two navies that enabled them to learn to think on a higher plane with regard to strategic naval thought?

#### Relationships

Some place belief in the idiom, “great minds think alike,” but they seldom take note of the remainder of that statement, “though fools seldom differ.”<sup>1</sup> A more appropriate manner of describing the relationship of men like Stephen B. Luce, Alfred T. Mahan, John Knox Laughton, Philip Colomb, Cyprian Bridge, Reginald Custance, Julian Corbett, Herbert Richmond, and other inspired naval minds that followed is to quote Thomas Paine. He wrote, “I do not believe that any two men, on what are called doctrinal points, think alike who think at all. It is only those who have not thought that appear to agree.”<sup>2</sup> The evolution of naval strategic thought in America

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Martin, “The meaning and origin of the expression: Great minds think alike,” The Phrase Finder, <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/great-minds-think-alike.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine, “The Rights of Man, Part Second,” in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2, 1779-1792, ed. Moncure Daniel Conway (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894), 516.

and Great Britain was ushered into the minds of naval officers by these men and their concepts of the role sea power should play in the development or support of national interests and objectives. Evidence of their actions exists in the establishment of higher education in strategy and naval warfare for both navies and the influence those actions had on leadership at the highest levels of their respective departments. What evidence exists to establish or deny that a relationship existed between these men of naval intellect, and did that relationship extend across the Atlantic Ocean? There is extensive evidence of the former. There is also ample evidence supporting the acknowledgment of the latter.

The relationship between Alfred T. Mahan and Stephen B. Luce began in 1862 when the U.S. Naval Academy was transferred to Newport shortly after the start of the Civil War. At that time, the Department of Seamanship was led by Lieutenant Commander Luce. Mahan joined the department when the staff was increased in size to accommodate the larger number of midshipmen under instruction.<sup>3</sup> This began what became a long association of the two officers over the next five decades. Evidence of the confidence Luce had in Mahan when he requested him in 1884 as an instructor for the art of war when the Naval War College was first established is revealed in Luce's own lecture on the subject of naval tactics in the summer of 1902. Speaking on the abilities and the work accomplished by Mahan during his times at the War College teaching courses on tactics and naval history:

His studies embraced the rise and development of the great navies of modern times, and a critical review of the naval wars of the past two hundred years. Not of the sea fights alone; but an examination into the origin, course and net results of naval wars; the moral, military and political effects upon the belligerents, and the ultimate bearing on the life of the nations taking part in them.

These studies resulted in a course of lectures which, for extent and depth of research, breadth of comprehension, skill in treatment and lucidity of diction, are, I venture to say,

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<sup>3</sup> Puleston, *Mahan*, 35.

without a parallel in the literature of the profession. On that course of lectures alone, the College might have rested its claim to recognition.<sup>4</sup>

The lectures he noted, of course, were the ones that formed the basis for Mahan's books, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* and *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution*. Luce held a very high regard for Mahan and his abilities as an intellect on the highest level. He attributed the utmost importance to Mahan's work at the War College and to his published books for the value they brought to the naval world as a whole and the recognition and credibility as a result to the Naval War College.

Mahan, in return, held the greatest level of respect for Luce. There existed somewhat of a mentor-protégé relationship between the two from early on in their association, but was especially evident during the War College years. Mahan would discuss ideas for his books and the applicability of lecture content with Luce often via his correspondence for both of them were not always resident in Newport at the same time. Mahan noted at one point when asking for input on his work pertaining to the War of 1812, potentially as an affable jab at his friend's seniority, "Any side lights from your reminiscences of the old times would be welcome."<sup>5</sup> Evidence of the mutual respect they held for each other was ample; the two often shared not only thoughts, but their written works for review and input. Mahan replied to a copy of his pamphlet on 'Naval Administration' sent to him by Luce, "Should the views you advocate find legislative adoption, which now seems possible, no one will have done as much as yourself in putting the

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen B. Luce, "Naval Tactics Lecture," July 16, 1902. RG-28, Naval War College President's Records, Stephen Bleeker Luce, October 1884-June 1886, Box 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>5</sup> A.T. Mahan to S.B. Luce, May 12, 1903, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, vol. 3, 1902-1914, 61.

administration of the Navy on an efficient basis.”<sup>6</sup> In the same letter to Luce, Mahan asked for him to take a critical eye toward Mahan’s discussion on one of the frigate actions of the War of 1812 he was writing for his book. Mahan’s views were somewhat different than the traditional ones taken before; therefore, he remarked to Luce, “I should be glad to have the judgement of a person upon whose professional ability I can rely as upon yours.”<sup>7</sup>

Luce provided another influence upon him outside of their own relationship, and that was through connecting him with other naval visionaries across the Atlantic like John Knox Laughton. Luce and Laughton met in 1870 in London at the Royal United Services Institute where they shared mutual interests in naval strategy and tactics, among other subjects. This was the period in which the United States Navy was beginning to take a stronger interest in naval education, so the conversation between the two men naturally steered toward that topic and the use of naval history in the same. The meeting was noted by John Hattendorf of the United States Naval War College that, “It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that this meeting witnessed the foundation of modern naval strategic and historical studies in the Anglo-Saxon world.”<sup>8</sup>

Luce and Laughton discussed many topics within the naval realm and, of course, history, both in person and through active correspondence over the next two decades. One of the “most important aspect[s] of this relationship was the exchange of ideas.”<sup>9</sup> Laughton was a significant influence on Luce through the papers he presented to the Royal United Services Institute in the 1870s on these topics. Evidence of that influence can be found in Luce’s own writings in this period from those he presented to the U.S. Naval Institute much like Laughton did in presenting

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<sup>6</sup> A.T. Mahan to S.B. Luce, July 29, 1903, in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, vol. 3, 1902-1914, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

to the Royal United Services Institute. An example of which was the occasion when Laughton sent Luce a copy of his paper, “The Scientific Study of Naval History,” in 1875. Luce responded to Laughton thanking him for the paper, “in regard to naval tactics, and agree with you fully in your views.”<sup>10</sup>

Some historians credit Laughton’s influence on Luce for the founding of the U.S. Naval Institute.<sup>11</sup> This is highly unlikely. While the R. U. S. I. had been around for many years by the time the two men met at one of its meetings in 1870, and the U.S.N.I. was founded three years later in 1873. Luce was not a founding member of the U.S.N.I. at the initial meeting, but did join the institute by year’s end.<sup>12</sup> During that period, Luce was in command of a ship in the Mediterranean Squadron from 1869 to 1872, followed by a posting at the Boston Navy Yard until 1875, with the exception of a short period in command of a frigate during the *Virginus* affair.<sup>13</sup> Laughton certainly influenced Luce’s writings, as Luce himself acknowledged in his paper, “On the Study of Naval History (Grand Tactics),” from 1887. He credits Laughton in a note, “to whom we are indebted for many valuable lessons.”<sup>14</sup> Although it is only a minor reference it “is substantive recognition of the impact which Laughton had on the U.S. Navy.”<sup>15</sup>

That influence is also clear from reviewing the works by Laughton and those by Luce in this period on how the arguments for building a course for the study and use of naval history in

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<sup>10</sup> S.B. Luce to J.K. Laughton, July 21, 1875, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, 1875-1900, LGH/12; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> “Members of the U.S. Naval Institute,” *Proceedings*, vol. 1, no. 1 (December 1874), 8-10.

<sup>13</sup> “Stephen Bleeker Luce,” Personnel Files, Naval History and Heritage Command, March 4, 2023,

<sup>14</sup> Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, “On the Study of Naval History (Grand Tactics),” *Proceedings*, vol. 13, no. 2 (April 1887), 187.

<sup>15</sup> Hayes and Hattendorf, ed., *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, 71.

teaching officers a higher level of thinking came about. Discussion on the need for a course or college for more senior ranking naval officers began on both sides of the Atlantic around the same time and most of that discussion originated with Laughton and Luce. It was no wonder the two of them became friends and believers together in the same school of thought on naval strategy and the art of war. Luce was more successful in gaining ground with the Navy Department in the United States than Laughton was in his efforts with the Admiralty. The end result was the establishment of the United States Naval War College in the fall of 1884 in Newport, Rhode Island. Luce notified Laughton of the news in a letter that December. He first thanked him for sending him a copy of the collection of essays Laughton was compiling of naval biographies to be published as *Studies in Naval History* before telling him the big news. Luce announced, “We on this side of the water, have undertaken, in a small way, to set up a naval college. As an evidence of the high esteem in which your work is held, I have sent you a copy of one of my lectures, wherein may be found liberal quotations from your articles.”<sup>16</sup>

The American-British relationship connection did not end there. Through Luce, Laughton came to be introduced to Alfred T. Mahan. It was the relationship between Laughton and Mahan, greater than that between Laughton and Luce, that “proved vital to the development of naval strategic and historical thought on both sides of the Atlantic.”<sup>17</sup> On the recommendation from Luce, Laughton read Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, and although he felt Mahan relied too heavily on French sources, he thought, “his chapters on strategy and policy are

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<sup>16</sup> S.B. Luce to J.K. Laughton, December 22, 1884, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, 1875-1900, LGH/12; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>17</sup> Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, 30.

excellent.”<sup>18</sup> Laughton was not incorrect in the assessment on Mahan’s reliance upon French naval sources. In his notes for post-1900 lectures on naval strategy at the War College, Mahan often referenced Admirals Gabriel Darrieus and Rene Daveluy further illustrating his fondness for French sources.<sup>19</sup> However, Mahan took the criticism in stride, confiding to Luce he, “considered [himself] fortunate to come off so easy at his hands, for he probably knows more naval history than any English speaking man living.”<sup>20</sup>

An examination of the personal correspondence between the two from 1893 to 1914, the year of Mahan’s death, reveals conversations covering a wide expanse of topics from the professional to the personal. They shared notes and thoughts with each other on the various books, articles, or lectures they were preparing. The two men shared a strong intellectual bond that certainly had an influence on each in their own writings and teachings whether directly or indirectly in some manner. From the first letter Mahan wrote to Laughton it was evident that the two seemed to find in each other a kindred spirit. Mahan discussed thoughts on the recent essays on naval warfare by Philip Colomb, thanked Laughton for bringing some of Mahan’s works to the members of the Royal United Services Institute, and providing access to historical sources through the Institute for Mahan’s own research on other topics. Mahan also shared an example of the higher level of thinking he would contemplate that perhaps was akin to questions Laughton would consider himself. Mahan remarked:

The dangerous man in war is he who gets hold of our side of the truth and thinking himself then equipped with a pass key to unlock all problems. To my mind the solution of the difficulties of war, (and for that matter of most problems in practical life), is not to

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<sup>18</sup> J.K. Laughton to S.B. Luce, August 12, 1890, MSC-10, Stephen B. Luce Papers, Box 1, Folder 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>19</sup> Mahan Research Notes for Naval Strategy Lectures, circa 1907-1914, MSC-17, Mahan Papers, Box 2. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>20</sup> A.T. Mahan to S.B. Luce, December 20, 1890, in in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 2, 1890-1901, 34.



attempt to strike a mean between the two opposite sides of a truth, but to hold them both, and under the influence of both to decide a particular case.<sup>21</sup>

The statement is an example of the manner of thinking Mahan would expect of a strategist. To gather all the information affecting the situation, examine and analyze it carefully, and make the best decision for going forward.

The relationship between Mahan and Laughton grew stronger as the two prepared their own biographical works on the life of Lord Nelson. Sharing of ideas and research sources was commonplace. On sending a copy to Laughton once published, Mahan noted “I hope you will accept, not only as a token of friendship but also as an acknowledgment of any indebtedness to your previous labors, and mastery of the subject, in guiding my footsteps. Your life has been great security to me.”<sup>22</sup> This was even more evident when Mahan received a wide array of critical comments from British readers on publication of his *Nelson*, including a young Herbert Richmond. For several months from spring through the fall of 1897, Mahan sought the counsel and advice from Laughton on the best manner in which to respond to the pointed queries by Richmond accusing him of false facts and/or carelessness when the errors were due to simple miscalculations based on lack of written evidence to the contrary.<sup>23</sup>

With the coming of the twentieth century, both men were relegated to a lesser role in the active day-to-day developments of higher education in their respective navies. However, they still held positions of influence from a perspective of their recognized authority on the subject of

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<sup>21</sup> A.T. Mahan to J.K. Laughton, March 21, 1893, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, 1893-1897, LGH/13; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>22</sup> A.T. Mahan to J.K. Laughton, February 27, 1897, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, 1893-1897, LGH/13; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>23</sup> A.T. Mahan to J.K. Laughton, April 29; August 3; August 16, 1897, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, 1893-1897, LGH/13; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

strategic thinking and the art of war. Laughton, who left his service with the Royal Navy in 1885, was a Professor of Modern History at King's College in London, and an active member of the Navy Records Society. Mahan, officially retired from the Navy in 1896, served on and off again stints of active duty for special assignments for the Navy in Washington and in Newport through 1912. The content of their letters in this period reveal more discussion on the latest written works they were pursuing and political developments on both the national and international stage. Of particular note, in the light of once a strategist, always a strategist, Mahan noted in regard to the developments of the latest Hague Conference in 1907, "that war is still a potent factor, the power to use which no great nation will abandon."<sup>24</sup>

One of the issues on the agenda for the conference in 1907 was the attempt to identify peaceful means of national arbitration over rather than simply resorting to war. However, as recorded in the summary of the outcome of the conference, "War was not abolished, nor was peace legislated into existence."<sup>25</sup> As he noted earlier, war would continue to be a factor in geopolitics. Some of the topics discussed at the conference in 1907 related to adapting naval warfare to the principles of the Geneva Convention of 1864.<sup>26</sup> This provoked discussion on the limitations of ship building and development of armaments and types of battleships. On these topics, Mahan remarked to Laughton that he was glad to be retired and only needing to read about the latest developments as opposed to being a part of the effort to determine solutions to

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<sup>24</sup> A.T. Mahan to J.K. Laughton, November 1, 1907, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, 1902-1910, LGH/15; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>25</sup> James Brown Scott, *The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907*, vol. 1, *Conferences* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1909), 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 599.

their impact.<sup>27</sup> In those final years of their relationship, conversation turned more to being happy with their current places in life as opposed to the continuous effort to bring about change in their respective services. It would be hard to argue against this stance. The lasting impact on the development of strategic thinking in naval thought for both the United States and Great Britain by Alfred T. Mahan and John Knox Laughton lay in their legacies found in Newport, Portsmouth, and Greenwich with the officers schooled in their lessons of naval thought and those other couriers of the message, like Herbert Richmond and Julian Corbett, that continued after them.

Richmond and Corbett, although not as dynamic a pair as Luce and Mahan, nonetheless, they were of similar trains of thought in the arena of naval strategy and the art of war. They each have both historical and theoretical books in their portfolio of published works. The paths of Corbett and Richmond did not bring them together the way Mahan and Luce were tied to each other. Quite the opposite; Richmond did not develop a personal rapport with Corbett to the point of collaboration like Mahan and Luce or Mahan and Laughton enjoyed until after World War I. In the interim, Corbett laid the groundwork pre-war for what Richmond would continue post-war in the area of naval history and naval strategy.

A primary difference between the school of thought Corbett represented versus that of Mahan was that the latter focused more centrally on the command of the sea and control of maritime commerce, purely in the naval domain, whereas Corbett (and Richmond) took a broader view of strategy and the art of war that included consideration of diplomacy and war on land. In a pamphlet used by students as an introduction to Corbett's lectures on naval history and

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<sup>27</sup> A.T. Mahan to J.K. Laughton, March 6, 1908, Sir John Knox Laughton Collection, Letters from Rear-Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, 1902-1910, LGH/15; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

strategy at the War College in Portsmouth, his description of naval strategy proclaimed it, “does not exist as a separate branch of knowledge. It is only a section of a division of the art of war,” and continued with a description of war that is very close to that declared by Clausewitz, stating, “war is a form of political intercourse, a continuation of foreign politics which begins when force is introduced to attain our ends.”<sup>28</sup> In the second edition of this work, referred to as “The Green Pamphlet,”<sup>29</sup> Corbett furthered his description of strategy as “the art of directing force to the ends in view,” and that, “every operation of an army or fleet must be planned and conducted in relation (1) to the general plan of the war; (2) to the object to which it is immediately directed.”<sup>30</sup>

The editions of the Green Pamphlet and the preliminary publications leading up to *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, his most extensive and complete work on maritime strategy, are the greatest strengths of Corbett’s portfolio of theoretical works. Corbett was influenced more by Clausewitz for his view on strategy and the art of war while Mahan was influenced more by Jomini. The Corbett files of notes for reference on his strategy lectures for the War Course contain copies of papers by the Vice Admiral Baron Freiherr von Maltzahn of the Imperial German Navy, an instructor in naval tactics and the history of naval warfare at the German Naval Academy in Kiel in the mid-1890s, and follower of Clausewitzian theory.<sup>31</sup> The papers, entitled, “Naval Warfare: Its Historical Development From the Age of Discovery up to the Present Time,” “Preparation in Peace-Time and the Approach of War,” and “What lesson has General Von

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<sup>28</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Strategical Terms and Definitions used in Lectures on Naval History*, War Course Manuscripts, Corbett, 1909, CBT/6/15-16, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>29</sup> Widen, *Theorist of Maritime Strategy*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Julian S. Corbett, Notes on Strategy, War Course Manuscripts, Corbett, 1909, CBT/6/15-16, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 11.

Clausewitz's Work, 'On War,' for the Naval Officer?,"<sup>32</sup> all blend historical context to contemporary naval issues of the period with a distinctive Clausewitz-like air. Corbett intended to incorporate Clausewitz into his landmark *Some Principles on Maritime Strategy* when he first began writing the book. He remarked, "It seems possible to envelope Clausewitz's theory from the point where he left off so as to make it apply to our case."<sup>33</sup>

Corbett would pass the torch of his efforts to Herbert Richmond to continue to advance strategic thinking in the Royal Navy following the First World War. Richmond's most notable works were not published until after World War I while the majority of Corbett's works were released prior to the war. In 1918, he returned to the field of naval education as Director of Staff Duties and Training for the Admiralty. During that tour he produced new proposals for a short course on strategy and tactics for junior officers that was broad in scope to provide them with more a summary view of the various aspects of their profession that lay before them. This was a similar approach taken by Clausewitz, "in his summary of instruction for the Crown Prince [demonstrating that] a wide area should be covered even in elementary studies," confirming Richmond's own Clausewitz orientation in his thoughts.<sup>34</sup> He also proposed a new set of manuals for officer training that widely expanded the scope of topics related to technical and theoretical craft for the modern naval officer. They covered specific issues within the realm of education and training, operations, and organization and administration, all with a noticeable trend toward a general higher level of thinking across the board providing a foundation upon which further

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<sup>32</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Strategical Notes*, War College Portsmouth, Corbett, 1909, CBT/22/2-10, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>33</sup> Diary kept by Sir Julian S. Corbett, June 25, 1910, CBT/43/10, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>34</sup> Herbert Richmond, *Remarks on Proposed Two Months Course in Strategy, Tactics, &c. For Lieutenants of 3 to 4 Years Seniority*, March 1918, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernlé-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

education in the art of war could be built.<sup>35</sup> In 1920 when a rear-admiral, he was in charge of the Senior Officer's War Course and later as the President of the Naval War College when it moved back to Greenwich. Although he once again returned to a position of influence in the realm of education for training officers to think on a higher plane, the task before him remained a difficult one. In the aftermath of the First World War, the work at Greenwich seemed even more important than before. Regarding the abilities of naval officers, Richmond thought:

It is curious, though it is not really surprising, to see how unable most officers are to express themselves at all. They cannot analyze a situation. They cannot define their objects in a given situation. The contrast between the naval and military officers is remarkable. Of the soldiers...all could write a clear appreciation and make a better plan than the Captains or Admirals. They think nothing of contradicting themselves two or three times within as many sentences, and are astonished to find they have done so. Yet these are our future guides in all high matters. No wonder the average statesman can make them say anything, and make a hash of their proposals.<sup>36</sup>

Richmond's observations at Greenwich in 1920 were representative of the general caliber of the officers in the Royal Navy in this period when it came to an understanding and appreciation of, as well as the ability of thinking on a higher plane. They still had a long and difficult journey ahead of them moving into the interwar period.

In summation, Stephen Luce lit the fuse of naval strategic thought in America. He was influenced by John Knox Laughton of Britain. Alfred Mahan was a protégé of Luce in the work to develop the Naval War College for the U.S. Navy and developing a school of strategic thought for its officers. Laughton and Mahan, through their mutual works in naval history, developed a long-lasting friendship and professional relationship that lasted the rest of their lives. Laughton brought on Julian Corbett to the Royal Naval War College and the Royal United Services

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<sup>35</sup> Herbert Richmond, *Manuals of Naval Warfare*, 1918, Papers of Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Erle-Drax, Education 1918, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, GBR/0014/DRAX 1/23.

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Richmond, November 10, 1920, in *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, ed. Andrew Lambert, 365.

Institute for his services in teaching naval history. Corbett read Mahan and the two corresponded through a professional relationship for many years. Corbett befriended Herbert Richmond and aided in his own pursuit of building a system of higher education in the Royal Navy to train officers to think on a higher plane. They all read each other's work. They all shared the same vision and common goal, albeit the guiding theme of their theories were different in some cases. In summation, it is fair to say the relationships between both American and British naval theorists of this period were instrumental in influencing, guiding, and even aiding the development of naval strategic thought in the United States Navy and the Royal Navy around the turn of the twentieth century.

#### Organizations Influencing Strategic Thought

There are numerous similarities between the American and British experience of developing naval strategic thought at the turn of the twentieth century. All of the various organizations and societies are discussed in this dissertation along with their origin stories and the principle individuals in leadership roles or as members. All were established along similar lines in order to bring together individuals with either a personal or professional interest to discuss matters of importance to the service and the nation. All the organizations discussed were specifically formed with a naval focus in mind with the exception of the Royal United Services Institute which had both a military and naval emphasis. The organizations discussed in Great Britain include the Royal United Services Institute, the Navy Records Society, the Navy League, and the *Naval Review*. In the United States there was just the United States Naval Institute.

The forum offered by the Royal United Services Institute served as a platform for presenting ideas and concepts that at some point were brought forward to the Royal Naval

College at Greenwich and again later in Portsmouth. Influential men like the Colombs, Laughton, and Corbett all were members of the Institute. It served as a relationship builder for many in the service, politics, or other influential members of society in Britain. The R. U. S. I. served as an inspiration to some American naval officers, namely Stephen Luce, who, on learning of the activities of the Institute, wrote to John Knox Laughton on the efforts within the United States of “trying to set up something like the United Services Institute, but our officers are so few and so much scattered that it has been found difficult to get enough to gather for discussing professional questions.”<sup>37</sup> This was a curious point brought by Luce because by that date the United States Naval Institute had already been established for over a year. However, his point about the difficulty in gathering many officers in one place for the purpose of discussion remained a difficult one outside the community of Annapolis, the home of the United States Naval Academy. Still, the fact remained that the R. U. S. I. was not only the oldest professional forum during this period for presentation of naval and military issues for discussion, and it did have an influence on the development of naval strategic thought, certainly in Britain and to a degree in the United States.

The founding of the United States Naval Institute in the fall of 1873 can be credited with a similar level of influence on the development of strategic thought, in general, but most definitely in the U.S. Navy. Many of the officers who were early members or founders of the Institute went on to play important roles in the establishment of the United States Naval War College. Mahan was a member and frequent presenter at meetings of the U.S.N.I. when he was on faculty at the Naval Academy. The discussions there served as catalysts for stimulating the

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<sup>37</sup> S.B. Luce to J.K. Laughton, July 21, 1875, Letters from Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, 1875-1900, LGH/12; MS1979/067, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.



minds of American naval officers to think beyond their position in the Navy, and enabled the active discussion and debate over important issues. Topics ranged from the technical, mechanical, operational, administrative, and theoretical in this period of dramatic transformation for the United States Navy. As a result, the Naval Institute was one of the most important influences in the United States for developing naval strategic thought.

The Navy Records Society in Britain, formed in 1893, provided a similar forum for debate and discussion to that found in the Royal United Services Institute and the United States Naval Institute, but it did have a more singular focus on topics related to the navy and naval affairs. Another difference between the Navy Records Society and the other two Institutes was the intent expressed by Cyprian Bridge, co-founder of the Society along with Laughton, was to provide a society to promote and publish historical naval documents. Unlike the professional journals of other institutions and societies, the Navy Records Society published collections of these historical documents and other collections in bound book form over just individual articles in a professional journal. The intent was to provide a means of preserving important material for future reference and documentation for use by historians, educators, naval officers, and any other professional with an interest. The books published by the Navy Records Society were, and still are invaluable resources to the study of the naval history of Great Britain and contemporary strategic discourse.

The Navy League in Britain, founded in 1894, the year following the Navy Records Society, differed from the previous organizations. This organization was formed with a focus on educating the general population and keeping them interested, and therefore involved, in matters pertaining to the Royal Navy. The Navy League built its own library to house published works from both independent authors and the newspapers along with a variety of other records. Again,

the intent was to provide a repository of information available to anyone with the desire to access it and stay involved in naval affairs.

In the United States, riding on the success of the Spanish-American War and the Naval Act of 1902 authorizing another increase in the U.S. Navy, the American version of the Navy League was founded in 1902 by a group from New York. The intent of this organization appeared to be similar to that of the Navy League in Britain to gain public support for naval matters and further the idea of navalism, albeit somewhat undefined at that point. However, the American Navy League lacked the identity within its membership to make it a credible and respected entity in the eyes of Congress. Most members were simply retired naval officers who knew each other from other veterans organizations. They tried to raise the level of credibility by attracting former Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Tracy and gained the support of Theodore Roosevelt. By 1903, the League was trying to grow its membership and influence among the population through hosting of conferences and other forums, but could not seem to create the same level of interest as their counterparts in Britain, where the League numbered over 12,000 members. Although there were high hopes for the success of the League in becoming a major contributor for public support of naval affairs, it never gained enough of a position of influence to make any significant difference.<sup>38</sup>

All of these organizations, in the United States and Great Britain, were started with similar intent. That being to advance the ideas of navalism in some form or fashion. Some were established with the military and academic professional in mind for membership while others, like the Navy Leagues, were geared more toward the general population. The membership also

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<sup>38</sup> Paul E. Pedisich, *Congress Buys a Navy: Politics, Economics, and the Rise of American Naval Power, 1881-1921* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 143-147.

indicated the direction of focus for the work of the organizations. The Americans in both cases can be credited with following the lead of their British counterparts. The success and influence brought by the British organizations was the objective for the American organizations. Although, the founders of the United States Naval Institute can be given allowance for their own independent thought for why it was established. Regardless, all of these organizations were valuable in their own right to the advancement of the ideas, theories, concepts, and technology relating to naval warfare in this period.

#### Publications with a Strategic Thought Perspective

The professional and civic organizations described in the previous section not only prided themselves on the quality and scope of the meetings of their membership, but also the publication of the writings of their members and other affiliated with the organization. These professional journals served as a means of reproducing the works of many enthusiastic and mindful visionaries for many inquisitive minds to read and form their own opinions to further the discussion and debate on the various topics and ideas presented. They were all invaluable tools that brought a tremendous impact and influence to the development of naval technology and naval thought in this period. Publications such as the *RUSI Journal* by the Royal United Services Institute, *Proceedings* by the United States Naval Institute, *The Navy League Journal* by the Navy League of Great Britain, and the *Naval Review* by Herbert Richmond and his merry band of visionaries were the groundbreaking products of a collection of societies founded upon innovative thought, professional development, and a desire to pursue achievement of what could be a better future for their respective navies and the naval world in general.

There were many other publications of works on naval theory, naval warfare, and the practice of the naval art during this period. However, there are two in particular that rank among the most prominent and influential works of their time. They are still studied in naval schools and by historians the world over for their significance to the art. They are often compared as two different schools of naval thought, either the Mahan School or the Corbett School. The two most widely known and studied works of these two men are, obviously, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1600-1783* by Mahan and *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* by Corbett. A discussion on the theories espoused by each author is not the objective at this point, but to acknowledge the significance of the two works combined on the development of naval strategic thought in the period surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, and their major differences from a contextual perspective in the public eye in this period.

Both men were historians, and both wrote books on the naval wars of history used in teaching lessons on strategy and the art of war in a naval context. It is interesting to compare the projects to produce these two books. Mahan had the idea to publish the collection of his lectures from the early years at the War College in Newport as early as 1886. He considered them ready for publication by the fall of 1888, but, in an ironic twist, did not want to release them in, “the matériel-oriented journal that was the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*.”<sup>39</sup> After some searching, he finally found his publisher in the Boston-based Little, Brown, and Company, who released the book in 1890 to world acclaim. Corbett’s road to publication of *Some Principles* was much shorter and with fewer obstacles, even considering he had to get Admiralty approval for the final work. Although the book was also predominantly based on his earlier works on strategy in the

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<sup>39</sup> Seager, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, 192.

‘Green Pamphlet’ productions, the principle work on this final book began in June of 1910 and by December that same year he was complimenting his progress in his diary:

Not a bad six months work. I began writing the strategy book on June 25...have written 17 chapters out of the 20 and should complete the book, and 9 of them revised or partly rewritten. Also in the time delivered 20 lectures and reviewed De la Renciere for American Historical Review.<sup>40</sup>

The primary writing was done by February 1911. The bulk of the year was used for the review process and preparation for the press. By November 2d, he noted, “completed Maritime Strategy. Sent off last proofs.”<sup>41</sup>

In comparing these two landmark works, it could be argued that Mahan’s work from 1890 had an impact on a broader audience than Corbett’s. That is likely due to the heavier emphasis on technical and theoretical aspects in Corbett’s work, whereas Mahan’s is packaged mainly as a history book. Corbett’s *Some Principles* was essentially, “the ‘Green Pamphlet’ writ large...a powerful compilation of his accumulated knowledge and one that is probably consulted more often than the historical works on which it is built.”<sup>42</sup> Mahan’s *Influence of Sea Power* was principally a collection of his lectures at the Naval War College in Newport in the mid-to-late 1880s. Both were used as principle references in their respective war colleges in America and Great Britain long after they were published even to the present day.

Considering the high level of respect and the influence both men and their books had on the naval world, one of the more noteworthy aspects of each is from where each man came before they made their impact on the world. Mahan was a rather unremarkable naval officer prior

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<sup>40</sup> Diary kept by Sir Julian S. Corbett, December 31, 1910, CBT/43/10, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>41</sup> Diary kept by Sir Julian S. Corbett, November 2, 1911, CBT/43/11, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>42</sup> Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922*, 62.

to his association with the Naval War College in Newport. He was not a bad officer, but simply an average one of his time, with no singular accomplishment to bring him notice other than being a serving naval officer performing his duties as tasked. His works on naval history and strategy, “brought him fame that reached every nation and [exerted] an influence that...reshaped the navies of the great powers.”<sup>43</sup> Corbett, on the other hand, was not a career naval officer like Mahan. He studied law in Trinity College at Cambridge, which filled most of his professional life until he came to the Royal Naval College in Greenwich to teach history alongside John Knox Laughton. However, although he began his life as a historian and naval theorist late in life, it cannot be denied he had a significant impact on the art and theory of naval warfare.

#### Schools of Thought: A War College Comparison

During the period 1873 to 1912, the United States and Great Britain went through an expansive growing period. The navies of the two nations experienced their own dramatic transformation and growth during this same period. The conversion from wooden sailing ships to steam-powered steel warships was a game-changer for the navies of the world. The changes in tactics and requirement to understand the strategic implications of the force projection capabilities of these new navies drove a transformation in the realm of naval strategic thought. Since a strategic mindset was not necessarily inherent within the officer corps of each navy it had to be taught. It had to be instilled in them to make it part of their innate abilities as naval officers in a modern world. That was the goal, the objective, of the teachings at the naval war colleges in

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll Storrs Alden and Ralph Earle, *Makers of Naval Tradition* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1925), 228.

the United States and Great Britain. Comparing the two schools from their establishment through the early years of their operation it is remarkable how many similarities exist.

Both schools were founded by intellectuals who saw the value in using history as a means of teaching lessons for the present. Both had similar ideals and principles for teaching the art of war and strategy to naval officers faced with a modernizing navy and rapidly changing world. The officer corps of each navy at that time were trapped in the past and tied to traditional means of training and teaching officers and what skills they should learn. That was sufficient when commanders were in charge of at most a squadron of ships, but it was not acceptable for the tasks before them such as command and control of large fleets whose actions could influence events on a national or global level. Therefore, the curriculum that was designed at both the American and British war colleges was founded upon similar topics: strategy, fleet tactics, international law, naval history, and the art of war. Both were connected, either directly or indirectly, to members of professional societies dedicated to the expansion and advancing of knowledge within the naval realm of technology and the art of war.

The similarities did not just lie in the manner in which they were founded, but also in some of the challenges both schools faced in their developmental years. The audience for students at each school was intended to target more senior officers in the rank of commander or captain to take advantage of their experience in the service and prepare them for command or staff positions at the higher level. However, this was an elusive target at best for many years. The student rosters at the U.S. Naval War College included lieutenants for many years before the list began to reflect the body of senior officers more suited for the level of instruction intended at the War College in Newport. The Senior Officer's War Course at the Royal Naval College Greenwich did list mainly senior officers, including some admirals, among its classes from the

start. There was even a dedicated course for flag officers on strategy. However, in the desire to expand the course, the doors were opened to junior officers with the result being a diluted curriculum and loss of focus on the intellectual subjects of strategy and policy in favor of more technical ones. That was not corrected until after the First World War.

The challenges were not limited to the type or rank of students, but they each battled repeatedly against forces trying to re-locate the schools or consolidate them with other courses. These distractions occurred all too frequently and subtracted from the quality of the instruction at times due to the pre-occupation of staff or lack of resources. Although the U.S. Naval War College did move from one command to another more than once in its tenure in Newport, Rhode Island, it never was re-located to another site. In fact, it remains there to this day in a modern facility that incorporates some of the original structures built in the times when Luce and Mahan themselves roamed the halls. The same could not be said for the Royal Naval College that moved from Portsmouth to Greenwich to Devonport to Portsmouth again, and eventually back to Greenwich, all before 1920.

These challenges were all indicative of the general institutional resistance to the value or need for a war college to train senior officers in the art of war. The old school mentality of the admirals in charge, along with the turf war mentality of others, served to influence the political leaders at times that was nothing more than detrimental to the goal of those in favor of the schools. Resistance to change simply because it was a change from the way things were always done seemed to be the central theme among those on both sides of the Atlantic standing in the way of progress. It signified the culture of the day. Peter Drucker said, "Culture eats strategy for



breakfast.”<sup>44</sup> For the Navy to understand the value and need for a strategic mindset it had to change its culture. To change the culture of any organization requires champions to lead that change. If not for strong-willed champions at the colleges and the favorable support of those in political power at various critical times in those formative years the fate of one or both schools could have changed to the detriment of their respective service.

An example of how both schools were able to serve their respective services at a significant time of need occurred when the staffs at each school served as the de facto naval war plans staff for their service. In the United States, it was in the lead up to the Spanish-American War when the Naval War College was tasked with preparing various editions of plans in the event of war with Spain. Although the plans development process went through multiple iterations and involved more than just the War College staff, there was a key learning point gained from this process. The ability of those at the War College to provide thorough and detailed analysis of a wide assortment of factors while coordinating with multiple participants and produce a complete and well-staffed plan was undeniable by even the most ardent opponents. In Great Britain, a similar process occurred in the early years of the twentieth century under Fisher’s administration in the Admiralty, albeit a little more stove-piped than the process practiced by the U.S. Navy. The staff at the Royal Naval College, under the guidance of Julian Corbett and Captain Slade, produced a series of war plans for consideration by Fisher and his personal councils of advisors. That planning process formed the groundwork for the ‘Green Pamphlet’ series of publications from Corbett and ultimately the nucleus of *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. Corbett’s book and the work done by those in the War Course also served as

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<sup>44</sup> Stephen Conmy, “What does culture eats strategy for breakfast mean?” Lexicon, Corporate Governance Institute, May 4, 2022, <https://www.thecorporategovernanceinstitute.com/insights/lexicon/what-does-culture-eats-strategy-for-breakfast-mean/>.

inspiration and foundation for Churchill's efforts to establish an Admiralty War Staff.<sup>45</sup> It is also worth mentioning, in the context of this discussion on war staff planning efforts, the role played by War College personnel as advisors to their departments in wartime. Mahan was enlisted by Roosevelt to come to Washington to advise the Navy Department leadership during the Spanish-American War,<sup>46</sup> and Corbett served during World War I in the Admiralty, "as a strategic advisor and a chronicler of the war."<sup>47</sup>

In summary, the births and formative years of the schools of naval strategic thought in America and Great Britain experienced many similar challenges, experiences, and opportunities. The intent for developing a strategic mindset in naval officers was the common objective. However, the culture within each navy at the time was a daunting obstacle to overcome. The leaders for the respective schools and their intellectual torch bearers worked hard in that task. By the start of World War I, the U.S. Naval War College was on sure footing having established not only a year-long standard course, but offered shorter courses by correspondence. The Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, reported, "The War College training is of the utmost importance to the development of the Navy, demanding the sole and entire time of officers taking it."<sup>48</sup> In Great Britain, with the onset of war, the War Course closed its doors, but reopened in 1919 following, "the creation of an effective Admiralty Staff in 1917-18 [that] justified the entire pre-war War Course."<sup>49</sup> Both schools would face further challenges and opportunities in the future, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

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<sup>45</sup> Lambert, *The British Way of War*, 117.

<sup>46</sup> Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan*, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Widen, *Theorist of Maritime Strategy*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Hattendorf, Simpson, III, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Lambert, *The British Way of War*, 119.

## Closing

This dissertation has examined how the American and British schools of naval thought matured in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, using an ideological and institutional comparison of the two navies demonstrated by the development of higher education for senior officers focused on strategic thinking. These programs helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection and influenced the ideology within each navy from a perspective emphasizing command of the sea in support of national interests and objectives. An examination of evidence sought to determine the influences several key factors had on the development of strategic naval thought in this period. Those factors include the physical transformation of naval forces in this period, the development of senior officer education, changes in national interests, and the relationships between American and British naval intellectuals. The analysis of the evidence surrounding those factors reveal answers directed toward a central point. The development of the naval war colleges in America and Great Britain enabled the intellectual transformation of their naval thought at the turn of the twentieth century and helped define the role of naval forces as an element of power projection in support of national interests and objectives. This was an important element in the advancement of naval warfare in this era, for it demonstrated, even amidst the constant struggle of traditionalists and reformers over funding and the purposes of a navy, the value of an educated and trained officer corps capable of thinking on a higher plane.

Four principle areas of examination and discussion provide answers to these questions. Those areas are relationships, publications with a strategic perspective, organizations influencing strategic thought, and the schools of thought – the war colleges themselves. Perhaps the most prominent among these areas of influence are the relationships between the men who brought it

all together and ushered in a new era of naval strategic thought. The relationships, both personal and professional, among these men were genuine in all respects. Their relations illustrate an almost symbiotic relationship among these great naval minds. They spoke of the various historical works they produced along with argument for and against key points made, emotional and physical support in the production of those works (research, writing, sources, crediting of sources, publishing, marketing, etc.). Richmond used notes from Mahan's earlier historical works in preparation of his own manuscript for his books, *Sea Power in the Modern World* and *Statesmen and Sea Power*.<sup>50</sup> These and the other principle works by Richmond and Corbett were, and still are, in the library at the U.S. Naval War College.<sup>51</sup>

This group of men, although separated by the Atlantic Ocean, were connected by their love of naval history, the state of the navy, and the profession of the naval art. As a result, their efforts, along with the many who worked with them, helped develop a strategic mindset for the navies of the United States and Great Britain. This is not to declare that the works by pundits like Mahan and Corbett were necessarily the sole guides for naval development in American and Great Britain. The ever-revolving wheels of worldwide progress, advancement of technology, and rising level of international discourse played roles in naval development as well. The revolution in industrial capability carried out in shipyards on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the twentieth century was immense. By the start of the First World War, "all navies had adopted the *Dreadnought* type"<sup>52</sup> of battleship with heavy armor and the largest main gun batteries even seen for that era. However, it cannot be denied that Mahan and Corbett, among

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<sup>50</sup> Sea Power Notes, Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond Papers, Downing College Archive, Cambridge, Box 186B, GBR/0269/DCPP/RIC/2/25.

<sup>51</sup> John Hattendorf, "Mahan is Not Enough," (Lecture at the Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Newport, RI, September 28, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 431.

others, were significantly influential through their stimulation of discussion, their advisory roles to naval leadership, and their dedication to the continued advancement of senior officer education in naval strategic thought. The success of the Naval War Colleges in both nations and the growing list of graduates in the professional field of naval art were a testament to that work, and their legacy continues in the graduates of the present era.

## Epilogue

Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, founder of the United States Naval War College, died on July 28, 1917. He is buried in St Mary's Churchyard in Portsmouth, Rhode Island just a few miles from the Naval War College. The marker on his grave is engraved with the title, "Intellectual Leader of the Modern Navy."<sup>1</sup>

In May of 1912, Alfred T. Mahan was released from active duty from the Navy for the final time. He wrote to the President of the Naval War College, " This closes my prolonged association with the College, and in notifying you of it I wish to express my appreciation of my pleasant relations with yourself, as with all the presidents."<sup>2</sup> He died suddenly on December 1, 1914 of heart disease. The release from the Navy Department stated:

His death will cause international regret not only because of the high esteem in which he is held in every country of the world interested in naval affairs, but also because of the fact that his death leaves a void among naval and political authorities of the world that no author and writer can fill.<sup>3</sup>

Julian Corbett was recognized for his work in the field of naval strategy and service to the Royal Navy. As a result, he received a Knighthood from the King on February 21, 1917.<sup>4</sup> In 1922, when Corbett died, his wife sent a packet of letters to Richmond representing the extensive correspondence between him and her husband over the years. The topics, ranging through the personal and professional, served as a testament to their long friendship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Visited by author, Portsmouth, RI, November 13, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Mahan to Raymond P. Rodgers, May 30, 1912. RG-1, Early Records of the Naval War College, 1883-1919, Box 4, Folder 5. Naval War College Archives, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>3</sup> "Admiral Mahan, Naval Critic, dies," *New York Times*, December 2, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Diary kept by Sir Julian S. Corbett, February 17, 1917, CBT/43/16, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

<sup>5</sup> Papers belonging to the late Sir Julian Corbett sent to Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond by Lady Corbett upon her husband's death, Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond Correspondence, RIC 9; MS1951-058, Caird Library and Archive, National Maritime Museum, Royal Museums Greenwich.

Herbert Richmond, ever the one to try and make improvements in appreciation for naval history and of the higher level of thinking required of naval officers in the twentieth century was referred by some as “the English Mahan.”<sup>6</sup> He continued strongly expressing his views until he was forced to resign under pressure from the Admiralty in 1931.<sup>7</sup> He served as Master of Downing College, Cambridge and continued his work until his death in 1946.

H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, launched in 1906, was an iconic ship in the Royal Navy. She was accepted by the Royal Navy a mere ten months after her launching. This was a record that, “had never been equaled in the history of capital ships.”<sup>8</sup> *Dreadnought* displaced almost 18,000 tons and carried a main armament of ten, twelve-inch guns.<sup>9</sup> She outclassed any other warship afloat at the time, and not only inspired a new series of large battleships for the Royal Navy, but the ship, and those that followed, became symbols of national power. The ship, whose name in auld English literally means, “fear nothing,”<sup>10</sup> did not fight in the largest battle of the First World War, Jutland, but she did change history and the course of naval ship development. She spent fifteen years in operational service with the fleet before being placed in reserve in 1919, and cut up for scrap in 1923.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar*, 206.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel A. Baugh, “Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond and the Objects of Sea Power,” (Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Newport, RI, September 28, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991), 482.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 909.

<sup>10</sup> Dreadnought (n.), Online Etymology Dictionary, March 18, 2023, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/dreadnought>.

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<sup>11</sup> “HMS Dreadnought (1906),” Naval Encyclopedia, last modified May 8, 2016, <https://naval-encyclopedia.com/ww1/uk/hms-dreadnought.php>.

U.S.S. *Olympia*, the ‘Queen of the Pacific,’ and Admiral Dewey’s flagship at the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, spent a long career serving the Navy and the nation in a variety of roles and locations around the globe. She was fortunate to be a part of events in American history that, “vaulted her from obscure squadron flagship to arguably the most famous warship of her class and era.”<sup>12</sup> She remains today as the oldest steel warship in the world still afloat in her mooring at the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia. To walk her decks and passageways admiring the workmanship of what were technical marvels in her time is a privilege. The guns are silent now, unlike that early morning of May 1, 1898. There are steel plates of footprints on the flying bridge where Admiral Dewey stood that morning and gave Captain Gridley the order that commenced the engagement. One just needs to sit at one of the tables below deck to visualize the sights, listen for the sounds of the guns, and screams of the men as they went about their duty that morning. The day started with a silent approach as the column led by *Olympia* slipped into Manila Bay and ended that afternoon with a complete victory over the Spanish squadron. It signaled not only the American victory, but the dawning of a new era in American naval might and “the United States to world power status at the turn of the twentieth century.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cooling, *USS Olympia: Herald of Empire*, 229.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



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