



The Transformation of
British and American
Naval Policy in the
Pre-Dreadnought Era
Ideas, Culture and Strategy

Robert E. Mullins
Edited by John Beeler



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

To appreciate the significance of Dr. Robert Mullins' comparative study of British and American naval policy in the late 1880s contained in this volume, it is first necessary to survey previous historiography on both navies. For decades Arthur Jacob Marder's work on the Royal Navy from 1880 to the end of World War I was regarded as definitive. No less a figure than Sir John Keegan once opined that Marder's research and analysis "defied betterment," and similar praise emanated from other prominent historians.¹ On the other side of the Atlantic, accounts of the US Navy's transformation from a commerce-raiding and coastal defense posture to a battleship-oriented force designed to fight fleet actions have been dominated by the theories, publications, and influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan, with little attention paid to the curious chronological fact that that transformation began in the 1880s, well prior to Mahan's influence within the service, much less his celebrity outside of it.

Recent scholarship, however, has contested much of the established historiography. The past two-and-a-half decades have witnessed a sustained assault on parts of Marder's scholarly oeuvre. While Ruddock McKay's biography of Admiral Sir John Fisher (1973) first raised questions about the thoroughness of Marder's research and the soundness of his conclusions, wholesale revision began with Jon Sumida's *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* (1989), which argues that Marder's account of the motives for Fisher's reforms during his initial tenure as First Sea Lord (1904–10) was misleading. Rather than being driven principally by external factors—foreign naval threats, in particular the rise of the German Navy—Sumida maintains that they stemmed in large part from domestic pressures, in

particular the political need to get more bang from the Royal Navy's existing budget.

Extending Sumida's critique, Nicholas Lambert's *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (1999) takes direct aim at Marder's "Dreadnought-centric" interpretation, arguing that Fisher preferred battlecruisers and submarines to battleships, and an imperial defense scheme centered on flotilla defense for the home islands and commerce-raiding interdiction for the empire to a massive fleet of capital ships. While neither Sumida's nor Lambert's interpretation has gone unchallenged, nor is Marder's extolled in the ringing terms it was a generation ago.

But neither Sumida nor Lambert pay close attention to the 1880s and 1890s, the years covered by Marder's first, and in many respects best, monograph, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (1940). Sumida begins with the Naval Defence Act of 1889, but devotes fewer than thirty pages of *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* to the years prior to 1904. Lambert's study, as suggested by its title, focuses on Fisher's initial tenure as First Sea Lord. The circumstances surrounding the Naval Defence Act's passage are therefore offstage in both accounts.

Nor has any other scholar given sustained scrutiny to Marder's take on British naval policy leading up to the Naval Defence Act in the three-quarters of a century since its appearance. Roger Parkinson's *The Late Victorian Navy* (2008) differs with Marder on whether that legislation constituted a proportional response to foreign naval threats, but does not question the reality of those threats, thereby adopting, whether deliberately or not, his interpretational framework. Shawn Grimes' *Strategy and War Planning, 1887–1918* (2012) challenges Marder's assertion that the Royal Navy's strategic planning in the late 1880s and afterward was amateurish, but does not interrogate his narrative of the "navy scare" of 1888, which resulted in the Naval Defence Act's introduction and passage. In short, Marder's account of British naval policy in the 1880s remains the default treatment despite its age.

For that reason alone, Dr. Mullins' study constitutes a major addition to the historical literature. It systematically explores the circumstances surrounding the Naval Defence Act's genesis in a manner that Marder did not, drawing on reams of Foreign Intelligence Committee (FIC) and Naval Intelligence Department (NID) reports that he either did not or was not allowed to consult. On the basis of those reports, and on public and political discourse in Britain during 1888, Dr. Mullins concludes that

the threat of a Franco-Russian naval alliance, on which Marder's interpretation hinged, was not so much exaggerated as non-existent.

Moreover, he pays far closer attention than did Marder to the public relations blitz initiated by Captain Lord Charles Beresford, MP, in the spring of 1888, especially to its central role in pressuring Lord Salisbury's Conservative government into acquiescing to the appointment of a Select Committee to examine the Navy Estimates, a Royal Commission on the relation of the Military and Naval departments to the Treasury, and, ultimately, to introducing the Naval Defence Bill itself. In doing so, he reveals that Marder's narrative of the 1888 navy scare to be as wide of the mark as his analysis of French and Russian naval capabilities and ambitions, and that his attributing to Lord Salisbury the impetus for the Naval Defence Act was equally off-target. Beresford and his allies—one is tempted to label them "co-conspirators"—were the driving force behind the bill's introduction and passage, and their unprecedented intervention in the public debate on British naval policy had portentous implications for its future direction.

As a consequence of Dr. Mullins' research and analysis, we now have a reliable account of the navy scare of 1888 and its political and legislative fallout. Its importance can hardly be overstated. The Naval Defence Act, its formal enunciation of the "Two-Power Standard" as the yardstick for determining battle fleet strength, and its unprecedented peacetime shipbuilding program—seventy vessels total, including ten battleships and more than forty cruisers—was a transformational event in the history of modern British naval policy, one with profound political, foreign policy, and even constitutional implications, yet one whose significance has been largely overshadowed by the Anglo-German naval race and Fisher's exploits, colorful language, and penchant for self-promotion.

Prior to 1888–89, assessments of the Royal Navy's force requirements were typically made in private by political and professional insiders on the basis of up-to-date and accurate knowledge of rivals' existing forces and building programs, coupled with appreciation of the fiscal constraints under which the government labored. Professional opinion—not infrequently prone to alarmism—was therefore tempered by political prudence and financial considerations.

Beresford's agitation upended this method of conducting business, replacing it with one in which strength assessments and the Navy's needs were increasingly calculated and determined by (often disgruntled and usually alarmist) professionals through the expedient of enlisting public

and press support to coerce reluctant governments, both Conservative and Liberal, into doing their bidding. Civilian control over the course of naval policy, previously a constitutional *sine qua non*, was thus contested.

To be sure, this transformation owed much to larger social, cultural, and political developments, in particular the spread of literacy, the growth of the popular newspaper press, and the expansion of the electorate. Nor can the influence of growing foreign economic competition, Social Darwinist pseudo-scientific theories, nationalism, and the late nineteenth-century imperialist frenzy be discounted when examining the reasons for Beresford's success.

Yet whether that success owed chiefly to the "spirit of the age" (to which Marder rightly called attention), or to Beresford's own flare for publicity and self-aggrandizement, his campaign set the mold for British naval policy through World War I, as suggested by the predictably frequent navy scares over the following quarter century: 1893–94, 1896, 1898, 1902–03; 1907, and 1909. In every instance the impetus came not from inside the government, but from without, and in every instance the agitation originated with naval officers and their navalist allies in the press. That their alarmism was, prior to the German naval challenge, largely unwarranted is suggested by the ratios of British to French and Russian battleships prior to each "panic."²

Yet if Beresford and his allies and successors managed to warp the course of British naval policy to suit their own ends, their American counterparts' accomplishment was even more remarkable, for during the 1880s they lobbied for and achieved a complete reversal of US naval policy despite the glaring want of any existing rationale for such a shift. Equally remarkably, they did so without resorting to a media campaign designed to convince large numbers of the American public of the need for a powerful fleet of battleships capable of force-projection. This transformation remains in many respects so mystifying that a just-published study characterizes historical treatment of it amusingly while highlighting its opacity. As of 1880, the US Navy was "a ragtag collection of ships haphazardly cruising around to various ports for the purpose of protecting American businessmen and their property. Mahan and his battleships then arrive[d] on the scene, *sui generis*, just in time to fight the battles of Manila Bay and Santiago de Cuba."³

True, the leading figures of the American navalist movement—Stephen Bleecker Luce, Caspar Goodrich, William Sampson, and Mahan—made their case publicly, but their influence was chiefly exerted upon elected

officials, in private, rather than upon the electorate. In some cases, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Franklin Tracy, and Congressman Charles Boutelle, their listeners were predisposed to accept the navalist (and imperialist) arguments being made to them, but in others, among them Secretaries of the Navy William Chandler and Hilary Herbert, Senator Eugene Hale, and President Benjamin Harrison, Luce and his allies appear to have been very persuasive indeed.

Dr. Mullins' research makes a vital contribution to our understanding of how this lobbying effort originated, proceeded, and ultimately succeeded. He traces its foundations to an intellectual vanguard of officers instrumental in the 1873 founding of the US Naval Institute (USNI), an organization modeled on the British Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). The USNI's leading lights—Luce, Sampson, Goodrich, Foxhall Parker, French Ensor Chadwick, Theodorus Mason, and others—along with allies within the Navy Department, in particular John Grimes Walker, head of the powerful Bureau of Navigation from 1881 to 1889, were instrumental in lobbying successfully for the creation of an Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) within the Department (1882).

Luce's subsequent efforts to establish the Naval War College (NWC (1884)), and his selection of Mahan as its lecturer in naval history have received widespread historical scrutiny, yet most accounts of the College's establishment and early years are incomplete, as Dr. Mullins' account makes plain. First of all, Walker's patronage at the Navy Department was as critical for the NWC's creation and early survival as it had been for the ONI's foundation. As a consequence his importance to the US Navy's modernization process appears to have been second only to Luce's.

Furthermore, from the evidence deployed by Dr. Mullins, it is clear that the concepts and arguments routinely attributed to Mahan in fact originated with Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson and were articulated in their plan for the NWC's curriculum. Mahan receives almost universal credit for them, thanks to their articulation in his *Influence of Sea Power* volumes, but he was merely building on intellectual and theoretical scaffolding that those men had erected in 1884.

Finally, although the evidence is largely circumstantial, it seems unquestionable that Luce envisioned a two-fold educational mission for the NWC. Not only was it intended to provide the higher education for mid-career officers that was its stated *raison d'être*: it was also designed to “educate” (“influence” or “propagandize” might be more apposite words) policy-makers in the Navy Department, Congress, and the White

House as to the desirability of building a powerful fleet of capital ships capable not only of defending the US coastline but of projecting American power within the hemisphere. In 1889 his efforts bore fruit twice over, as Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy both saved the NWC from absorption into the Navy's Torpedo School or outright closure, and put forward a rationale for building a battleship-oriented fleet in his 1889 *Annual Report* to Congress.

Dr. James Rentfrow has recently remarked that historical debates about the origins of the US Navy's strategic sea-change in 1889 have a "chicken and egg" character to them, as to "whether naval officers desiring a larger navy promoted expansionism or whether expansionist-minded politicians and civic leaders promoted a larger navy."⁴ On the basis of Dr. Mullins' research it appears that the former interpretation is closer to the mark, although many of the arguments put forward by Luce and his allies turned less on overseas expansion than on protecting America's existing coastline, albeit by meeting enemy forces on the high seas, before they reached the eastern seaboard.

Of Luce's own imperialistic beliefs (and those of Mahan) there can be no doubt.⁵ Nor can there be any doubt that with regard to some politicians (Tracy and Roosevelt, for instance) the naval professionals were preaching to the choir. All the same, Dr. Mullins' research leaves little question that the ideas articulated by Tracy in 1889 originated early in the decade within the intellectual circle around Luce, and that he and they intended the NWC to be as much as a policy-influencing institution—a think-tank within the service—as an educational one. Few will doubt the extent of their success after reading his account of their activities.

Still another achievement of Dr. Mullins' study deserves mention here, that being its contribution to our understanding of how strategic and technological change occurs within military and naval organizations. In this regard his work is of as much value to social and behavioral scientists as to historians. He draws on recent literature on organizational culture to frame in compelling fashion his discussion of the genesis, evolution, and implementation of strategic concepts and force-structure choices within both the Royal and US Navies.⁶

Dr. Mullins unequivocally demonstrates that the arguments put forward by both Beresford and his allies in Great Britain and Luce and his in the United States to underpin their arguments and activities sprang from a common root—naval history—even from a common source: pioneering British naval historian Sir John Knox Laughton. It was Laughton who

furnished the analytical framework and evidentiary base used by subsequent British naval historians and planners such as Philip Colomb, Cyprian Bridge, and Captain William Hall, the last being the British Admiralty's first Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI).

Hall's plans for war with France (1884) and Russia (1885), together with his force-planning analysis of 1887–88, which served as the basis for the Naval Defence Act's shipbuilding program, were based upon "lessons of history" adumbrated by Laughton: the Royal Navy's traditional offensive orientation, its reliance on an operational strategy of "sea denial" via blockade, and its use of coastal assault to supplement blockading. Yet the manner in which these ideas circulated among service intellectuals in both Britain and the US was not usually via direct transmission from teacher to pupil, and warrants the extended scrutiny that Dr. Mullins devotes to it precisely because it reveals the importance of organizational culture to institutional change.

Laughton's concepts and arguments were disseminated through a variety of media, in particular his firsthand acquaintance, in many cases friendship, with service intellectuals like Bridge and Admiral Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, and his frequent lectures at the RUSI and the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. The latter, especially those at the RUSI, were followed by discussions in which the audience participated. Those lectures and discussions were subsequently printed and distributed in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute (JRUSI)*.

Thus Laughton's arguments, and the response thereto by an audience consisting chiefly of service professionals, were available to all members of the RUSI and provided the intellectual vanguard within the officer corps with a potent and ultimately triumphant riposte to the techno-centric view held by more narrowly educated (not to mention often less clever) officers: that the changed circumstances of naval warfare attendant on steam, armor, modern ordnance, and torpedoes had rendered the Royal Navy's strategic and operational history irrelevant when planning for future conflicts. While the "historical school" probably constituted a minority within the officer corps, its adherents were disproportionately among the service's best and brightest, and therefore also disproportionately posted to the NID and other positions where they could exert influence on strategic policymaking and force-structure planning.

A list of officers posted to the NID during its first twenty-five years of existence constitutes virtually a who's who of the Navy's (and Marines') intellectual elite. Hall, Bridge, Lewis Beaumont, Reginald Custance,

Prince Louis of Battenberg, Charles Ottley, Edmund Slade, George Ballard, Sydney Eardley-Wilmot, Maurice Hankey, and George Aston are only the most prominent names. While there may not have been a widely-shared “service culture” consensus on strategy within the Royal Navy’s officer corps (many junior officers and perhaps more than a few senior ones doubtless rarely spared a thought for such nebulous subjects), Dr. Mullins makes clear that such a consensus existed among the service intellectuals who determined the organizational culture of the Admiralty.

The dissemination and institutionalization of strategic ideas based on the “lessons of history,” was strikingly similar within the US Navy, with one notable exception. As Dr. Mullins reveals, Laughton was as great an influence on Stephen Luce and Alfred Mahan as he was on British officers like Bridge and Philip Colomb. Luce and Laughton first met in 1870 and corresponded regularly from 1875 onward. Mahan was no less indebted to Laughton, as is made clear in Andrew Lambert’s biography of the latter.⁷ Likewise, the RUSI and NID had close American analogues: the USNI and the ONI. Both the NID and ONI even owed their establishment and early survival to institutional patrons within their respective naval administrations: Sir George Tryon in the British Admiralty and John Grimes Walker in the US Navy Department. And the combination of these institutions and the policy and strategy debates they spawned gave rise in both services to a cadre of service intellectuals who pushed an historically-based vision of what their respective navies should be and do. These were the men who determined the outcome of the decisions of 1889.

The major difference between the two services was the glaring absence of any historical or geographical justification for an offensively-oriented, blue-water, *guerre d’escadre* American battlefleet. The Royal Navy had an unassailable rationale, well supported by historical “lessons,” for maintaining a powerful battlefleet in the late 1880s: the security of both home islands and empire depended upon it. For all of the overheated rhetoric they generated, the debates surrounding the Naval Defence Act turned on the relatively minor issue of exactly how powerful it should be.

By contrast, the US Navy had no such rationale nor any historical underpinning for abandoning its traditional strategy of *guerre de course* and (mostly land-based) coast defense, unless overseas expansion factored into the equation, at least implicitly. The insular United States of the late 1880s had no need for a powerful navy to defend either it or its non-existent overseas empire. Yet the arguments put forward by Luce, Sampson, and Goodrich borrowed extensively from British naval history, not only that of

the home islands, but of the empire too, regardless of its inapplicability to America's strategic and geographic situation. Therefore, the historically-based vision they sought to realize was that of the Royal, rather than the United States Navy. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of their campaign is that they managed to pull off this intellectual legerdemain.

Whether the "American Naval Revolution," as Walter Herrick aptly dubbed it, was based on sound intellectual foundations or no, Dr. Mullins' findings make an important contribution to current scholarly debates regarding the sources of and impetus for institutional change. Contra the bureaucratic or "neo-realist" school of which Barry Posen's work is an exemplar, his research reveals that in both the British and American cases, the agents for change were not only professionals, but were in many instances *officers working within the institutions (and their accompanying bureaucratic structures) that they sought to transform.*

The strategic verities enunciated by Laughton as a Royal Naval College lecturer (and thus a semi-insider) were incorporated and internalized in Admiralty planning thanks to insider professionals like William Hall. Likewise, the movers and shakers in the American Naval Revolution were almost all well-placed professionals: Luce, Walker, Goodrich, Sampson, and Mahan. To put it as bluntly as possible: the impetus for strategic and technological modernization in both late Victorian British and US Navies emanated from professionals within the institutional structure, rather than being foisted upon them from by civilians from without. The implications and conclusions of Dr. Mullins' study, based as it is on extensive archival research, therefore deserve close scrutiny by political scientists and sociologists alike.

It remains only for me to thank Dr. Mullins for the chance to work with him in editing his outstanding study. This is the second book-length collaborative scholarly effort with which I have been involved, the first being the late Donald M. Schurman's 1955 Cambridge University Ph.D. research, *Imperial Defence, 1868–1887*, which he and I edited for publication (Frank Cass, 2000). That experience was so rewarding to me, both personally and intellectually, that I was eager to undertake another such project.

Happily for me, if not for him, Dr. Mullins' doctoral research, which formed the basis of this book, was not, as it deserved to be, quickly revised and published following its completion in 2000. That outcome had nothing to do with its quality and everything to do with the professional and personal demands upon Dr. Mullins' time over the past fifteen years.

I have been the beneficiary of that state of affairs. Co-editing his book has exceeded my every expectation and I feel privileged to have assisted in its publication. Working with him has been a delightful and thoroughly rewarding experience, so much so that I will be on the lookout for another such project.

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NOTES

1. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 27.
2. For example, returns to the House of Commons give the following figures for battleship strength:

	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Under construction</i>	<i>Total</i>
1888:			
Great Britain	42	7	49
France	22	8	30
Russia	2	7	9
1896:			
Great Britain	45	12	57
France	18	6	24
Russia	10	8	18
1898:			
Great Britain	52	9	61
France	27	7	34
Russia	12	6	18

Critics of these returns, both then and subsequently, claimed that the British list was padded with many obsolescent, even useless, vessels. So were the French and Russian lists.

3. James C. Rentfrow, *Home Squadron: The US Navy on the North Atlantic Station* (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 2014), p. 3.
4. Rentfrow, *Home Squadron*, p. 2.
5. For Luce's imperialism, see Walter Herrick, *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. 30, 197. For Mahan's, see Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters* (Annapolis, MD: 1977), pp. 349–51.

6. Stephen Cobb has recently examined the late Victorian and Edwardian Royal Navy's service culture in *Preparing for Blockade 1885–1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare* (Farnham, Surrey: Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series, Ashgate Publishing, 2013).
7. Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy, and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), pp. 126, 129–30.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Until recently, the subject matter of this volume was a delightful but distant memory. In the fifteen years that followed the completion of my doctoral work at King's College London, I built a career in the American and British national security communities, first in the policy world and then in the defense industry where I currently reside as a senior executive responsible for the matters of global business strategy and its implementation. With constant business travel and the demands of fatherhood and family, thinking about naval and strategic history was an occasional indulgence, limited largely to the perusal of shelves at bookstores in Washington and London, or the reading of a journal article on an overnight flight. Doing anything more was an unfulfilled aspiration.

That changed in 2013, when Professor John Beeler called to discuss my doctoral research and inquired if I still harbored an interest to see it published in some form. I first met John in 1999 at a naval history conference at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis and we kept in touch throughout the years. But that was the extent of our association. Now John offered to partner with me, as he did with Professor Donald Schurman on the publication of *Imperial Defence, 1868–1887*, and work together to revise my work, untouched since October 2000. His offer was eagerly accepted. After finding the only electronic copy of it—on an old Zip disk which was thankfully discovered in a box in the study—John and I embarked on our joint restoration project, preserving the intellectual foundation of the original research but bolstering its structure to create, in essence, a vastly transformed scholarly contribution to the fields of political science, naval history, and strategic studies.

This would not have been possible had it not been for John. While I am thrilled to finally see this volume published after all these years, it was the intellectual journey undertaken with John that I will always relish more than the destination. I am deeply honored to be associated with him. Also associated with this volume are Professors Sir Lawrence Freedman and Andrew Lambert, both of whom stirred my appetite for naval and strategic history and supervised my original research. Memories of my time as a postgraduate student at King's College London in the late 1990s are some of my fondest, due largely to their mentorship. I sincerely hope that the arc of my career, away from academia and into the world of business and industry, has not disappointed them.

Thanks are also due to the staffs of the British National Archives, the British National Maritime Museum, and the US Library of Congress, whose assistance was essential to the completion of my dissertation; to the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the United Kingdom for an Overseas Research Student Award; and to the US Naval Historical Center, now the Naval History and Heritage Command, for the 1998–99 Admiral John D. Hayes Pre-Doctoral Fellowship. I would also like to thank my colleagues and supervisors at the RAND Corporation, where I was employed while conducting much of my research and writing. In particular I would like to acknowledge the support of Dr. Daniel Byman, Dr. David Ochmanek, and Dr. James Mulvenon.

My final words of gratitude are for my mother, wife, and daughter, the three most important women in my life who (grudgingly) tolerate my prolonged absences from home, the infrequent phone calls, the missing of events at school, and the multiple weekends consumed by matters other than family. My success in all things is due to them, and I will love them forever.

15 January 2016

R.E. Mullins

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CB&Q	Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (Railroad)
CIO	Chief Intelligence Officer
DNC	Director of Naval Construction
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DNO	Director of Naval Ordnance
FIC	Foreign Intelligence Committee
<i>JRUSI</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal United Services Institute</i>
LC	Library of Congress
NA	National Archives (US)
NHFC	Naval Historical Foundation Collection
NID	Naval Intelligence Department
NMM	National Maritime Museum
NRS	Navy Records Society
NWC	Naval War College
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
RAF	Royal Air Force
RNC	Royal Naval College
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
US	United States
USNI	US Naval Institute
<i>USNIP</i>	<i>Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute</i>

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PART I

Overview

Introduction

The emergence of modern sea power in Britain and the United States can be traced to decisions made in 1889, when both countries embarked on rapid and sustained naval expansion that continued throughout the pre-dreadnought (1889–1906) and dreadnought (1906–14) eras, into World War I. The British Naval Defence Act, enacted in May 1889, authorized the construction of ten battleships, forty-two cruisers of various types, and eighteen torpedo-gunboats at the cost of £21.5 million. This constituted the largest British warship-building program of the nineteenth century. It was deemed necessary in order to modernize the fleet—the Royal Sovereign class capital ships built under its terms were the prototypical “pre-dreadnought” battleships—and was intended to deter other countries from following suit. In December 1889, a similar proposal to modernize the American fleet was circulated in Washington, following the enunciation of a new strategic posture that envisioned an offensive naval force of capital ships as the means of hemispheric defense. The result was an unparalleled transformation of naval power on both sides of the Atlantic, due not only to maturing naval technologies and the emergence of the pre-dreadnought battleship, but also the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and their impact upon the peacetime naval policies of Britain and the United States.

This work examines the decisions of 1889 in light of those strategic ideas, and from cultural and organizational perspectives that combine archival sources with modern historical techniques and social science

methodologies and applies them to the study of naval policy formulation. Prior accounts of these decisions typically measure their historical significance in terms of the naval construction that ensued. This study focuses instead upon the shaping influence of strategic ideas and how they were inspired, institutionalized, and finally implemented in the policies enacted in 1889. That strategic ideas shared among naval officers were decisive in this instance is the underlying tenet of the cultural approach to historical naval analysis, which in turn highlights the impact of organizational cultures upon the strategic and force structure choices of military institutions.

The pre-dreadnought era has garnered less historical attention than the subsequent period, characterized by HMS *Dreadnought* and the Anglo-German naval race that immediately preceded World War I, but it has nonetheless been the subject of a substantial body of scholarly literature. Much of it, however, focuses on technology, naval architecture, and naval construction, leaving policy decisions such as those of 1889 essentially untouched or only briefly mentioned. Indeed, that the period between 1889 and the appearance of HMS *Dreadnought* is known as the “pre-dreadnought era”—using a ship design to characterize an era—speaks volumes of its treatment in modern naval historiography. Typical of the scholarship is an overarching emphasis upon the technical aspects of warship building, as evidenced by design histories by David K. Brown, Norman Friedman, and others.¹ These technocentric histories, while excellent for their detailed descriptions of the ship design and building processes, typically give short shrift to the substantive rationales behind key policy choices. “The problem,” observes one prominent naval historian with respect to design histories in general, “is that we need to address warships and their development as a historical problem, and we need to address it with respect to organization, to personality, [and] to technology”² Yet this approach remains to be applied to the decisions of 1889.

The tendency to consign the policy formulation process, especially in peacetime, to a conceptual “black box” is further encouraged by longstanding tendencies in naval historiography, more specifically, the limits of what can be termed the “policy-and-operations” perspective ordinarily employed to analyze naval policy formulation.³ At its worst, this perspective oversimplifies the complex realities of developing policy, strategy, and doctrine in navies, a characteristic that becomes more pronounced when studying peacetime administration, during which organizational decisions are often reflective of the ideas and experiences of service professionals. “Naval officers,” writes David Alan Rosenberg, “acquire their experience

and understanding of naval strategy and operations, and later apply it in decision making positions, within the unique organizational structure of the navy.”⁴ Failure to take this phenomenon into consideration means that peacetime policy decisions are often treated as if they had been made under wartime conditions, when external factors such as foreign navies and threat perceptions generally assume priority in the decision-making process. In failing to distinguish between these different policymaking environments, many core naval histories are misinformed (and misinforming) as to the major shaping influences behind policy choice and implementation.

Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in most existing accounts of the decisions of 1889. Conventional wisdom regarding the Naval Defence Act rests on the work of Arthur Jacob Marder, who as a pioneer in the field of modern, scholarly naval history popularized the policy-and-operations perspective in his landmark studies of British naval policy.⁵ Failing fully to consider the shaping influence of organizational, political, and economic factors in peacetime policy deliberations, Marder framed his account of the Naval Defence Act around three conceptual pillars: external provocations, threat perceptions, and civilian intervention. On this basis, he concluded that the Act was spurred by a combination of these external factors, with particular emphasis upon a feared Franco-Russian naval combination that he argued was ultimately responsible for the new course in Admiralty policy.⁶

Somewhat less problematic are what amount to hagiographies of US naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan, which together form the basis of conventional wisdom about his centrality to the origins of strategic reconfiguration in United States naval policy.⁷ Yet these too overlook additional, critical internal factors in favor of an oversimplified image of how American naval policy was transformed in the late 1880s. That historian Jon Tetsuro Sumida elected not to challenge this image but instead perpetuated it in his assessment of the celebrated naval theorist and his writings—*Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command* (1997)—testifies to the extent to which the strategic discourse that prompted the revolution in American naval affairs remains obscured by the literary attainments of its most famous participant.⁸

Naval historiography has broadened in the last twenty-five years to examine policy formulation from an organizational perspective, based on the appreciation that navies are complex organizations, with sophisticated *ideas, structures, and processes* which combine to affect how naval officers and administrators think about and prepare for war within the

larger context of policy formulation. “Navies,” in the words of Sumida and Rosenberg, should be “... understood as institutions whose manifold dimensions, variations in major characteristics, and potential for radical reformation need to be taken into consideration when investigating the ... motives underlying the behavior of naval decision makers.”⁹ To accomplish this task, the historical discipline has recently embraced new analytical techniques and research methodologies borrowed from the social sciences, especially those that can be used to sort out complex issues in naval technology, personnel, administration, and finance.¹⁰

A number of naval historians have produced studies that focus chiefly upon internal factors and the organizational perspective. Sumida has written extensively on the formulation of British naval policy between 1889 and 1914, with a particular emphasis upon the interaction of internal factors and their impact upon the key policy choices made during the John Fisher era (1904–10).¹¹ Nicholas Lambert has followed a similar research agenda in his studies of the same period, while John Beeler has applied an organizational perspective to an investigation of mid-Victorian British naval policy.¹² Andrew Gordon’s superb analysis of British naval command highlights cultural factors that affected the operational performance of the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland.¹³ More recently, C. I. Hamilton’s study of British naval policymaking in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shawn Grimes’ examination of Admiralty war-planning 1887–1918, Nicholas Black’s work on World War I-era British naval staff, Stephen Cobb’s exploration of Royal Navy efforts to employ armed merchant cruisers to interdict enemy trade 1885–1914, and Matthew Seligmann’s investigation of the service’s plans for trade protection have all moved decisively beyond the policy-and-operations approach to take into consideration cultural and organizational factors in the formulation of naval policy.¹⁴ Because of their analytical roots in the organizational perspective, these studies are marked by an emphasis on the pervasive influence of strategic ideas and professional arguments thereon, and their impact in shaping the content and process of naval policy formulation. Yet, as one naval historian has warned, it is simply not enough to identify which idea(s) mattered most in the policymaking process: “[i]n order to explain the history of naval strategy, we must move behind the ideas to consider where they came from and how they were translated from theory into practice.”¹⁵ Understanding key policy choices is thus dependent upon a study of strategic ideas and, more importantly, the organization in which these ideas are inspired, institutionalized, and finally implemented in policy frameworks.

Implicit to assessing the impact of strategic ideas is the concept of organizational culture, which this study adopts from the social sciences to link strategic ideas with the environment in which they evolve into preferences within the professional mindset of British and American naval officers. Having originated in organizational theory, the concept of organizational culture has in recent years attracted the attention of political scientists and historians, many of whom have incorporated it in their analyses to explain certain aspects of military behavior.¹⁶ Although frequently categorized in this literature as “service culture,” or “military culture,” organizational culture is employed in this study as encompassing a set of attitudes, beliefs, and other common habits of thought shared among naval officers serving as the intellectual basis for their conceptions as to the roles and missions of the service. For evidence of such culture and its impact upon naval decision-making, this work relies on departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, and personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of senior officers, in order to provide answers to the following questions about the decisions of 1889:

- To what extent were they reflective of internal factors, and in particular the strategic ideas and actions of naval officers?
- How were these ideas inspired, institutionalized, and finally implemented by naval administrators within the context of naval policy formulation?
- What was the overall impact of these ideas and actions—the influence of organizational culture—upon the content and process of naval policy formulation?

Each of these questions is framed with the expectation that archival sources, in conjunction with the work of other naval historians, will furnish insights into the circumstances that led to the decisions of 1889. The findings suggest that conventional wisdom about them is misinformed to varying degrees. In the case of Britain and the Naval Defence Act, Marder’s account appears unpersuasive: well-informed intelligence reports demonstrate that confidence prevailed at the Admiralty during the 1880s despite outdoor concerns of a Franco-Russian naval combination. Similarly, archival evidence from American departmental records and private papers do not support the image of naval policy formulation upheld in biographies of Mahan, although he was certainly a leading

figure among the personalities, institutions, and events that generated a new strategic outlook for the US Navy.

Perhaps even more compelling are three further conclusions drawn from the cultural approach employed here. First, in both cases, naval officers worked together to ensure that strategic ideas drawn from the study of naval history were enunciated and debated in selected policy forums, in particular professional associations and semi-official “think-tanks” such as the USNI, the RUSI, and the Navy Records Society (NRS). There are also striking similarities between British and American navies in how these ideas were institutionalized and incorporated. In both services a new line of strategic thinking quickly found favor in war colleges, intelligence departments, and among service patrons and, owing to that institutional support, was ultimately able to overcome bureaucratic opposition. Finally, both cases demonstrate the shaping influence of organizational culture upon the content and process of naval policy formulation, as reflected in the ideas, actions, and achievements of naval officers in the late 1880s.

At first glance, it might appear that the introduction of organizational culture to the study of naval or even military history is a curious decision. Although some military historians have applied the concept, most naval historians have been reluctant to employ a cultural lens in their analytical toolboxes. Given the relative novelty of the methodology, the following chapter elaborates further on the cultural approach, examines its compatibility with an organizational perspective, and describes how it is applied as an analytical instrument throughout the remainder of the study. It addresses these methodological considerations through a survey of the historical and theoretical literature from the fields of naval history, strategic studies, and political science. With the three conceptual pillars of Marder’s account in view, a comprehensive reassessment of the Naval Defence Act follows in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, each chapter focusing on particular aspects of the emergence of strategic ideas and their transformation from theory into practice in the policy sphere. Similarly, Chapters 6 and 7 examine the evolution of American naval policy in the 1880s, which culminated in the formal adoption of an offensive, *guerre d’escadre* naval strategy in November 1889. Finally, Chapter 8 summarizes the conclusions reached, not only about the immediate consequences of the 1889 decisions, but also their implications for subsequent naval policy formulation in London and Washington.

NOTES

1. David K. Brown, *Warrior to Dreadnought: Warship Development, 1860–1905* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1997); and Norman Friedman, *US Battleships: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986). Other noteworthy design histories related to this period include Robert Gardiner and Andrew Lambert (eds.), *Steam, Steel and Shellfire: The Steam Warship, 1815–1905* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1992); R. A. Burt, *British Battleships, 1889–1904* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988); John C. Reilly and Robert L. Scheina, *American Battleships, 1886–1923: Pre-Dreadnought Design and Construction* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980); and Roger Chesneau and Eugene Kolesnik (eds.), *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1979).
2. “Discussion of the Papers Written by Dr. Jon Sumida and Dr. David Rosenberg,” in James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf (eds.), *Mahan Is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1993), p. 182.
3. Jon Tetsuro Sumida and David Alan Rosenberg, “Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management and Money: The Study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History,” in John B. Hattendorf (ed.), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1996), p. 31.
4. David Alan Rosenberg, “Process: The Realities of Formulating Modern Naval Strategy,” in Goldrick and Hattendorf, *Mahan is Not Enough*, p. 145.
5. Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1940); and idem., *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904–1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961–70), 5 vols.
6. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 120, 131.
7. See, for example, Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776–1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942); Margaret Tuttle Sprout, “Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power,” in Edward Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941); and W. D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1939). More balanced historical treatments of Mahan can be found in Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977); and Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of*

- Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: Free Press, 1972).
8. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997).
 9. Sumida and Rosenberg, "Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management and Money," p. 32.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889–1914* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). See also idem., "British Naval Administration and Policy in the Age of Fisher," *Journal of Military History* vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1990); idem., "Technology, Culture and the Modern Battleship," *Naval War College Review* vol. 45 (Autumn 1992); idem., "Sir John Fisher and the *Dreadnought*: The Sources of Naval Mythology," *The Journal of Military History* vol. 59, no. 4 (October 1995); idem., "Demythologizing the Fisher Era: the Role of Change in Historical Method," *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt*, 59 (2000); idem., "A Matter of Timing: The Royal Navy and the Tactics of Decisive Battle, 1912–1916," *Journal of Military History* vol. 67, no. 1 (January 2003); idem., "British Preparations for Global Naval War, 1904–1914: Directed Revolution or Critical Problem Solving?" in Monica Toft and Talbot Imlay (eds.), *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning under Uncertainty* (London: Routledge, 2006); and "Geography, Technology, and British Naval Strategy in the *Dreadnought* Era," *Naval War College Review* vol. 59, no. 2 (Summer 2006).
 12. Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); idem., "Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904–1909," *Journal of Military History* vol. 59, no. 4 (October 1995); and John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone and Disraeli Era, 1866–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).
 13. Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996).
 14. C. I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805–1927* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Boydell and Brewer, 2012); Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009); Stephen Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade 1885–1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare* (Farnham, Surrey: Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series, Ashgate Publishing, 2013); Matthew S. Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901–1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War Against Germany* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012).

15. Rosenberg, "Process: The Realities of Formulating Modern Naval Strategy," p. 145.
16. Among political scientists, see Elizabeth Kier, *Imaging War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); idem., "Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars," *International Security* vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995); Jeffrey Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step," *American Political Science Review* vol. 90, no. 1 (March 1996); and idem., *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). Among historians, see Gordon, *The Rules of the Game*; Williamson Murray, "Does Military Culture Matter," *Orbis* vol. 37 (Winter 1999); David Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the US Army, 1917–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet (eds.), *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Explaining Strategic Choices in Military Institutions: Theoretical Models

While the application of a cultural lens to explain strategic and military behavior is not by any means novel in the field of strategic studies, its adoption by modern military and naval historians has been a relatively recent phenomenon.¹ This slowness to embrace the cultural approach has not been wholly devoid of benefit: since the mid-1990s many informative methodological debates, largely among political scientists, over its utility, analytical scope, and explanatory value have taken place.² As a consequence, the methodology has matured and become more widely accepted. It is not without its critics, however, especially scholars who question its efficacy in predicting state and non-state behavior, rather than just understanding it, but organizational culture is now well established as a key variable to help explain an array of topics of relevance to strategic studies, among them patterns of strategic behavior, how militaries organize and prepare for war, the dynamics of military innovation, and the learning curve and adaptation of war-fighting organizations.³

The cultural approach furnishes a valuable methodology for historians as well, in either revisiting core historical narratives or creating new ones. Theo Farrell, who perhaps more than anyone else has championed the cultural approach over the past two decades, sees culture as “a powerful tool for explaining state action, and the actions of military organizations within states.”⁴ Farrell also points to a distinction between *strategic* culture and *organizational* culture (the latter sometimes referred to as military or service culture). The terms are often used interchangeably, and

while indeed related from an epistemological standpoint, their meanings and levels of analysis are different. Strategic culture possesses a national frame of reference—Colin Gray defines it as “modes of thought and action with respect to force” which in turn is derived from national historical experiences, national aspirations, and geostrategic circumstances.⁵ Organizational culture, as the term implies, has an institutional frame of reference and is reflective of a mix of dominant organizational ideas and interests, often influenced by national circumstances such as geography and other geostrategic factors.⁶ These ideas and interests are vital to understanding the strategic and force structure choices of military organizations. Again, the scholarship of Farrell is instructive on this point:

Culture, as both professional norms and national traditions, shapes preference formation by military organizations by telling organizational members who they are and what is possible, and thereby suggesting what they should do. In this way, culture explains why military organizations choose the structures and strategies they do, and thus how states generate power.⁷

In 1999 the policy journal *Orbis* published selected papers from a conference it sponsored to consider the cultural dimension of the American way of warfare.⁸ While the conference was tailored specifically to consider American defense policy issues, a general historical assessment of military culture was offered by prominent military historian Williamson Murray, in which he explained why comprehending organizational culture is critical when seeking to understand how militaries prepare for future conflicts. “Unfortunately, historians have done little on the subject,” he observed, “focusing on the most part on more immediate factors such as leadership, doctrine and training to explain victory or defeat. Even works specifically examining military effectiveness and innovation tend to discuss military culture as a tangential issue.”⁹

Murray was among the first historians to attribute specific cases of military behavior to cultural impulses in a 1996 edited volume that examined patterns of military innovation during the interwar period.¹⁰ “The history of the first half of this century,” he concluded, “would suggest that military culture was a crucial determinant of how well military organizations adapted to war.”¹¹ Since those words appeared other military historians, and a growing number of naval historians as well, have followed suit and are including organizational culture in their explanatory frameworks, albeit without always explicitly detailing their methodology.¹² This study

seeks to establish a cultural framework for the historical analysis of naval policy and, more importantly, to use it as an analytical lens through which to view the strategic and force structure choices reached in Britain and the United States at the end of the 1880s.

* * *

The study of naval history has experienced peaks and troughs over the past one-hundred twenty years, culminating in the last two decades with a challenge to revive the discipline when (again) confronted with the prospect of academic obscurity.¹³ What has been particularly noteworthy about the field's response to that challenge is scholarly introspection. Several naval historians have undertaken discussions about the future of the field, about how to improve the research and writing of naval history, and about the potential of incorporating concepts and methodologies from related disciplines in the social sciences.¹⁴ In the process, they have identified traits in the literature that, in the past, have generally informed naval history and that might be de-emphasized or at least supplemented. Prominent among these traits is a research agenda that focuses mainly on the policies and operations of navies in wartime or in preparation for conflict, in which the motives and intentions behind key policy decisions are assessed in isolation as parochial responses to actual or perceived threats. The result of this policy-and-operations perspective is a type of naval history that often oversimplifies the process by which naval policies are formulated by politicians and naval professionals in peacetime.

What has taken place over the past two-and-a-half decades resembles a Kuhnian paradigm shift in the research and writing of naval history, to include a multidisciplinary orientation and new lines of inquiry that consider internal, as well as external, influences on naval policy. Moreover, it has become increasingly apparent that historians should strive to understand the relationship between organizational culture and the policy formulation process in navies. "Navies are complex institutions," observes Jon Sumida, "whose history as such can only be understood through scholarship that takes into account the full range of technical, tactical, strategic, administrative, economic, financial, political, sociological and *cultural* characteristics that define their nature and function."¹⁵

The introduction of organizational culture to the study of naval history is closely linked to the insight articulated by Sumida, the first scholar to highlight the significance of organizational complexity in the patterns

of naval history. His contributions to the literature include a revisionist assessment of the “*Dreadnought Revolution*” and the formulation of British naval policy during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* (1989).¹⁶ In this work he draws on hitherto underutilized archival sources to fashion an account of British naval policy between 1889 and the outbreak of World War I that highlights the financial, technical, and organizational influences on key policy decisions.¹⁷ He also sheds significant light on the decision-making process within the Admiralty to demonstrate how each of these internal factors affected the strategic and force structure choices that led to the construction of the Dreadnought-class battleships and, in particular, the hybrid battlecruisers favored by First Sea Lord John A. Fisher. It is thus no surprise that these choices are attributed by him to a “multi-tiered process [of decision-making] that was heavily influenced by budgetary pressure, technical uncertainty, flaws in bureaucratic organization, and the vagaries of chance.”¹⁸

That Sumida did not consider organizational culture per se as a factor is not surprising, for the concept remained on the periphery of strategic studies until the mid-1990s. Still, his approach informs this study in two important respects. First, his research, like that presented here, is predicated on the premise that the Royal Navy in the early twentieth century was a sophisticated and highly complex institutional structure that requires a comprehensive approach to sorting through the volumes of Admiralty records. Equally influential is his departure from the policy-and-operations perspective popularized and institutionalized in the historical narratives of Arthur Marder and Stephen Roskill.¹⁹ While the contributions of these two prominent naval historians cannot be undervalued, their focus on wartime naval policy and operations now appears open to challenge in significant respects.

The explanatory value of the organizational perspective, with its archival-based approach and methodological rigor, has prompted other naval historians to adopt it. Two studies warrant particular attention here, for the underlying objective behind both is to broaden the study of British naval policy to encompass the full range of its core political, economic, technical, and administrative components, all of which shaped naval policy formulation in the Admiralty. This was certainly the case during the Fisher era, as argued by Sumida and largely substantiated by the research of Nicholas Lambert. In his book, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (1999), Lambert faults the generally accepted core naval histories of the period, especially those of Marder, for incomplete and oversimplified accounts of the archival evidence.²⁰

The current study is less concerned with Lambert's claims than with the methodology used to reach them. He attributes key policy decisions during the Fisher era to a host of internal factors missed by earlier historians, who ascribed them instead to external provocations, specifically foreign naval developments. This oversight exemplifies a serious shortcoming in the policy-and-operations perspective, which can be attributed to incomplete research and the quest for narrative integrity: to tell a straightforward, coherent story. "Naval planning and operational performance," Lambert notes, "are generally regarded by historians to form the heart of naval history—judging by the emphasis placed on these subjects in most core naval studies."²¹ But the core studies miss the target, as Marder and others "failed to take cognizance of a myriad of 'internal' influences upon the formulation of 'naval policy,' such as the prevailing fiscal climate, institutional or personal ambitions, and the impact of interservice rivalry."²²

The conclusions reached by Lambert are strikingly similar to those of John Beeler, even though the latter concerns himself with the formulation of British naval policy several decades earlier. Whether he intended to or not,²³ Beeler incorporated in his analytical framework an organizational perspective to reassess naval policy formulation during the Gladstone and Disraeli ministries, while explicitly departing from the traditional technocentric approach to illuminate other factors that shaped key policy decisions at the Admiralty. "Technology was (and is) an important element in naval warfare, policy, and strategy, but technology should be viewed in its contemporary setting," he cautions at the outset of his analysis.²⁴ "It cannot be fully understood without reference to the political, economic, administrative, international, and even ideological context within which it evolves." Writing about a complex organization in a complex era, Beeler discounts the notion that British naval policy 1866–80 was largely driven by a technological arms race and perceived threats from France. His archival-based conclusions reveal that Admiralty officials were quite aware of the growing disparity in naval strength in Britain's favor, both quantitatively and qualitatively, from the late 1860s onward.

Nor does his research show that the different political agendas espoused by William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli resulted in anything more than incremental shifts in the overall direction of British naval policy. In fact, Admiralty officials trod carefully throughout this period of profound technological uncertainty, in part owing to both prime ministers' emphasis on economy. Beeler also surveys other factors, including "the domestic

political scene, government fiscal policy, the administration (and administrators) of the navy, and certainly not least of all, British perceptions of foreign governments and navies.” In the process, he carries the scope of his analysis even further to consider the impact of specific individuals and their ideas on the shaping of British naval policy, an approach analogous to that adopted by many political scientists in explaining the behavior of complex military organizations. Thus, while Beeler does not explicitly address organizational culture in his analytical framework, he does so implicitly. Indeed, the dustjacket of his volume succinctly terms it “as much a case study in human responses to the process of modernization as it is an investigation of mid-Victorian British naval policy.”²⁵

The organizational perspective was first showcased at a time when naval history, as a field, appeared to be struggling for academic survival.²⁶ Perhaps for that reason practitioners have seemed eager to embrace new analytical approaches that offer the prospect of furnishing a more complete understanding of the complex nature of naval administration and its related functions. In the 1990s, naval historians debated the merits of new approaches, their potential in historical scholarship and, more to the point, their relevance to the research and writing of naval history. Without doubt, the most important of these debates took place at a conference convened at Yale University in June 1994, the proceedings of which were subsequently published in a volume appropriately entitled *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*. Here for the first time naval historians seriously addressed linkages between organizational culture, naval policy formulation, and the sources of professional behavior. Moreover, two naval historians and a political scientist put forward persuasive cases for adding a cultural lens to the toolbox of modern naval history, especially when treating navies as complex organizations. “[A]ll will agree,” concluded John Hattendorf, one of the conference’s organizers, “that navies are instruments of government and operate as highly technological organizations within the context of both domestic and foreign politics, finance, technology, and bureaucracy. This range is as much the realm of political scientists as it is of naval historians.”²⁷

Political scientists have generally been more receptive than historians to concepts borrowed from the other social sciences, especially those that are perceived to add explanatory value to theories designed to explain and predict variations of organizational behavior, but, as historian and Yale conference attendee Captain James Goldrick, RAN (Royal Australian Navy) warned, “[i]f we are to achieve any improvement in our understanding

of navies in the machine age, there must be a new approach to the subject, one which integrates the elements of technology, finance, strategy, operations and personnel”²⁸ The holistic study of navies as complex organizations might integrate those elements, a point underscored at Yale by Jon Sumida and David Alan Rosenberg. Their underlying objective was to urge the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach to re-evaluate core naval histories, both in light of the limitations of the policy-and-operations perspective, and the existence of unexamined archival materials: “Speaking very generally, the core histories oversimplify, and thereby obscure, the influence of technical, personnel, economic, administrative, and financial matters to extreme degrees.”²⁹

To assist in the task of re-evaluating these core accounts, Sumida and Rosenberg recommend that scholars be enlisted from related disciplines, ranging from political science, economics, and military sociology, to a host of historical subspecialties (i.e. diplomatic, political, and scientific), international security, and strategic studies. In their estimation, researchers trained in these fields are better positioned to write “new model monographs” which will supplant or at least supplement the standard historical narratives through the application of research methodologies and analytical techniques used in their respective disciplines. Of particular interest to Sumida and Rosenberg are those methodologies, concepts, and techniques specifically tailored for subjects traditionally relegated by naval historians to conceptual black boxes, such as the impact of complex institutional and administrative settings upon the decision-making process. When combined, these modes of analysis have the potential to reveal the internal sources of naval policy, including the extent to which organizational culture affects the strategic and force structure choices made in upper level policy debates. On the potential of cultural analysis, Sumida and Rosenberg are confident that

... the proliferation of well-founded and conceptually advanced writing on navies as institutions will provide the basis for more sensible analyses of the social and cultural context of naval officer behavior, and that of politicians and bureaucrats as well. This should establish socio-cultural analysis as a much larger and more important form of naval history than is currently the case.³⁰

Focusing on organizational culture when studying naval history is also endorsed by Robert Jervis, one of the political scientists attending the Yale conference.³¹ He urges naval historians to embrace the organizational

perspective and the multidisciplinary approach advocated by Sumida and Rosenberg. “There is something of a paradox here,” observed Jervis, “in that we need to be able to isolate the field of naval history in order to study it and yet part of what makes the field so interesting is the links it has to many other areas—e.g. foreign policy, organizational theory, [and] the uses of technology.”³² Accordingly, the focus of naval historians should widen to explore naval-related subject areas once considered on or beyond the periphery of the discipline.

Jervis highlights several of these subject areas, including naval influence on national power and patterns of international politics (and vice versa), internal and external sources of naval conduct, and the propensity for innovation in specific naval organizations. Each of these lines of inquiry, however, requires a research methodology tailored specifically to answer the questions relevant to the researcher: “A student of the role of navies in international conflict, for example, will use different concepts, examine different data, and employ different methodologies than the person who wants to know how navies influenced and were influenced by conceptions of gender.”³³ Similarly, a cultural explanation of strategic and force structure choices requires a much different conception of organizations and their constituents, the impact of organizational culture on policy formulation, and critical linkages between the personalities, institutions, and events relevant to the decisions under scrutiny.

In some cases, the sources of naval conduct emanate chiefly from external considerations, as commonly seen in strategic and force structure choices made in response to foreign provocations or threat perceptions. Far-reaching decisions can be much more complicated, however, in the absence of wartime conditions or the overt threat of conflict, and in such cases historians are compelled to pierce the veneer of naval organizations to determine which of many factors were most influential in the decision-making process and why. For that reason, naval historians’ research agendas should be expanded to encompass both external and internal dimensions of naval policy formulation. Archive-based research on that basis may reveal service cultures as significant factors in shaping the context from which strategic ideas emerge and are ultimately institutionalized and implemented.

A major work illustrating the rewards to be gained by examining organizational culture is Andrew Gordon’s acclaimed study of the World War I-era Royal Navy, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (1996). Gordon attributes the incompatible approaches to command and

control on display at Jutland to a signals-dominated service culture that had employed a centralized system of battle tactics since the publication of then Captain Philip H. Colomb's *Manual of Fleet Evolutions* in 1874.³⁴ When a decentralized command approach was introduced by Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon in the early 1890s, Gordon suggests that a transformation of the navy's approach to command and control might have ensued had Tryon not met an untimely death in the *Victoria–Camperdown* collision in 1893.³⁵ Instead, a “counter-reformation” occurred, which divided the senior officer corps into two schools of thought, those in favor of a flexible and decentralized style of command, allowing for individual initiative, and those who advocated the retention of a more rigid and centralized system of command and control. Most were more comfortable with the latter and centralization prevailed among the Royal Navy's flag officers, epitomized by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe's maneuvers with the Grand Fleet and in his inflexible Grand Fleet Battle Orders. “By the time of Jutland,” observes David Syrett, “the Royal Navy had ... developed into an institution in which all authority was centralized in the commander, with subordinate officers almost reduced to automatons whose only task was to respond to the commands of their superiors.”³⁶

It is within this cultural context that Gordon re-examines the movements of the British Grand Fleet at Jutland, with particular emphasis on the mis-coordination between Battlecruiser Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty and his subordinate Rear-Admiral Hugh Evan-Thomas that contributed to the loss of two British battlecruisers and serious damage to two battleships. Trained as a signals officer and a disciple of the traditional centralized school, Evan-Thomas waited until formally signaled to reverse the course of his Fifth Battle Squadron and close with the remainder of Beatty's force. Gordon also faults Beatty for assuming that his subordinate would anticipate his movements and close with his vulnerable battlecruisers, which might have happened had Evan-Thomas been familiar with Beatty's preference for delegation and initiative.

In the final analysis, Gordon highlights British actions at Jutland to illustrate the point that organizational culture, or military culture as he terms it, can have a serious impact on operational performance, especially when conflicting tactical doctrines of command and control exist within the senior officer corps. “Military cultures impart doctrine by corporate ambience as much as by explicit teaching,” he concludes, adding that “the ‘ambience’ of a military culture consists of its ethos, its conceits and its traditions.”³⁷ Although Gordon confines his analysis to the linkage between

organizational culture and the development of Royal Navy tactical doctrine in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his study suggests the potential value of employing a cultural lens in examining other aspects of naval history, including the strategic and force structure choices under review in this study.

So why has the organizational perspective and the related concept of culture not been applied more frequently by naval historians?³⁸ There are three possible reasons. The first is a function of time and resources in a specialized discipline. The organizational approach, as Sumida's observation suggests, requires extensive archival research over a broad range of materials, including the financial, political, economic, and administrative aspects of naval policy.³⁹ The second can be attributed to the level of research skills and training required to sustain an organizational analysis. Jervis has encouraged naval historians to apply concepts and methodologies borrowed from the social sciences, but historians Sumida and Rosenberg imply that these lines of inquiry are better left to qualified researchers from those disciplines: "[t]here are few historians of naval affairs of any kind to start with, and fewer still who are likely to pursue the course of scholarship ... presented [by Jervis]."⁴⁰ Finally, many naval historians may decide that culture need not be added to the analytical toolbox employed to study policy formulation, and even those who do are faced with choosing among competing methodologies.

* * *

Social scientists have been as concerned with the sources of military behavior as have historians, but have generally been much more receptive to employing constructs such as organizational theory to explain them. These theories, however, are far from homogenous, as divergent schools of thought exist.⁴¹ For naval historians, the theoretical elements of the three major approaches—referred to here as “bureaucratic,” “professional,” and “cultural”—are less important than the assumptions that inform each. Each can be distinguished according to: (1) its conception of the military organization; (2) the role of civilians and military professionals in the policy formulation process; and (3) the factors perceived to shape organizational action (i.e. innovation, organizational learning, policy choices), the most important of which are typically regarded as external provocations, threat perceptions, civil-military relations, domestic political structures, and organizational culture. The addition of culture to this list

of variables in the 1990s reflected an evolving perspective of military organizations among political scientists, one coincident with the recognition by historians of navies as complex organizations with the potential to be subjected to organizational and cultural analysis.

Naval historians, particularly advocates of the policy-and-operations perspective, will find the bureaucratic approach the most familiar of these approaches. Simply put, it attributes the selection of military strategies and force structures to external factors, as manifested by actual or perceived threats to national security from foreign military developments or other systemic changes in the status quo among nations. The agents for choice in these circumstances, at least in liberal democracies, are civilian policymakers, who are, it is argued, frequently compelled to intervene in military preparations when professional responses are deemed parochial and insufficient. According to this analytical framework, such is often perceived to be the case when military professionals are left to decide on their own how to prepare and organize for conflict. By the same token, incentives to innovate within military organizations are, according to this analytical approach, virtually non-existent, as institutionalized conceptions of warfare are routinely applied in carefully orchestrated roles and combat missions. Military policy, in short, is thus seen as stemming from the interaction of three essential factors—external provocations, threat perceptions, and civilian intervention—that together contribute to the most widely accepted interpretation, in both political science and strategic studies, of how states generate military power and organize for war.

Political scientists will immediately recognize in this scenario the underlying tenets of neorealism, also known as structural realism.⁴² It is based largely upon the work of Barry Posen to explain strategic and doctrinal choices as systemic imperatives within bureaucratic organizations, militaries in particular. In *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984), Posen champions the explanatory value of this neorealist paradigm, at the core of which is a conception of bureaucracies that privileges institutional structure over the behavior of its constituents in shaping organizational outcomes.⁴³ With structure prioritized, the analytical framework acquires a predictive component: similarly-structured organizations will behave in similar ways, such as the usage of pre-established routines and standard scenarios to reduce levels of uncertainty, and with it the incentives for innovation. Posen employs the bureaucratic conception of organizations popularized by Graham Allison in *The Essence of Decision* (1971), which portrays military organizations as rigid, risk-averse, and predisposed to

organizational inertia. “Where the international environment cannot be negotiated,” Allison argues, “organizations deal with ... uncertainty by establishing a set of *standard scenarios* that constitute the contingencies for which they prepare.”⁴⁴ By accepting this conception of organizational inertia, Posen not surprisingly concludes that civilian intervention in strategic and doctrinal matters is essential. Moreover, the quest for organizational autonomy exacerbates civil–military relations to the point that military professionals are “unwilling to provide civilian authorities with information that relates to doctrinal questions, especially those having most to do with the actual conduct of operations.”⁴⁵

What actually causes civilians to intervene in military affairs? In answering this question Posen argues “soldiers are not better equipped than civilians to interpret the international political system and come to reasonable doctrinal conclusions,” thus requiring political intervention.⁴⁶ To emphasize his point, he surveys the origins of strategic and doctrinal choices in Britain, France, and Germany during the interwar period. He attributes British preparations for a defensive air war in the 1930s, for example, to civilian recognition of the necessity to equip the Royal Air Force (RAF) with sufficient fighter strength to oppose the German *Luftwaffe*. When the RAF resisted entreaties to bolster Fighter Command, at the perceived expense of Bomber Command, civilian intervention was required to compel it to adopt a defensive orientation: “[t]he heating up of the international system encouraged civilians to intervene in the operational preparations of the RAF and, against its will, press it in the direction of greater air defense efforts.”⁴⁷

Similarly, French statesmen sought to redress deficiencies in their own preparations for war, but were in the main preoccupied with finding coalition partners (i.e. Britain) to “balance” the perceived threats from Germany—strategic behavior anticipated by the neorealist school of thought. As a result, Posen maintains, French interwar doctrine evolved with civilian political support toward a strict defensive orientation, even though the exigencies of the situation demanded innovative military thinking beyond that offered by General Maurice Gamelin, Chief of Staff for National Defence from 1938 to 1940: “[t]he changes suggested by French military authorities such as De Gaulle had an excessively offensive appearance that would have undercut the broader purposes of French grand strategy.”⁴⁸

Finally, Posen concludes that the German *Wehrmacht*—as an organization—was of less importance than civilian recognition of possible wartime

contingencies in spurring development of innovative doctrinal concepts and armor formations. Civilian intervention was, according to him, therefore required to compel the *Wehrmacht* to embrace the blitzkrieg concept, especially as innovators such as Heinz Guderian and other proponents of high-speed, deep armored thrusts were stymied within the service. "That even the offensively inclined German Army," Posen concludes, "required a good kick from the outside to create such an offensive innovation provides still more support for the utility of organization theory in explaining certain tendencies within modern military organizations."⁴⁹

Posen's conclusions, it scarcely needs stating, are not universally accepted by historians and political scientists, but the neorealist approach and its underlying bureaucratic conception of organizations remains a common method of explaining military conduct in peacetime. Other political scientists have offered modifications to the bureaucratic scenario, for instance taking a less pessimistic view of military organizations. Emily Goldman argues that strategic adjustments, defined as alterations in service roles and missions, can originate within military organizations provided that such innovations are triggered by notions of urgency, desirability, and possibility.⁵⁰ External pressures arising from threats abroad and domestic political incentives provide, respectively, the urgency and desirability to encourage new roles and missions that hinge on the nature of possibility. "Organizations can adjust," she concludes, "provided the appropriate stimulants are present."⁵¹

An alternative approach, offered by Kimberly Zisk, provides a theoretical bridge between the bureaucratic and professional approaches to organizational analysis. On the one hand, she sides with Posen in her conception of military organizations, observing that "[they] will resist innovative ideas that threaten their budgetary resource share or corporate autonomy."⁵² In similar fashion, she views military innovation as a *reaction* to external factors, originating in shifts in rivals' doctrines or pressure from domestic political elites. Where Posen and Zisk disagree, however, is over the perceived influence of strategic ideas and the individual contributions of constituents within the organization, which Zisk maintains can rival institutional self-interest in shaping outcomes. In sum, the theories advocated by Goldman and Zisk, although they depart from the bureaucratic approach in some significant respects, unite in their mutual agreement that militaries are essentially reactive institutions which require some combination of external provocation, threat perception, and civilian intervention to act.

The professional approach, by contrast, explains military behavior through the interaction of external and internal inputs that occur *within* military organizations and *among* individual decision-makers, to shape strategic choices and other aspects of military policy. It conforms largely to a second school of organizational theory, which focuses less on structures than on processes: the internal operations of complex organizations, including how decision-makers perceive their external environment and render strategic decisions when confronted with circumstances that require changes in organizational response. Typical of this research paradigm is the view that a “complex organization is more like a modern weapons system than like old-fashioned fixed fortifications, more like a mobile than a static sculpture, more like a computer than an adding machine. In short, the organization [itself] is a dynamic system.”⁵³

The origins of the professional approach can be traced to Samuel Huntington, who characterized military organizations not in terms of perceived structural impediments to optimal strategies and force structures, but rather by the professional competence of military officers that constitute them. In his book, *The Soldier and the State* (1957), Huntington described militaries as “human organization[s] whose primary function is the application of violence,” which in turn is regulated in democratic societies by the conduct of civil–military relations in formulating military policy.⁵⁴

Viewed from this perspective, the agendas that military organizations follow in planning and preparing for war are determined largely by the actions of individuals or, more precisely, the relationship between civilian leaders and their military counterparts. A critical element of the Huntington thesis is the nature of civilian control which, contrary to the civil–military friction postulated by Posen, encourages and rewards appropriate professional attitudes and behavior among the members of the senior officer corps, thereby ensuring that operational strategies and force structures are compatible with the security needs of the country. The pattern of civil–military relations envisioned by Huntington, in short, regards civilian intervention in military affairs as the exception, not the rule, as professional military officers are quite capable of adapting to new roles and missions without prodding from their political masters.

An example of the professional approach is found in the work of Stephen Rosen. In his analysis of military innovation—*Winning the Next War* (1991)—Rosen argues that civilian intervention is unlikely to stimulate innovation without critical support from within the service from

senior officers who have already identified the necessity for change and are empowered to accomplish it. Civilian pressure for innovation without such internal support will fail, owing to the lack of understanding of the change demanded and organizational resistance. Rosen cites as evidence British war preparation in the 1930s, ironically, the same example offered by Posen to exemplify the necessity for civilian intervention. While agreeing with Posen that civilian intervention “altered the balance of resources in favor of fighter aircraft,” Rosen attributes the creation of the British air defense network to senior officers within the RAF such as Hugh Dowding who “laid a sound intellectual organizational foundation” for the rapid construction of fighter aircraft and the successful incorporation of radar technology.⁵⁵ Had doctrinal development not occurred within the RAF beforehand, supported by Hugh Trenchard, Geoffrey Salmon, and Dowding throughout the 1920s and 1930s, civilian intervention would have been fruitless. Similarly, Rosen attributes the development of carrier aviation within the US Navy in the same period to William Moffett and the approach he employed to press an innovative concept in a process that spanned over twenty years. “It was a strategy,” Rosen observes, “based on shaping the process of generational change in the officer corps, and as such, must have appeared maddeningly slow to the young officers advocating aviation, but it worked.”⁵⁶

In the end, Rosen concludes that there can be multiple patterns of military innovation, but common among them is the role of senior officers in determining when and how their organizations innovate.⁵⁷ Critical to his understanding of the process of innovation is the organization itself. Rosen views military institutions as “complex political communities,” each with its “own culture and distinct way of thinking about the way war should be conducted, not only by its own branch, but by the other branches and services with which it would have to interact in combat.”⁵⁸ Innovation in these circumstances first requires a strategic assessment of the security environment and then an “ideological struggle” in which new military concepts and technologies are debated by senior officers on behalf of their subordinate advocates. The outcome of such ideological struggles, which can sometimes last decades, determines whether or not senior officers can sustain innovation through the promotion of their supporters. “At the practical level,” Rosen maintains, innovation “depends on a senior officer or a group of senior officers who first attract officers with solid traditional credentials to the innovation and then make it possible for younger officers to rise to positions of command while pursuing the innovation.”⁵⁹

In sum, the professional approach emphasizes *process* over *structure* when attempting to identify the sources of military conduct within and across national boundaries. Similar to the organizational perspective to historical analysis, it treats militaries as complex organizations whose perceptions of the security environment are framed by professional military officers in senior-level positions. While external pressures are indeed important in strategic and force structure choices, the professional approach does not regard organizational outcomes as being shaped by external factors alone. What occurs instead can be described as the product of a confluence of external and internal factors (i.e. organizational culture, patterns in civil–military relations), which in turn influence the selection process to determine war fighting strategies, doctrine, and weapons systems that answer national security needs. As principal actors in the decision-making process, military leaders are qualified to decide for themselves how they should organize and prepare for war.⁶⁰ The interpretations offered by Huntington and Rosen, moreover, suggest that senior officers and their ideas often shape organizational outcomes, so much so that their actions have explanatory value when accounting for military behavior.

While the professional approach is premised on the assumption that each military organization has its unique culture, the cultural approach goes an analytical step further by assuming that shared habits of thought among military officers shape organizational choices and subsequent actions.⁶¹ This approach emerged in the 1990s as an alternative to neo-realist conceptions of military organizations and their behavior, as political scientists again borrowed concepts and ideas from organizational research, including the perspective that *culture*, not *structure*, drives organizational outcomes. “All [cultural approaches] take the realist edifice as a target,” writes Iain Johnston, “and focus on cases where structural material notions of interest cannot explain a particular strategic choice.”⁶²

Indeed, the explanatory power of the cultural approach is especially apparent when examining strategic, tactical, or technological innovations in peacetime that take place without civilian intervention, occurrences that cannot be encompassed by, indeed run counter to, neorealist explanations. Elizabeth Kier, for example, argues that “civilian intervention is unusual and can hinder the development of doctrine.”⁶³ She suggests instead that while civilian decisions are not unimportant, strategic developments largely reflect institutional preferences that in turn are informed by the organization’s culture, which can be defined broadly as a set of attitudes and beliefs commonly held within the senior officer corps. On this point,

Kier is supported by the observations of Ann Swidler, a prominent sociologist who argues that “[c]ulture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is orientated, but by shaping a repertoire or ‘tool kit’ of habits, styles and skills from which people construct ‘strategies of action.’”⁶⁴

In her book, *Imagining War* (1997), Kier challenges the conclusions reached by Posen with a cultural explanation of the strategic and doctrinal choices made by Britain and France during the interwar period. Of particular interest is the fundamental difference that characterizes the research methodologies used by the two scholars, as Posen builds his arguments almost entirely upon secondary sources whereas Kier combines primary and secondary research to reach her conclusions. Indeed, applying the cultural approach requires archive-based research. “Determining the culture of a military organization,” she cautions, “requires an extensive reading of archival, historical, and other public documents, including curricula at military academies, training manuals, personal histories of officers, internal communications in the armed services, and leading military journals.”⁶⁵ Jeffrey Legro echoes Kier, contending that a military organization’s culture can only be revealed “by reviewing available internal correspondence, planning documents, regulations, exercises and the memoirs of individual members. These multiple sources provide a composite picture of the hierarchy of legitimate beliefs within an organization.”⁶⁶ What is required by the cultural approach, in sum, is a broader range of evidence, along with interpretative skills which should be equally familiar to both historians and political scientists.

In her study, for example, Kier found that the shift from an offensive to a defensive orientation in France during the 1920s did not result from civilian leaders’ desire to appear less bellicose in order to attract British support, as suggested by Posen. Her interpretation of these events suggests the opposite: that “external balancing” was not the driving force of French security policy: “France seemed unconcerned about potential reactions to an offensive strategy.” Moreover, “in the late 1930s, British policymakers were alarmed that the French did not have an offensive doctrine”⁶⁷ Instead, Kier argues that the French Army gradually adopted a defensive orientation at the behest of the senior officer corps following the introduction of short-term conscription in 1923. Simply put, French military officers could not conceive of implementing an offensive doctrine with short-service conscripts; they switched to a defensive orientation out of perceived necessity.⁶⁸ While parliamentary action to reduce the term

of conscription was indeed significant, French policymakers deferred to senior military officers in formulating a strategy to fight Germany. That these officers chose to conduct a static defense was a reflection of the organizational culture that prevailed within the French Army. “Thus, despite adequate funding, knowledge of offensive alternatives, and freedom from civilian interference,” Kier concludes, “the French army did not integrate offensive concepts into its doctrine, and instead, after the reduction in the term of service to one year in 1928, became increasingly committed to a defensive doctrine. Its organizational culture would not allow otherwise.”⁶⁹

Kier also maintains that other military organizations’ cultures have intervened in upper-level policy debates and shaped strategic decisions. These cultures draw strength from responsibilities and assimilation processes that are unparalleled in conventional, civilian forms of societal organization. Indeed, the instruction at service academies and other intellectual activities at institutions such as the US NWC and the Royal Naval College (RNC), Greenwich, provides an effective transmission mechanism through which to instill within the senior officer corps a firmly rooted cultural framework to guide organizational practices and conceptions of mission—i.e. the traditions, professional ethos, and historical experiences made available to successive cohorts for use in formulating future strategy, tactics, and overall policy.⁷⁰

Yet, at the same time, a transition in organizational culture can occur within the senior officer corps, a process analogous to the phenomenon of “generational change” suggested by Rosen and seconded by Kier: “[o]rganizational culture is not the sum of the values and beliefs of a few individual members. Replacing a few leading officers is unlikely to give rise to a new organizational culture.”⁷¹ What is required is a commitment to change, instigated by an individual or group of senior officers capable of overcoming the resistance that they are likely to encounter from within the organization. “Although it may be more difficult for leading officers to overcome the initial hurdle of recognizing that a change in the organization’s culture is necessary,” concludes Kier, “once this barrier has been crossed it should be easier to impose a change in the military’s culture.”⁷²

That cultural analyses of this sort have thus far been few and far between within the historical literature should not come as a surprise to political scientists, as the approach remains subject to criticism. Most of the latter leveled at it by social scientists has more to do with its perceived theoretical shortcomings than its explanatory value where a thorough understanding

of strategic choices is more important than assessing “generalized” and “predictable” events within existing theoretical frameworks.⁷³

As Michael Desch, one of the more vocal critics of the cultural approach within political science, argues, cultural explanations of military behavior are inherently flawed precisely because of their theoretical limitations, namely their absence of predictive elements: “[p]rediction ... is central to the social scientific enterprise not only for theoretical reasons (we need theories to make predictions in order to test the theories), but also for policy analysis (theories that do not make clear predictions are of little use to policymakers).”⁷⁴ In the same breath, however, Desch admits that the cultural approach can be a powerful explanatory tool when directed toward circumstances that cannot be explained via the lenses conventionally employed by political scientists. Cultural analyses can supplement existing theories of strategic behavior, especially in cases where the structure of the international system cannot account for organizational outcomes. “In such an indeterminate threat environment,” observes Desch, “it is necessary to look to other variables to explain various types of strategic behavior. Culture and other domestic variables may take on greater independent explanatory power in these cases.”⁷⁵ Echoing Desch in this regard is Jeffery Lantis, who voices skepticism toward the cultural approach but praises studies that assess organizational culture and its shaping influences on strategic choice:

One of the more promising contributions of strategic culture to the security studies literature has been to spur on examinations of military organizational culture The organizational culture literature characterizes strategic choice as a function of specific institutional orientations, or prevailing cultures, within the military. Indeed, the organizational culture literature is impressively well developed.⁷⁶

Thus, despite some reservations by political scientists, the cultural approach provides naval historians with an analytical instrument borrowed from the social sciences to assess policy formulation from an organizational perspective. It is especially useful when assessing navies as complex organizations for its focus upon the *ideas and actions of naval officers* as motivational factors behind key policy decisions, such as those of 1889. Doing so significantly revises much of what has been written about them in the core naval histories, in particular *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, despite its age the standard account of the Naval Defence Act. Confined

to the policy-and-operations approach to analysis, Arthur Marder focused exclusively upon external factors that appear incongruent with the overall peace of the 1880s, which he in turn attributed to British fears of a Franco-Russian naval combination. Similar criticism can be leveled at accounts of American naval policy centering on Alfred Mahan's role in its transformation, which also adopt an oversimplified image of naval policy formulation and understate the ideas and actions of other officers in shaping the course of American naval policy during the same period.

If the decisions of 1889 ultimately revolved around strategic ideas—and the actions of naval officers in support of them—it is incumbent to trace them from theory to practice in the policy sphere. As will be seen in the chapters that follow, this progression can be seen in the manner in which strategic ideas were *inspired* by examples drawn from naval history and were later *institutionalized* and *implemented* through the lobbying efforts of naval officers. These three phases characterize how strategic ideas became firmly embedded in the professional thinking that led to the decisions of 1889, under the auspices of service patrons who championed them despite institutional, administrative, and political opposition. Also critical to understanding how strategic ideas progressed through these phases is an appreciation of the leading personalities, institutions, and events that furnished naval officers with their intellectual *weltanschauung* as to the roles and missions of the service. Evidence of these linkages are in both cases found in departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, and personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of senior naval officers.

NOTES

1. Recent examples include Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade 1885–1914*; Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); and Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (Milton Park, Oxford: Routledge, 2006).
2. For a summary of the debates, see Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, “Towards an Explicative Understanding of Strategic Culture,” *Contemporary Security Policy* vol. 28, no. 2 (August 2007), pp. 286–90. See also Christopher P. Twomey, “Lacunae in the Study of Culture in International Security,” *Contemporary Security Policy* vol. 29, no. 2 (August 2008), pp. 338–57.

3. On these topics see as examples, George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 29, no. 5 (2006); and Janine Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace: How Americans Learned to Fight Modern War* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010).
4. Theo Farrell, "Culture and Military Power," *Review of International Studies* vol. 24, no. 3 (1998), p. 408. Professor Farrell is the Head of the War Studies Department at King's College London and the author or co-author of a number of books and journal articles on strategic and organizational culture.
5. Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security* vol. 6, no. 2 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 21–47. See also Theo Farrell, "Strategic Culture and American Empire," *SAIS Review* vol. 25, no. 2 (2005), p. 3.
6. Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning and Terry Terriff, *Transforming Military Power Since the End of the Cold War: Britain, France and the United States, 1991–2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 8–13.
7. Farrell, "Culture and Military Power," p. 416.
8. See Harvey Sicherman, "The Future of American Military Culture," *Orbis* vol. 37 (Winter 1999), pp. 9–10; Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *ibid.*, pp. 11–26; Williamson Murray, "Does Military Culture Matter?," *ibid.*, pp. 27–42; and John Hillen, "Must US Military Culture Reform?," *ibid.*, pp. 43–57.
9. Murray, "Does Military Culture Matter?," p. 27.
10. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet (eds.), *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
11. Murray, "Does Military Culture Matter?," p. 35.
12. For the period covered by this work, see C. I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-making 1805–1927* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2012); Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2009); Stephen Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade 1885–1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013); and Matthew S. Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901–1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War Against Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2012)
13. For a recent overview on the state of the field, see the roundtable published in *Historically Speaking*, vol. 11, no. 4 (September 2010): Andrew Lambert, "Naval History, Division or Dialogue" (pp. 9–11); John Beeler, "The State of Naval History" (pp. 12–14); Barry Strauss, "Response to Andrew Lambert"

- (pp. 15–16); John Hattendorf, “The State of American Naval History in 2010” (pp. 16–18); and Andrew Lambert, “Reflections” (p. 19).
14. These discussions are published in John Hattendorf (ed.), *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1995); idem. (ed.), *Ubi Sumus?: The State of Naval and Maritime History* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1994); and John Hattendorf and James Goldrick (eds.), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1993).
 15. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, “Technology, Culture and the Modern Battleship,” *Naval War College Review* vol. 45 (Autumn 1992), p. 87. Emphasis added.
 16. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889–1914* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
 17. The research of the Arthur Marder constituted the conventional wisdom on the subject before the publication of Sumida’s volume. See Marder, *Fear God and Dreadnought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952–59) 3 vols.; and idem., *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904–1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961–70). 5 vols.
 18. Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, p. xviii. Several of Sumida’s findings have been challenged in recent years. See John Brooks, *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland: The Question of Fire Control* (London: Routledge, Cass Series, Naval Policy and History, 2005); Matthew Seligmann, “Britain’s Great Security Mirage: The Royal Navy and the Franco-Russian Naval Threat, 1898–1906,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35 (2012), pp. 861–86; idem., “Review of Jon Tetsuro Sumida’s *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889–1914*,” *Northern Mariner*, 24 (2014), pp. 205–06; idem., “Naval History by Conspiracy Theory: The British Admiralty before the First World War and the Methodology of Revisionism,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38 (2015). pp. 966–84.
 19. Roskill’s major works include *The War at Sea, 1939–1945* (3 vols., London: HMSO, 1954–61); *The Navy at War, 1939–1945* (London: HMSO, 1960); *The Strategy of Sea Power* (London: Collins, 1962); *Naval Policy Between the Wars* (2 vols., London: Collins, 1968); *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (3 vols., London: Collins, 1970–74).
 20. Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina University Press, 1999). Marder, it should be noted, was barred access to much of the Admiralty’s archives when doing his research for *The Anatomy of British Sea Power* in the 1930s. That lacuna can therefore be attributed to British secretiveness rather than to want of methodological rigor.

21. Ibid.
22. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, p. 7.
23. Editor's note: he did not.
24. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 5.
25. Ibid., p. 4.
26. Again, see the roundtable published in *Historically Speaking*, vol. 11, no. 4 (September 2010).
27. Hattendorf, *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, p. 2.
28. James Goldrick, "The Problems of Modern Naval History," *ibid.*, p. 22. A distinguished naval officer as well as an accomplished historian, Goldrick combines historical analysis with firsthand experience of modern naval administration, a useful combination that adds credence to his observations.
29. Jon Tetsuro Sumida and David Alan Rosenberg, "Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money: The Study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History," in *ibid.*, p. 31. For similar arguments, see Jon Tetsuro Sumida, "Sir John Fisher and the *Dreadnought*: The Sources of Naval Mythology," *The Journal of Military History* vol. 59, no. 4 (October 1995); and David Alan Rosenberg, "Process: The Realities of Formulating Modern Naval Strategy," in Goldrick and Hattendorf, *Mahan is Not Enough*.
30. Sumida and Rosenberg, "Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money," p. 34.
31. Jervis is a prominent political scientist at Columbia University and pioneer in the field of political psychology, the study of the cognitive mechanisms that shape decision-making, and their collective relevance to foreign policy behavior and international politics. See Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). See also Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), and Randall L. Schweller, "Jervis's Realism," in James W. Davis (ed.), *Psychology, Strategy and Conflict: Perceptions of Insecurity in International Relations* (Milton Park, Oxford: Routledge, 2013).
32. Robert Jervis, "Navies, Politics, and Political Science," in Hattendorf, *Doing Naval History: Essays Toward Improvement*, p. 41.
33. Ibid.
34. Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996).
35. The victim, along with 392 others, of his own navigational error.
36. David Syrett, "Roundtable: Notes on Andrew Gordon: 'The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command'," *International Journal of Maritime History* vol. 9 (December 1997), p. 183.

37. Gordon, *Rules of the Game*, p. 580.
38. Gordon himself is the first to admit that the cultural context of his analysis is informed not by innovative trends in naval historiography, but also by his personal knowledge of service culture as an officer in the Royal Naval Reserve. Conversation with Andrew Gordon, September 24, 1999. See also Andrew Gordon, "The Rules of the Game Revisited," *International Journal of Maritime History* vol. 9 (December 1997), p. 189.
39. Many of the studies cited here, as well as this volume, began as doctoral research and were continued beyond the dissertation. Those of Sumida, Lambert, and Beeler, for example, all originated in postgraduate research.
40. Sumida and Rosenberg, "Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money," p. 39.
41. A useful summary of these schools of thought can be found in Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace*, pp. 9–26.
42. Neorealism is a political science research paradigm that attributes state behavior to the international system, more precisely the competition that (it is presumed) inherently develops between states with different levels of military capability. As such, neorealist interpretations of military behavior generally do not consider factors at the organizational or state levels of analysis. As Emily Goldman and Richard Andres observe: "For neorealism, the competitive logic governing the international system creates a powerful incentive for states to adopt new military methods and to emulate the military practices of the most successful states in the system." Emily O. Goldman and Richard B. Andres, "Systemic Effects of Military Innovation and Diffusion," *Security Studies* vol. 8 (Summer 1999), p. 82.
43. Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). Posen adopted this conception from theorists who champion a "natural systems" model of organizational behavior. For more on this subject, see Theo Farrell, "Figuring Out Fighting Organisations: The New Organisational Analysis in Strategic Studies," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 19, no. 1 (March 1996), pp. 124–25; and Richard W. Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems* (3rd ed., Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1992), pp. 51–75.
44. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), p. 84. Emphasis in original.
45. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 53.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 178. The analogy to Arthur Marder's account of the circumstances surrounding the Naval Defence Act should be apparent, suggesting the similarities between Posen's approach and the "policy and operations" framework popular with many naval historians.

48. Ibid., p. 139
49. Ibid., p. 226.
50. Emily O. Goldman, "Mission Possible: Organizational Learning in Peacetime," in Peter Trubowitz, Emily O. Goldman and Edward Rhodes (eds.), *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions, and Interests* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). See also Emily O. Goldman, "The US Military in Uncertain Times: Organizations, Ambiguity, and Strategic Adjustment," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 20, no. 2 (June 1997), pp. 41–74.
51. Goldman, "Mission Possible," p. 251.
52. Kimberly Martin Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 14.
53. Harold J. Leavitt, William R. Dill, and Henry B. Eyring, *The Organizational World* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), p. 4, cited in Richard W. Scott, *Organizations Rational, Natural and Open Systems* (3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 93. On the relevance of this strain of organization theory in strategic studies, see Emily O. Goldman, "Thinking About Strategy Absent the Enemy," *Security Studies* vol. 4 (Autumn 1994), pp. 40–95.
54. Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 11.
55. Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 14 and 18.
56. Ibid., p. 80.
57. This point is also made in Murray and Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, pp. 301–28.
58. Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, p. 21. See also Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1989), pp. 3–41.
59. Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, p. 96.
60. Readers should not infer that military leaders are infallible and render optimal decisions on all occasions. History is replete with examples of military organizations that failed to develop war plans that reflected strategic and operational realities.
61. That the professional and cultural approaches are closely aligned is underscored by the fact that Huntington was and Rosen is an advocate of cultural explanations in strategic studies. See Stephen P. Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and idem., "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security* vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 5–31.

62. Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security* vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995), p. 41. It should also be noted that the cultural approach emerged in the 1990s in parallel with a largely complementary "constructivist" school of thought in international relations studies. Both are ideational approaches to explaining international security behavior. On the relationship of these approaches, see Theo Farrell, "Constructivist Security Studies: Portraits of a Research Program," *International Studies Review* vol. 4, no. 1 (2002), pp. 49–72.
63. Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 12. See also idem., "Culture and French Military Doctrine Before World War II," in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 187–215; and idem., "Culture and Military Doctrine," *International Security* vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 65–93.
64. Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* vol. 51, no. 2 (June 1986), p. 273.
65. Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars," p. 70.
66. Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 30.
67. Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 51.
68. This conclusion is echoed by Eugenia Keisling in *Arming Against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996).
69. Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 73.
70. This point is also made in Murray, "Does Military Culture Matter?," pp. 27–42.
71. Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 152.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
73. See Twomey, "Lacunae in the Study of Culture in International Security," p. 338 and pp. 344–53. While generally critical of strategic culture as a flawed concept, Twomey is more supportive of organizational culture: "[Literatures] stressing the importance of an organizationally derived military culture are eminently persuasive."
74. Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* vol. 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998) p. 153. Predictive power in theory generation is the sine qua non in traditional international relations literature. For more on this subject, see J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1961), especially pp. 76–81. Equally illustrative is the discussion of comparative approaches (objective, subjective, and discursive) to security studies in found in Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution*

of *International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 32–39. Of course, criticism of this sort means little to historians, most of whom eschew any predictive component in their scholarship and look askance at any discipline or approach that claims such power.

75. Desch, “Culture Clash,” p. 169.

76. Jeffrey S. Lantis, “Strategic Culture and Tailored Deterrence: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 30, no. 3 (December 2009), p. 475.

PART II

The Struggle for Control of British
Naval Policy, 1870–1889

The Royal Navy and the 1889 Naval Defence Act: History and Historiography

For more than seventy years, the study of British naval policy in the 1880s has been conducted within an interpretive paradigm established by Arthur Marder, whose privileged access to Admiralty archives in the 1930s led to findings published in *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (hereafter referred to as *Anatomy*).¹ In that volume Marder portrayed the Naval Defence Act, which formalized the Two-Power Standard for calculating the minimum requisite level of battlefleet strength and authorized the construction of seventy warships, as a justifiable reaction to widespread fears of a possible Franco-Russian naval combination and his account continues to inform most historical scholarship on the subject.

To subject *Anatomy* to any form of “pressure test” first requires a brief appreciation of the author, the influences that shaped his outlook, and the circumstances that led to the publication of *Anatomy* in July 1940. The volume was a revision of Marder’s Harvard University doctoral dissertation, “English Navalism in the Nineties.”² His Harvard mentor and dissertation director was William L. Langer, who during the 1920s and 1930s was emerging as a leading authority in the field of European diplomatic history. Langer was to have a profound influence on Marder’s scholarship as well as his career both inside and outside academia, instilling in the younger man a voracious appetite for research. Langer’s views on the sources and conduct of interstate behavior in the pre-World War I era were also absorbed by Marder. Langer’s *Alliances and Alignments* (1931) and

Diplomacy of Imperialism (1935) were published just prior to Marder's dissertation research.³ In the latter, Langer characterized the period as a series of repeated threats to British global supremacy, manifested in the military and diplomatic challenges posed by France, Russia, and Germany, and this interpretation informs *Anatomy*.

Langer's strong influence on Marder was acknowledged by the latter himself. As revealed in Barry Gough's excellent dual biography of Marder and Stephen Roskill, Marder viewed himself as a disciple of Langer and in 1969 even credited him for his career: "I would like again to acknowledge my profound indebtedness to you for steering me into the then virginal field of naval history ... where I have been happy all these years."⁴ Marder dedicated *Anatomy* to Langer (along with his other Harvard "godfathers," Donald McKay and Michael Karpovich), and his devotion was reciprocated by Langer.⁵ With few exceptions, however, Langer's influence upon Marder has been overlooked by most naval historians, yet, as will be seen, it is critical to understanding how the latter approached the research and writing of *Anatomy*, and framed the narrative contained therein.⁶

At the time of its publication *Anatomy* was received with great acclaim and enthusiasm: the volume was published as Britain was enduring German bombardment and facing the threat of invasion. But while the portions of it dealing with the early twentieth century have been subjected to sustained criticism for the past quarter-century, Marder's account of the 1880s has received little attention since the volume was last reprinted in 1964. To some degree, then, *Anatomy* and the events that spurred the promulgation of the Naval Defence Act of 1889 have been relegated to the backwaters of British naval history. Marder's account has been accepted as conventional wisdom, underpinned by preferential access to rich archival materials (and the resulting imprimatur of authenticity stemming from it) and the great power rivalry narrative advanced by leading historians such as Langer and later A. J. P. Taylor. Taylor, not surprisingly, was another admirer of Marder's scholarship.⁷

Marder's account rests on three fundamental premises:

- British naval supremacy was in serious jeopardy in the late 1880s, due mainly to naval expansion and modernization in France and Russia, and the prospect that these two countries would form a combination capable of challenging the Royal Navy. According to him, the Franco-Russian threat to Britain was credible, and the latter was

falling behind its potential adversaries in such crucial areas as *material*, armament, and rate of construction.⁸

- Not only would a Franco-Russian naval combination be a serious challenge to British naval supremacy, but the threat was recognized more readily outside of the Admiralty than by the Board itself. This contention is critical to Marder's account, as perceived threats from external sources drove the British reaction eventually manifested in the Naval Defence Act. Marder refers to these apparent threats and the reactions of British journalists and civilian policymakers as "the navy scare of 1888."⁹
- The strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act were made at the behest of the Salisbury ministry, not by the Admiralty. According to Marder, Salisbury was compelled to intervene in the strategic calculus when a reluctant Board, unwilling to concede the disparity in naval strength *vis-à-vis* France and Russia, remained adamant that it possessed sufficient numbers of battleships and cruisers to fulfill the duties of the service in the event of war.¹⁰

Marder's interpretation therefore depicts the Naval Defence Act in terms of real—or at least apparently genuine—external threats, the British recognition thereof, and civilian intervention, typical of how the policy-and-operations perspective of policy formulation is employed to explain the behavior and strategic and force structure choices of navies in peacetime.¹¹

Given its centrality to the course of British naval policy and his account of it in the pre-dreadnought era, Marder's treatment of the circumstances leading up to the Naval Defence Act is curiously diffuse and cursory. A chapter in his study bears the title "The Naval Defence Act of 1889," but of its twenty-four pages, less than seven actually address the navy scare of 1888 or its outcome. Almost as many are devoted to the "Truth about the Navy" alarm of 1884, masterminded by muckraking journalist William T. Stead, despite its irrelevance to the topic, and among other tangents are several pages on torpedoes and British battleship and gun designs.¹² Interspersed among these digressions are a handful of critical assertions. Marder notes at one point that the British laid down no new battleships in 1887–8, and that "[c]oinciding as the slackening tempo of British building did with the renewal of French ... activity (in 1887 and 1888 their shipbuilding vote averaged £2,180,000 as contrasted with the

£1,300,000 average of 1885 and 1886) and the threatening international situation, the navy panic of 1888 was *inevitable*.¹³ As for that threatening international situation, Marder fails to devote even an entire paragraph to it, claiming baldly that Admiralty plans for a war with France alone were outdated: “a Franco-Russian combination was the emergency against which preparation had to be made. The agitation in France for a Russian alliance assumed menacing proportions in 1888, and the Russians were beginning to tap the Paris loan market.”¹⁴

More curious still, no source is provided for either of those assertions, which appear to have come not from his own research but, un-cited, from Langer’s *European Alliances and Alignments*.¹⁵ And a careful reading of the latter tends to undercut the notion of a serious Franco-Russian threat, or even the perception thereof, to Britain in the late 1880s. First, Russia’s tapping of the French loan market, as Langer makes clear, owed almost everything to German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s increasing reluctance to furnish Russia with German loans, and almost nothing to Russia’s desire to cozy up to France, although some French politicians were certainly eager to take advantage of the situation.¹⁶

Moreover, French agitation for a Russian alliance emerged with the growth of “Boulangism”, which meant that any such pact would have been directed toward Germany rather than Britain (as was the Franco-Russian Entente that actually appeared in 1894).¹⁷ Langer notes that General Boulanger’s political ally Paul Deroulède toured Europe in the summer of 1886,

concentrating his attention upon Russia. The object of the tour was to prepare European opinion ‘for the probable and early rise of a popular chief, destined to regain for France her due rank and rights.’ In practice it came to a vigorous agitation on behalf of a Franco-Russian alliance against *Germany*.¹⁸

Langer also notes the desire of many French political leaders besides Boulanger to obtain a Russian alliance, and French efforts to cultivate Russian friendship in 1887, yet also details the demise of those efforts in February 1887: “[w]hatever information the [French] government may have had [regarding the Triple Alliance], it certainly served to dampen its ardor for an agreement with Russia. [Emile] Flourens [French Foreign Minister] became rather uncomfortable about the violence of the Pan-Slav affection for France and especially for Boulanger.”¹⁹

Nor were the Russians interested:

[t]he Tsar's dislike of parliamentary democracy and the instability that seemed to be inseparable from it was notorious. The uncertainty of French politics in 1888 was bound to reduce Russian interest in the connexion between the two countries. Furthermore, Flourens, one of the ablest foreign ministers France had had for some time and one of the foremost advocates of the understanding with Russia, left office when the Tirard cabinet fell, in March 1888²⁰

True, neither the French nor the Russian government's cold feet had any bearing on public opinion in the former country, and Langer observes that there was no "cooling of popular enthusiasm" during 1888: "[o]n the contrary, the agitation for such an alliance assumed ever greater proportions as the Boulangist movement spread. But the government had got wind of various international agreements which made it realize how complete was France's isolation and the danger of an adventurous policy."²¹

In a well-informed, influential series of articles on "The Present Position of European Politics" in the *Fortnightly Review* in early 1888, ardent imperialist Charles Dilke claimed that Russia offered a formal alliance to France in late 1887, but that the latter country turned it down "with thanks," knowing that such an alliance "would practically have led to war," war between Germany (and perhaps Austria) on the one hand, and France and Russia on the other:

Prince Bismarck knows well enough that there is no alliance between these powers, but it still suits France to show Russia in the background, as it suits Russia to show France, and while German writers point out that Russia would, if she could, only make use of France for her own ends, still the existence of two military powers upon the flanks of Germany cannot for one moment be out of the mind of the German [General] Staff.²²

An even better informed source than Dilke on the prospect of a Franco-Russian alliance was the British embassy in Paris, where, on March 16, 1888, chargé d'affaires Edwin Egerton forwarded to Lord Salisbury an article from the Paris newspaper *Matin* that, as Egerton glossed in his accompanying letter, pointed "to the reaction which has, I believe, taken place in public opinion against the idea of a Franco-Russian alliance."²³ Furthermore, Egerton claimed, "notwithstanding the violence in which the French press indulges against neighboring countries ... peace ... is the

desire of all classes of Frenchmen.” Two months later, Ambassador Lord Lytton, adverting to the existing tensions between Italy and France, stated to Lord Salisbury:

At no time since I have been in official relations with the Government of this country have I been able to detect in its language or conduct the faintest indication of a disposition to incur the risk of war with Italy or any other European Power. I am persuaded, on the contrary, that the possibility of war in any part of Europe is viewed with the greatest alarm by the French Government, and that no Ministry representing the present Republican régime is likely to be under the temptation to adopt a war policy. The fear of a triumph of Caesarism in the person of General Boulanger, and the desire to avert it, so far from creating any such temptation, have had the effect of strongly accentuating the peace programme of the Republic.²⁴

In sum, the chronology simply does not support Marder’s contention of a credible Franco-Russian threat: by the time the agitation that resulted in the Naval Defence Act was gaining traction in the British press, any prospect of a Franco-Russian alliance, remote to begin with, had been dashed and, what is more, the British government was fully alive to that fact. Informed insiders were under no illusions: the possibility of such an alliance was virtually non-existent as of 1888–9, and even had one materialized, its target would obviously have been Germany rather than Britain. British public opinion may have been stirred up by alarmists, but there is scant evidence of widespread domestic anxiety over the prospect of a Franco-Russian alliance, even in the debates surrounding the Navy and Army Estimates in 1888, or in those prior to passage of the Naval Defence Act the following year. Indeed, the best the government could offer on that score was Chancellor of the Exchequer George J. Goschen’s prevarication when trying to explain why it had changed tack so abruptly in 1888, from confidence in the existing fleet to a demand for seventy new vessels:

We were asked, as a Cabinet, to consider the matter, and the result is the proposal we submit. I admit that many of us, myself included, have been mainly influenced in the view that this expenditure ought to be undertaken by our opinions upon the position of foreign affairs. Hon. Members ask what changes there have taken place, but I trust ... [they] will not press us too much on the diplomatic side of the question. We do say that the general foreign situation, without being acute, is such that we should be blind to our duties if we did not take immediate measures to put ourselves in a proper state of defence.²⁵

Marder also devotes but a single paragraph to the origins of the 1888 navy scare, which he states began in late January, when the London *Standard* claimed that “[e]verything is being done to place a squadron of ironclads and all available cruisers in readiness to sail” from Toulon: “[t]he dockyard hands are working extra time.”²⁶ Instead of detailing the scare’s spread, however, Marder documents the receipt of conflicting accounts over the next six weeks as to whether or not the French *were* making “extraordinary preparations,” his object being to demonstrate the alleged inadequacy of the British government’s information-gathering and “the blue funk in which the Admiralty worked in these years.”²⁷ It seems clear, however, that Marder either never saw the Admiralty’s NID reports, or else discounted them in order to maintain his view of the Board’s “blue funk.”

French–Italian relations had been strained since the previous year over a tariff dispute and Italian negotiations for a military convention with Germany, and a war scare between the two countries did erupt in February 1888. Contra Marder’s account, however, the British government was fully aware of the situation and French Ambassador to London William Waddington assured Lord Salisbury that French military and naval preparations were defensive: the French feared a combined German–Italian attack.²⁸ The Admiralty’s response, therefore, should be understood in this context.

Upon reading the *Standard*’s report, DNI William Hall immediately requested the Foreign Office to secure further information on the subject.²⁹ The Admiralty was furnished with three reports, one from the British military attaché who stated that nothing unusual was going on in Toulon.³⁰ This report was contradicted by an excited Italian chargé d’affaires, who claimed that the French were mobilizing a sizeable naval force in the Mediterranean and a similar statement was relayed to the Foreign Office by the German Ambassador.³¹ Sensible to the political and foreign policy aims of both Germany and Italy, First Naval Lord Arthur Hood discounted the last two reports. He surmised correctly that Germany’s warnings about France were an attempt to push Britain closer to Germany, while Italy was angling for a defensive naval alliance with Britain to deter French aspirations in the Mediterranean.³² He therefore opposed any British reaction that the French might regard as provocative. “I think it would be advisable,” he cautioned, “unless there are really reliable grounds for believing the preparations at Toulon have any other motive than the usual preparations for commissioning vessels in the summer, not to create feelings of distrust or tension in the French Government, by otherwise strengthening the squadron in the Mediterranean.”³³ First Lord of the Admiralty Lord

George Hamilton concurred with Hood, observing confidently that there was no evidence to suggest that the French Navy could conduct offensive operations with any reasonable likelihood of success. He also stressed that

the French have a building programme far in excess of their financial supplies, and unless extraordinary credits to a large extent are voted, each successive year they will find themselves in greater difficulties, for they either continue finishing ironclads laid down 10 years back, or put off work on the fast cruisers already laid down.³⁴

Thus, so far from demonstrating its blue funk, the Admiralty's reaction—expressed by both the civilian First Lord and professional First Naval Lord—reflected its well-informed perception of France's limited naval capabilities. These were not the utterances of men filled with anxiety over the ambitions of a rival, much less confessions of ignorance about what that rival was doing. France was unable to pose a viable threat to the Royal Navy, either in 1888 or in the foreseeable future, and both Hood and Hamilton were alive to that fact.³⁵

Finally, Marder scarcely mentions the extraordinary public relations campaign waged by several naval officers and their allies in the press during the first half of 1888, aimed at pressuring the government to sanction a large increase in the navy's size. He briefly alludes to an important London Chamber of Commerce meeting in late May, which "passed resolutions urging large naval increases," but fails entirely to address the even more significant City National Defence Meeting which took place the following week.³⁶ He spends the better part of a page describing Captain Lord Charles Beresford's personality and his resignation from the Admiralty in 1887, but fails to examine his role in the agitation of 1888. And when he mentions the appointment of a House Select Committee to examine the Navy Estimates, and by extension the state of the navy itself, he fails to make clear that its appointment in March owed everything to the agitation that Beresford and his allies were carrying out in both public and Parliament, preferring instead to take another pot shot at the Admiralty's "smug and contented attitude" as manifested in the testimony of Hamilton, Hood, and Second Naval Lord Anthony Hoskins to the Committee.³⁷

That the Admiralty's confidence might actually have been warranted evidently never crossed his mind. Instead, he appears to have accepted the navalists' cries of "wolf" without skepticism, while at the same time

failing to appreciate, or at the very least acknowledge, their centrality to the Naval Defence Act's genesis and passage. Thus, when he states at the chapter's conclusion that "[a]lthough the government had been reluctant to admit any deficiency ... it had to reverse its attitude, and ... trim its sails to meet the breeze," he furnishes no clear sense of *why* it was forced to do so, nor why Prime Minister Lord Salisbury "sadly admitted at the Guildhall in November" that he "found himself compelled to enter England into the naval armaments race."³⁸ If it was a source of sadness to him, then why did he do so? Marder's account fails to answer that question at all, much less satisfactorily, perhaps because of his conviction that the navy's parlous state, owing to the "smug and complacent" attitude of its administrators, made the panic of 1888 "inevitable," and Salisbury's change of course equally so.

* * *

In the more than seven decades since Marder's study appeared, others have chipped away at elements of his interpretation without contesting its core assumptions: the existence of a serious Franco-Russian threat, or at least valid reasons for perceiving such a threat, and the need for outside pressure to force the Admiralty to act. Interestingly, the most acute critique was written three years *before* Marder's work appeared. Theodore Ropp's 1937 dissertation on French naval modernization, 1871–1914 concludes that British "fears were largely illusory—even though France and Russia ... signed an alliance in 1892, they did not enter into naval conversations until 1900, and the French naval command not only never considered the possibility of a union between the two fleets but was unanimously opposed to it."³⁹ More to the point, 1892 was three years after the Naval Defence Act was passed, and four after the agitation that led to it commenced. Again, the chronological record simply does not conform to Marder's account.

Paul M. Kennedy also faults the British for blowing the paltry threat out of proportion, observing that "it seems in retrospect that they probably overestimated the danger from this direction, forgetting the weaknesses of their rivals and seeing only those in their own fleet."⁴⁰ What appears to be a departure from Marder's interpretation, however, is in actuality a tacit acknowledgment that the threat posed by a Franco-Russian naval combination, or more precisely, the misperception of the threat, was the driving factor behind the passage of the Act. In the end,

however, Kennedy echoes Marder and invokes a causal linkage between the perceived threat and the actions taken by the Salisbury government: “The prospect of a Franco-Russian naval alliance, which would pincer the under-strength Mediterranean Fleet and cut that vital line of communication in time of war, was too grim to be dismissed with soothing phrases and half-measures.”

More recently, Shawn Grimes and Roger Parkinson have both challenged significant aspects of Marder’s account. Grimes makes clear in *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* that from the evidence furnished by annual fleet maneuvers, NID war plans, and ship procurement policy, the Admiralty had much better developed plans for war than Marder or other traditionalists of the blue funk school have been willing to credit, but he does not venture an opinion on whether the Naval Defence Act constituted a suitable response to a genuine threat.⁴¹

The most explicit challenge to Marder’s account appears in Parkinson’s *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War*. Using many of the same sources employed in this study, Parkinson concludes emphatically that “[b]y almost any yardstick or criterion of judgment the Act was a considerable over-reaction to the real situation of the Victorian Royal Navy.”⁴² Yet he accepts without demur Marder’s argument that the British *perception* of a Franco-Russian menace not only drove the Act’s introduction and passage, but was warranted: “[t]he threat from France and Russia seemed real enough,” he remarks at one point, and borrows directly from Marder elsewhere: “... the agitation in France for a Russian alliance and the Russians’ tapping of the French loan market was [*sic*] duly noted in London.”⁴³ Thus, whether the threat was real or imagined, Marder’s interpretive framework remains intact.

Contra his assertions, the threat posed by a possible Franco-Russian naval combination on which he lays such stress simply dissolves on closer examination, and insofar as there was any public alarm in Britain, it was the product of misplaced anxiety among British politicians, fanned by panic-mongering officers and journalists, rather than of a dispassionate, accurate assessment of the naval balance between the three countries in the 1880s. With Admiralty records of the 1880s now readily available, especially the vast inventory of NID reports, a reassessment of his core premises is now possible. Measuring the relative naval strengths of both France and Russia in the 1870s and early 1880s, these reports reveal in the aggregate a balanced appraisal of the strategies and effective forces available to both countries. Neither, the Admiralty’s intelligence unit concluded, was capable of

deploying against the Royal Navy along any other than *defensive* lines, save for commerce raiding, and even that on only a modest scale. Noticeably absent from these reports is any indication that the Admiralty was preoccupied with the possibility of a Franco-Russian naval combination or with the alleged threat it would pose to the security of the home islands, the Empire, and the sea lanes that connected them.

* * *

Given the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean for communication with India and other Asian colonial possessions, the Admiralty was well-informed of naval developments in Russia, even though that country's force projection capabilities posed no challenge to British naval supremacy at any time before, during, or after the Crimean War.⁴⁴ The Admiralty purchased four ironclads being built in British dockyards for the Ottoman Empire and Brazil during the latter stages of the Eastern Crisis of 1876–8, when war with Russia appeared to threaten, but the measure was taken chiefly to ensure that the vessels were not transferred to hostile parties. “In none of the surviving correspondence regarding the ‘war scare’ purchases of 1878,” observes John Beeler, “is there any indication that [the] Admiralty or cabinet was motivated by a sense of urgency, much less necessity.”⁴⁵

The Admiralty had no shortage of evidence on which to base its disparaging assessment of Russian naval forces and facilities in both the Baltic and Black Seas, the most likely theaters of operations in an Anglo-Russian naval war. The Russian battlefleet of the 1870s was composed almost entirely of shallow-draft, low-freeboard turret ships with inadequate armor protection and armament, material weaknesses even for a force designed principally for coastal defense rather than offensive operations.⁴⁶ An American observer underscored this point in 1877, writing in his report that “Except for coast defence, the Russian fleet is rather numerous than powerful. The *Peter the Great* [a large “breastwork monitor” similar to although less well constructed than several first-class British ironclads] and the *Minin* [an armored cruiser] are the only two vessels on the list which approach the modern standard of fighting efficiency.”⁴⁷

Attempts to redress the profound disparity in naval strength during the 1880s were incremental. True, Russian naval expenditures steadily increased throughout the decade, from £4.2 million in 1880 to just over £5.8 million in 1889—an increase of roughly 39 percent over ten years.⁴⁸

Admiralty estimates were more alarming: one intelligence report calculated that Russian naval spending rose by almost 54 percent during the same period.⁴⁹ Yet this increase failed to provoke anxiety within the Admiralty, a testimonial to overwhelming confidence in the Royal Navy. It was also due to a realistic appraisal of relative capabilities vis-à-vis Russia. Given the complexities of naval warfare on the open seas, the British correctly recognized that, increased funding notwithstanding, the Russian Navy remained in a state of relative infancy: the Royal Navy was years ahead of it in terms of strategy, fleet composition, logistics, and naval construction. It was equally obvious to Admiralty officials that the Russian battlefleet, such as it was, first had to learn to walk before it could run—and the Royal Navy had been for decades accustomed to running at a pace unmatched by any of its nineteenth-century rivals.

This assessment of Russian naval capabilities was informed by periodic visits to its dockyards by the British naval attachés in Europe, who forwarded their observations to the intelligence department for analysis and dissemination.⁵⁰ When opportunities offered, the attachés supplemented this information with observations of foreign naval maneuvers, which provided considerable insight into the strategies and forces most likely to be employed in the event of war. Russia offered such an opportunity in 1884, and Captain Henry Kane was dispatched to observe the maneuvers of the Baltic Fleet. His report reinforced Admiralty perceptions of the backward condition of the fleet, which constituted the bulk of the Russian Navy.

Many of his observations bordered on condescension: “a great deal of practice was given to the [Russian] officers, if not in ‘manoeuvring’ as we understand the word, at least in managing their ships.”⁵¹ His most pointed criticism concerned the utter absence of what the British termed “steam tactics”: tightly choreographed geometrical evolutions controlled by flag signals between the commanding admiral and the ships of his fleet. Kane observed:

Fleet Manoeuvring or “steam tactics,” which the Russians were famous for, in theory, in the days of Admiral Boutakoff, seems to have been completely overlooked. They did not have a single day’s drill of that sort. They never cruised in any formation but the single line ahead. They appear to have so devoted themselves to torpedo warfare as not to be able to think of anything else.⁵²

The underlying aim of the maneuvers was equally significant: they revealed Russian obsession with evading an enemy blockade of Cronstadt,

the fortress guarding the approaches to St. Petersburg. Only the Royal Navy could have been the hypothetical adversary in such a scenario.

The Russian maneuvers of 1884 reflected naval strategy formulated along strictly defensive lines, a fact underscored in an article by a senior Russian officer, translated by the Foreign Office and forwarded to the NID in April 1888.⁵³ The article reinforced the Admiralty's perception that the Baltic fleet was merely a coastal defense force of secondary importance to the army: "It is difficult to admit the idea that Russia is striving for mastery over the Baltic. The attainment of this objective would not be worth the sanguinary struggle which it would involve, and moreover, the same result could be gained by Russian troops on the plains of Pomerania." Indeed, the author went further and advocated strengthening Cronstadt, the fortress guarding the approach to St. Petersburg, to prevent the reduction of Russia's principal naval port by naval bombardment. He also broached the idea of establishing a station in the Baltic, near the entrance of the Gulf of Finland, to threaten the communications of enemy blockading squadrons off Cronstadt, again suggesting the overwhelmingly defensive *mentalité* of the Russian Navy's officer corps. The DNI, William Hall, supplied a reality check to this fanciful proposal: "[r]ecent reports in Russian papers lead me to think it will be some time before steps are commenced to make a military harbour inside the Gulf of Finland."⁵⁴

Visits to Russian naval dockyards were equally informative, for the types and qualities of warships being built there reflected not only future additions to the fleet but also their intended wartime roles and missions.⁵⁵ During such visits, naval attachés also made note of Russian shipbuilding practices and activities, and speculated on the potential combat effectiveness of ships under construction. Between 1880 and 1888 Russia laid down six battleships and four armored cruisers, but none of the former and only two of the latter were completed prior to 1889.⁵⁶ Prior to that date, therefore, the Russian battlefleet consisted of a single first-class ironclad (completed in 1876 and thus far from state-of-the-art a decade later), three armored cruisers, four second-class ironclads, and twenty-one coastal defense ironclads, most of them of 1860s vintage.⁵⁷

Almost all of these vessels, especially those in the last category, were unsuitable for operations outside Russian waters. Moreover, the ships under construction were openly imitative of foreign designs, suggesting how backward the Russian Navy was in terms of naval architecture and technology. On his visit to the Baltic naval dockyards and facilities in early 1887, Kane observed that "the Russians pay great attention to English

and French shipbuilding, and every detail concerning our ships is well known and studied here. There is a reading-room at the 'New Admiralty' Dockyard, at which ... English professional papers and magazines are more read than Russian."⁵⁸

It was thus unsurprising that when the Russians began construction of five battleships between 1886 and 1888, most were comparable to British vessels.⁵⁹ Collectively constituting a significant step toward Russian naval modernization, the progress of these new vessels attracted Admiralty attention, but did not arouse any sense of anxiety, given the huge existing disparity between the Royal Navy and its Russian counterpart. While regarded as an "important subject" by the Foreign Office, Admiralty records reveal a well-informed yet unworried attitude toward what might have been a contentious issue between the two countries, that being the presence of new Russian battleships in the Black Sea, where three of the vessels were being built. In response to a June 1888 Foreign Office request for more information about the new ships, Hall made clear his lack of immediate worry, noting that their completion would be delayed until 1890 at the earliest.⁶⁰

At the same time, he noted the deplorable state of the existing Russian Black Sea Fleet: "such a force can hardly be capable of coping with the ironclads Turkey possesses though these are not modern vessels and it is doubtful all are efficient."⁶¹ The presence of the three new battleships would alter the balance of naval power between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea, but that, he maintained, was more a Turkish concern than a British one. "[A]s there seems no disposition on the part of Turkey to acquire new ironclads, it is evident that in 1890, Russia with three powerful ironclads will be relatively much stronger than at present."

In sum, there is little evidence in Admiralty records to suggest anxiety over Russia's modest naval expansion in the 1880s.⁶² Rather, scores of intelligence reports and other correspondence to and from the Admiralty reveal a very different picture from that painted by Marder, one of a well-informed and confident Board, with an NID cognizant not only of British naval power, but also of how it compared with that of other countries. Russia lagged far behind the British standard of sea power. The Russian Navy was largely a defensive force, a fact documented in the frequent reports filed by British naval attachés following their visits to Russian dockyards and facilities, and clearly recognized by informed parties in London. What Russia regarded as its battlefleet, moreover, was more impressive on paper than in action, as demonstrated by its mediocre showing in the 1884 naval maneuvers.

Between 1883 and 1889, Russia embarked on a shipbuilding program to remedy its reliance on numerous but ineffective and obsolete coastal defense monitors, but the construction of seven first-class and two second-class battleships was in itself modest, and the potential threat posed to Britain reduced by the fact that they were split between the Baltic (four) and Black Sea (five) fleets.⁶³ Even combined they were not enough, even in conjunction with the French Navy, to constitute a credible challenge to British naval supremacy. It is therefore understandable why the French deprecated cooperation with their Russian counterparts after the countries allied in 1892. The specter of a Franco-Russian naval combination in the late 1880s and the threat thereby posed was based not on solid foundations, but instead on exaggerated, one is tempted to say hysterical, pronouncements by ill-informed or disingenuous commentators. The weakness of the Russian Navy, and its overwhelmingly defensive orientation left only one significant navy to concern British policy makers during the 1880s: that of France.⁶⁴

* * *

A number of factors traditionally complicated British strategic calculations when contemplating war with France, many more than those that would be encountered if preparing for a lopsided contest with the Russian Navy. Two turned on geographical and meteorological circumstances. The distances between the three countries aside, Russian naval operations were hindered by the lack of unfettered access to the open ocean in both the Baltic and Black Seas. Foreign warships were prohibited by treaty from passing through the Straits of Constantinople in peacetime, thus bottling up the Black Sea Squadron, such as it was, in confined waters.⁶⁵ No such international stipulations attached to the Gulf of Finland, but it is a shoal-infested body of water and ice-bound for much of the year. For this reason, the NID never seriously considered offensive coastal operations to reduce Cronstadt, but instead planned to establish a blockade at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland.⁶⁶

The proximity of France to Britain posed a much larger problem for the latter, as the second largest naval power possessed an extensive Atlantic coastline with a number of ports, including Cherbourg, Brest, L'Orient, and Rochefort, as well as a second coastline in the Mediterranean, including the nation's greatest commercial port at Marseilles and the navy's principal arsenal at Toulon. The prospect of an invasion force crossing the English Channel from French ports generated intermittent anxiety among

Victorian British politicians and military officers, beginning in the 1840s with the alarmist claim that “steam has bridged the Channel” and continuing through the rest of the century. “For the present the enemy is France,” Lord Salisbury observed in 1887.⁶⁷ The following year, he cautioned that “France is, and must always remain, England’s greatest danger.”⁶⁸

The critical factor in any such scenario, however, was the naval balance between the two countries, and throughout the 1870s and 1880s well-informed British naval officers and administrators were confident that the French Navy was inferior to the warships, personnel, and administration of the Royal Navy, despite the occasional “invasion” or navy scare which, as will be seen, was a generally baseless yet often effective tactic to bludgeon reluctant government ministers into authorizing increased naval expenditures. In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-German War of 1870–1 France was little more a threat to British naval supremacy than was Russia. In the years following a harrowing defeat on their own soil, the French were far more preoccupied with overland threats from Germany and with rebuilding their army than challenging British naval supremacy. The French Navy suffered as a result, as governmental expenditures were diverted to other priorities, chief among them the army. “For the majority of the decade,” observes John Beeler,

the French navy was deprived of the funding to maintain its existing navy, much less renew the challenge to Britain. The immediate need to rebuild and remodel the French military establishment, coupled with the futility of naval operations during the war and the necessity of paying a huge war indemnity, made naval construction a low-priority item during the years immediately following the humiliation.⁶⁹

Thus, throughout the 1870s the French Navy consisted chiefly of obsolete wooden-hulled ironclads constructed in an ambitious shipbuilding program in the early 1860s.⁷⁰ These vessels were no match even for most British warships of similar vintage, the latter having durable iron hulls, watertight compartments, and thicker armor.⁷¹ By the end of the decade, the Admiralty estimated that the balance in ironclads between the two countries was nine to five in favor of the British, who during the course of the 1870s completed thirteen first-class, sea-going ironclads and eight coastal defense vessels.⁷² In contrast, French shipbuilders completed only eight sea-going ironclads, and four coastal defense vessels.⁷³ Worse yet, no fewer than six of the former had wooden hulls, and four had been laid

down in 1865–66. The British enjoyed not only a decisive quantitative advantage, but also an equally decisive qualitative one: with the partial exception of armament, British first-class ironclads were in every respect superior to their French counterparts.⁷⁴

Moreover, when the French began naval reconstruction in the late 1870s, the number of vessels laid down barely kept pace with the decay and removal of their first-generation ironclads from the navy list, so that while a superficially impressive construction program was underway by the early 1880s, it actually amounted to little more than a replacement-level one, a fact apparent to discerning observers in London.⁷⁵ Additionally, while the French laid down nine first-class battleships in the later 1870s, a host of factors, including administrative interference and dockyard delays, slowed construction so badly that most were completed between 1886 and 1889, having been a decade or more on the stocks.⁷⁶ By comparison, again with the exception of ordnance, most British battleships were completed in fewer than five years.⁷⁷ This characteristic of French shipbuilding worsened significantly in the 1880s owing to pervasive dockyard inefficiency and the burden of additional naval construction, as well as frequent design changes demanded by the *Conseil des Travaux*, an advisory board responsible for the approval and modification of warship designs.⁷⁸ Compared to French naval dockyards, the Royal Navy's facilities, although widely criticized by economy-minded British politicians of both parties, were paragons of both thrift and efficiency.⁷⁹

The Admiralty was well aware of the problems that beset French shipbuilders, being kept informed of their progress and working conditions by attachés' reports following their periodic visits to French dockyards. After one such visit in early 1884, Kane termed the *Conseil des Travaux* "the final court of appeals on questions of naval construction," adding that it was "in the vein of altering many things."⁸⁰ To underscore the point, he recounted the frustrations of a French naval officer, who lamented that "it is impossible to know what one of our ships will be like when completed, but it is very easy to see what she will not be; look at the design on which they begin her construction."⁸¹ In the same report, Kane also provided insights into the fractious atmosphere at the French Admiralty, in part due to the doings of the politically-motivated oversight board: "[T]he re-organisation of the *Conseil des Travaux* amounted to quite a revolution at the French Ministry of Marine, and was directed against M. De Bussy, who ... had made himself too autocratic, and had forced designs on the department which were generally condemned"⁸²

This and subsequent reports were carefully read at the Admiralty, and their contents undoubtedly shaped the outlook of Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key, First Naval Lord from 1879 to 1885. In a letter to Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby in December 1884, following a naval scare triggered by journalist William T. Stead's "Truth About the Navy" series in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Key exuded a level of confidence commonplace at the Admiralty, despite public and political outcry over the allegedly dangerously narrow gap in naval strength between Britain and France:

We now have twenty-seven ironclads in commission. The French have eleven. We could commission thirteen more in a month. I cannot find that the French have more than two ready and one of these has her boilers condemned (*Richelieu*). Many of our ships are of obsolete types—so are many of theirs. Moreover, being of wood theirs cannot last long. *I should have no fear whatever of war with France and Russia now, so far as our Navy is concerned*⁸³

The French Navy's situation worsened after 1885, before improving slightly at decade's end, due not only to dockyard inefficiency and the workings of *Conseil des Travaux*, but also to policy wrangles that divided the Ministry of Marine into competing schools of naval thought. The result was incessant vacillation between naval strategies and capital ship design policies, as successive naval administrations acted on their preference for one over the other. Complicating matters further still was the intermittent ascendance of Vice-Admiral Theophile Aube and his fellow disciples of the *Jeune Ecole*. These reform-minded officers had maintained since the 1870s that French naval strategy should be focused on the *guerre de course* and based on a fleet of fast cruisers and torpedo boats to destroy enemy commerce and the vulnerable ironclad forces that protected it.⁸⁴

In January 1886, the *Jeune Ecole* was officially, albeit briefly, installed with the appointment of its principal spokesman as Minister of Marine. Never reticent in airing his views, Aube received Kane in his office on 10 February for a general discussion of naval strategy. In the report he subsequently filed to the Admiralty, the naval attaché recounted Aube's assertion that "no blockade will now prevent fast ships from putting to sea, and that it is therefore impossible for any nation to make herself Mistress of the Seas, in the way [the British] were after Trafalgar, however powerful she may be in ironclads."⁸⁵ This and other comments by Aube, however, did not provoke anxiety at the Admiralty. Upon reading the report,

Hall blandly noted that “Admiral Aube’s views on naval policy ... agree with those expressed by him in French periodicals before his accession to office.”⁸⁶

Nor was it any surprise to the Board that the Aube ministry either slowed the construction of battleships—as was the case with the Magenta class—or halted it altogether in favor of new construction priorities.⁸⁷ The lack of progress on capital ships, duly witnessed and reported by the naval attachés, prompted an NID staff officer to conclude in November 1886 that “the [French] armoured fleet is not only now, but will be, when all ships of both nations building are completed, inferior to that of England”⁸⁸ Rather than battleships, the French, under the sway of the *Jeune Ecole*, directed their *matériel* and financial resources toward the procurement of fast cruisers and torpedo boats. The Aube ministry solicited designs for a number of cruisers of various types, among them a protected cruiser of moderate tonnage with a speed of 19 knots and four five-and-a-half inch guns.⁸⁹ Three vessels of this description were eventually laid down in 1886–87, and the dockyards labored to complete them as quickly as possible.⁹⁰ Also laid down in 1885–86 were two larger protected cruisers—*Tage* and *Cecille*—specifically designed for commerce interdiction and destruction. Both vessels possessed the speed, coal capacity, and armament for such missions.⁹¹ Finally, Aube sought funding for three more large protected cruisers, two smaller cruisers of an intermediate design, and six third-class cruisers, all of which were to be commenced in 1887.⁹² But all of these developments were known at the Admiralty in ample time to respond if necessary.

The Admiralty was equally well-informed of the latest developments in French torpedo boat construction and their experimental deployment in the annual naval maneuvers. By the end of 1886, the NID calculated that the French Navy possessed eighteen first-class and thirty-nine second-class torpedo boats, with another fifty-one of the former under construction.⁹³ The department also noted Aube’s request for funding for one hundred additional torpedo boats to be built over four years. The French government refused to accede to his demand, however.⁹⁴

His failure to obtain those funds was the least of Aube’s worries by late 1886. The experimental deployment of torpedo boats in the 1886 French naval maneuvers was inconclusive at best, a result known shortly thereafter at the Admiralty.⁹⁵ In the absence of first-hand observations from the naval attaché, who, not surprisingly, was not invited to witness the maneuvers, the NID instead secured accounts published in French periodicals.

The subsequent report, written by Hall's assistant, Reginald Custance, paraphrased eyewitness accounts by French naval officers, who publicly expressed their doubts over the torpedo boat's seaworthiness and its suitability for fleet operations.⁹⁶ The 1887 maneuvers produced no better results.⁹⁷ The torpedo boats' performance was again inconclusive, in part due to the cancellation of a portion of the exercises when the French government, Aube included, fell from power in May 1887.

While Aube's tenure as Minister of Marine lasted less than fifteen months, its aftermath revealed the extent to which the *Jeune Ecole* experiment was a thoroughgoing disaster for French naval policy. This point is underscored by Theodore Ropp, who observes that the

Jeune Ecole split the French Navy wide open, and the next fifteen years (1885–1900) was a period of incredible confusion [W]ith an increasingly complicated ministry, an increasing confusion in strategic ideas, and an increasing number of civilian ministers, it is a wonder that France had any naval policy at all. At times it is certainly difficult to find it.⁹⁸

Aube's immediate successor, Edouard Barbey, served essentially as a caretaker until the appointment of Admiral Jules-Francois-Emile Krantz in January 1888. Barbey and Krantz inherited a French Navy in a state of grave disorder, stemming from financial mismanagement, dockyard inefficiency, and divisive opinions over the future course of strategy and force planning.⁹⁹ Burdened by deficit spending and debt incurred from borrowing, both ministers initiated measures to remedy the deplorable situation found by the new British naval attaché, Captain Sir William Cecil Domville on his initial visit to French dockyards. In a report filed in April 1888, Domville passed on his observations to the Admiralty, noting that financial exigencies had caused a reduction of workmen at Toulon from 5,000 to 4,400 since his last visit.¹⁰⁰ The remaining workmen were assigned to the completion of contract vessels and repairs of existing ships until the brief war scare between France and Italy blew up in early 1888, prompting frantic efforts to ready the battlefleet. "There is no doubt that a month or so ago," wrote Domville in April, "the French armourclads were in a deplorable state of unreadiness for war, a fact of which apparently no notice was taken till recent political events brought war with Italy within a measurable distance."¹⁰¹

In short, it is clear that the Admiralty possessed detailed and reliable reports on the state of the French Navy, which was in no condition to pose a viable threat to Britain for the foreseeable future, notwithstanding

alarmist sentiments to the contrary in the press and Parliament. Admiralty confidence in this respect was so high that the First Lord boasted in the House of Commons in February 1888 that

many abuses and evils which we have eradicated here, flourish with exuberance in [French] dockyards, and the changes in policy and consequent waste of money in their building programme during the past two years contrast unfavourably with the continuity and consistency of action of the English Admiralty during the same period.¹⁰²

* * *

Neither the professional nor the civilian element at the Admiralty perceived Russian and French naval policy or *matériel* in the 1880s to be alarming, either individually or jointly, any more so than they did hints of naval modernization in Germany and the United States the following decade. This calm and confident attitude was pronounced in the tone of numerous reports generated by the NID, which reflect a well-informed and *proactive* Admiralty, an image very much at odds with that depicted in Marder's account. Indeed, the Admiralty in *Anatomy* is a different entity altogether: a complacent, out-of-touch, and ineffective Board, "smug" and "contented," and slow to respond to the naval provocations of France and Russia, thus requiring outside prodding to act.¹⁰³

According to Lady Gwendolen Cecil in her multi-volume biography of her father, Lord Salisbury presided over a June 1888 cabinet-level strategic review and intervened when the Admiralty refused to pay heed to the potential threat of a Franco-Russian naval combination.¹⁰⁴ In a letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer George J. Goschen printed in Lady Cecil's biography, Salisbury alluded to his ongoing exasperation with Admiralty administration, and credited civilian intervention as the crucial impetus behind the Naval Defence Act. "As to the mere question of enlarging the fleet," he wrote, "we were able to do some good by making a sort of raid upon [the Admiralty] and carrying back the Naval Defence Act as the spoils of victory. But we cannot govern the Admiralty from day to day by raids of this kind."¹⁰⁵

Salisbury's claim is suspect for a number of reasons. First, the implication that he was attentive to the requirements of the naval service is undercut by the fact that at no previous point during his tenure either as Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary did he express any interest in British

naval policy, other than insisting that service expenditures be kept as low as possible. He tacitly admitted as much in an exchange with Viscount Wolseley in the House of Lords in May 1888, acknowledging that he could not remember ever having seen a plan of campaign before.¹⁰⁶ This admission is entirely plausible since Salisbury, like many of his predecessors in office, presumed that British naval supremacy was just that, not thinking it necessary to depart from the ad hoc treatment of strategy and other security policy issues, and being guided principally by economic considerations.¹⁰⁷ He especially resented naval and military officers who publicly criticized the Government for its alleged failure to attend to overarching questions of national defense. At the height of the 1888 public campaign regarding the state of the service (the subject of Chapter 5) Salisbury strongly condemned "... the tones of panic which prevail and the language which is used, as though the Government were passing by all these matters in utter apathy"¹⁰⁸ Such behavior served only to reinforce his long-held and cynical, not to say hostile, view of the professional element in military affairs. "I think you listen too much to the soldiers," he observed to Lord Lytton in 1871:

No lesson seems to be so deeply inculcated by the experience of life as that you never should trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers nothing is safe. They all require to have their strong wine diluted by a very large admixture of common sense.¹⁰⁹

Salisbury was no different from his political rival William Gladstone and from the same bolt of cloth as his Conservative predecessor Benjamin Disraeli, when it came to naval policy. All three statesmen were acutely sensitive to public reaction to increased defense expenditures. Upon his accession into office in 1868, Gladstone immediately instituted a policy of financial retrenchment and installed a reform-minded supporter—Hugh Childers—as First Lord of the Admiralty.

Gladstone struggled to limit defense expenditures throughout each of his four ministries, ultimately resigning for the final time in 1894 when the majority of his Cabinet held out for major increases in the naval budget. When in opposition he repeatedly denounced the Disraeli and Salisbury ministries for their extravagance. During the first of his famous Midlothian campaigns (1879)—which presaged a Liberal victory at the polls in 1880—Gladstone raised a familiar theme, one that he was convinced resonated

with the public: "If all the millions bestowed upon giving effect to the warlike policy of the [Disraeli] Government [then in office] had, instead, of being so applied, been thrown down to the bottom of the sea, you would have been better off, with such a mode of disposing of the funds, than you are now."¹¹⁰

The success of Gladstone's rhetoric in the Midlothian campaigns was not lost upon his opponents. In his biography of Salisbury, A. L. Kennedy observes that he "appreciated at its true value the tremendous impression which Gladstone's exploitation of Conservative mistakes, and even of Conservative achievements, had made and was making all over the country. The success of the famous Midlothian campaign, indeed, had a lasting effect on Lord Salisbury"¹¹¹ Upon his own accession to the premiership in 1885—and more lastingly in 1886—Salisbury sought to strike a politically acceptable balance between military preparedness, fiscal parsimony, and reform. In effect, the popularity of Gladstone's message compelled Salisbury to emulate his political nemesis to some extent, if not with a rigid adherence to financial retrenchment, then at least in appointing reform-minded men to the Admiralty, as Gladstone had done in 1868. For that matter, until 1889 Salisbury was also willing to adhere to Gladstone's (and Disraeli's) approach to the annual Naval Estimates, using finance as the chief determinant of policy. In this endeavor he was amply supported by his two civilian agents at the Admiralty—First Lord George Hamilton and Parliamentary Secretary Arthur Bower Forwood.

The appointments of Hamilton and Forwood to the Admiralty are of considerable significance when attempting to determine responsibility for the strategic, political, and economic motivations behind the Naval Defence Act. It is suggestive of Salisbury's competing desires to retain general oversight of naval matters while leaving it to his appointees to control expenditure and improve administrative efficiency. "Salisbury was fundamentally uninterested in military matters," observes Andrew Roberts in his biography of the Tory statesman, "and it took ... a public, if hyperbolic, attack from the political Right to goad him into reforms."¹¹²

Ironically, his selection of Hamilton was initially driven by the desire to reward a dependable political supporter in the House of Commons rather than to reform the Admiralty or limit naval expenditures. Salisbury originally intended to appoint Hamilton to the War Office and return W. H. Smith, an experienced naval and treasury minister who had held the same post from 1877 to 1880, to the Admiralty as First Lord.¹¹³ According to Beeler, Smith enjoyed a "high reputation as an administrator ... But as a

man of business he fell squarely into the ‘economical’ camp along with Childers, and both men ... seem to have rated political considerations higher than the often alarmist pronouncements of their naval advisors.”¹¹⁴ Given his low opinion of service experts, Salisbury undoubtedly viewed Smith as the best choice to represent his views at the Admiralty. But at Hamilton’s urging, Salisbury reversed his decision, appointing Smith to the War Office and Hamilton to the Admiralty, the latter insisting that he could not deal effectively with Army Commander-in-Chief the Duke of Cambridge.¹¹⁵

With previous ministerial experience limited to the India Office and Education Department, Hamilton was a neophyte when it came to naval matters. Although Marder states that neither he nor First Naval Lord Arthur Hood “seem to have been administrators of exceptional talent,” both contemporary and subsequent judgments on Hamilton’s tenure at Whitehall have been generally positive.¹¹⁶ In his efforts to impose financial discipline on the service he certainly aroused the consternation of Queen Victoria, admittedly one of the most ardent hawks in the British political world. At the height of public debate over the navy’s strength in June 1888, the Queen wrote to Salisbury to express her alarm. She thought Hamilton to be “not near strong enough” to be First Lord, and decried his propensity to “declare *all is right*, which we *know is not*.”¹¹⁷ In reply, the Prime Minister confessed that the state of affairs at the Admiralty was unsatisfactory and assured the Queen that Hamilton was well aware of the “great deal to be done” to remedy the situation.¹¹⁸ After the passage of the Naval Defence Act, Salisbury visited Victoria at Windsor and suggested replacing Hamilton with his original nominee, Smith, who was in poor health and unable to continue as Conservative Leader in the House of Commons.¹¹⁹

That Salisbury recognized Hamilton’s inexperience is implied by his decision to appoint Forwood as Parliamentary and Financial Secretary. The appointment also impressed Salisbury’s desire for reform upon Hamilton and the Naval Lords, as Forwood was not only an outspoken supporter of the Prime Minister but also a former mayor of Liverpool with thirty-five years of experience in the commercial shipping sector. “Your commercial knowledge and experience would be of great value,” wrote Salisbury in offering the post to Forwood in August 1886.¹²⁰ The latter promptly accepted, and Hamilton welcomed his expertise, despite the fact that his appointment was made at Salisbury’s, rather than Hamilton’s, behest.¹²¹ Forwood’s presence at the Admiralty was viewed with suspicion,

if not outright hostility, by the Naval Lords, who were especially resentful of his meddling in the technical aspects of naval policy. In explaining his *modus operandi* to Hamilton, Forwood admitted that "I quite appreciate that I may have departed from the course of my predecessors in dealing with some questions that have been before me in considerable detail."¹²² The traditional role of the Parliamentary Secretary, however, did not in his view preclude him from expanding his responsibilities in the Admiralty. "For a business life of thirty-five years I have been in the practical management of ships and steamers," he stressed to the First Lord, "and with the knowledge thus acquired I cannot refrain from commenting on the papers that come before me. It may be that having this knowledge was a reason for placing me in my present position."¹²³

Forwood returned the contempt of his naval colleagues with interest. He reserved his harshest criticism for their attitude toward the Naval Estimates, the overall form and content of which was a responsibility shared by him and the First Lord. Forwood viewed civil–military clashes over the estimates as a contest of wills. The Naval Lords, he charged to Hamilton, "... have at hand the old traditional policy that the Service exists for the Service, and support the naval as against the civil control which so excites service feeling when called into action. The question of civil control of expenditure is more or less at stake."¹²⁴ His hostility toward the Naval Lords eventually became public: the press reported his repeated frustration with them over such issues as the naval estimates, dockyard administration, and future shipbuilding requirements.¹²⁵ His antagonism toward them both in public and private became so pronounced that it resulted in the departure of Third Naval Lord and Controller Sir William Graham, who resigned April 1888 rather than continue to be subjected to the constant interference and criticism of the abrasive Parliamentary Secretary.¹²⁶ Hamilton did what he could to restrain Forwood and preserve the appearance of harmony on the Board, with the result that the latter complained that the First Lord was not providing the support necessary to face down the Naval Lords.¹²⁷

If Forwood worried that Hamilton would succumb to the views of his naval advisors, his apprehension was groundless. When it came to the formulation of naval policy, in particular determining the level of spending, the First Lord was supreme. He also exercised complete control over the nature and conduct of business performed by the Board. The responsibilities of each member were assigned by the First Lord, and were subject to review and amendment if he deemed necessary.

The Board itself convened on a weekly basis, the agenda of each meeting having been approved by the First Lord and distributed to Board members beforehand. Any member wishing to introduce an issue for discussion had first to receive Hamilton's sanction before it could be brought before the Board.¹²⁸ This arrangement was confirmed by Arthur Hood, the First Naval Lord who stated with approbation to a House Select Committee that

[t]he First Lord has the power, after due consideration of ... [any] paper [introduced by one of the naval lords] of making up his mind whether it is desirable that the paper should be laid before the Board, and he is the ruling power; and I hold ... this is a power that he should possess.¹²⁹

Since no votes were taken at meetings, the role of the naval element was hence limited to furnishing professional and technical advice and consultation when requested by the First Lord. The only recourse for a member dissenting from a Board decision was to offer his opinion in a minute to be included in the official record.¹³⁰ Alternatively, he could resign, in which case he would forfeit a generous salary as well as a house and other prerequisites of office afforded to the Naval Lords.

While Hamilton generally exercised his power sparingly and with considerable discretion, he was willing to let Graham resign rather than undermine Forwood and their joint efforts to place the Admiralty within the "compass of finance."¹³¹ In this endeavor the two were strongly supported by Salisbury who, along with the First Lord and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was responsible for determining just how much the Navy would receive from the Treasury. It was then left to the First Lord, advised by the rest of the Board, to prioritize the needs of the service and frame a budget according to the financial parameters laid down.

Salisbury later described the procedure used to determine proposed budgetary allocations prior to the Naval Defence Act, including the Prime Minister's role as final arbiter: "Questions of Estimate which are not settled by personal conference between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the War Office or Admiralty, as the case may be, are usually arranged in concert with the Prime Minister."¹³² His participation in the budgetary process was at times instrumental in establishing a satisfactory compromise between economy and service efficiency: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer, little familiar with the defensive services, is rightly the spokesman of economy [and t]he heads of the War Office and Admiralty, unacquainted with the precise position of the Exchequer, are the natural

and proper advocates of efficiency,” requiring the Prime Minister to adjudicate between competing viewpoints in contested cases.¹³³

In the first six months of 1888, the Salisbury ministry was engaged in an extraordinary public tussle between naval officers and cabinet officials over the strategic and policy implications of the Naval Estimates. This was a critical episode in the struggle for naval modernization, and the navalists’ efforts eventually compelled the Prime Minister to conduct a cabinet-level review that outlined the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act. It is important, however, to underscore Salisbury’s indifference toward the policy questions brought up in the course of the public debate. He preferred to rely on the principal spokesmen of his naval policy—Hamilton and Forwood—to respond to the numerous speeches and editorials written by the service “experts” that he so mistrusted.

His first substantive public statement on the subject was made to the House of Lords on May 10, at which point the agitation had been going on for more than two months, when he was compelled to respond to charges leveled by critics of his naval administration. In doing so Salisbury appears more to have wanted to rebuke his critics than to reassure the public that the Navy was adequate for the tasks required of it in wartime. He angrily protested that his silence was not due to negligence or want of concern, but rather from his conviction that discussions of defense policy should take place in private, not in public. He then defended his policy: “there is no ground whatsoever for the implied reproach of parsimony and that we are neglecting the defenses of the country.”¹³⁴ But Salisbury ultimately returned to the central theme of his message:

before I sit down I feel that I cannot avoid taking advantage of the opportunity to enter a protest against another practice. That is, the practice of those who are, or ought to be, distinguished authorities upon military affairs making statements against the Government under whom they serve, and making them in a place where they cannot be answered.¹³⁵

In stating his conviction that policy questions should be addressed in private, Salisbury tacitly committed himself to conducting a strategic review of the armed forces. In approving the cabinet-level initiative the next month, he succumbed to the critics’ demands to determine the military and naval requirements of the country. Hamilton and Edward Stanhope, his counterpart at the War Office, were appointed to the committee. The scope of the review, however, was limited to assessing the invasion threat

posed by France. “The one subject with which I propose to deal with is the alleged inability of our military organization to protect us from the invasion of London,” Salisbury wrote in a memorandum to the participants on June 6: “I presume the examination may be confined to the danger of the occupation of London by France, for an attempt by any other Power to conduct such an operation does not seem to be within the widest limits of probability.”¹³⁶ Salisbury, moreover, seems to have been more interested in the fitness of the Army to repel a French invasion than with the Navy’s ability to prevent an invasion force from crossing the Channel in the first place.

The Admiralty initially contributed very little to the strategic review; that is until Salisbury agreed to allow the Naval Lords to submit a proposed shipbuilding program calculated on the basis of two hypothetical scenarios. In a subsequent memorandum, Hamilton confirmed the departure from the traditional budget-driven approach to force planning: “The Cabinet in July determined that Admiral Sir Arthur Hood should be requested to state the amount of force which he would require under certain eventualities. The questions ... were drawn up after personal consultation with the Prime Minister.”¹³⁷ Hood, in fact, offered to submit the proposed shipbuilding program within half-an-hour of being told what scenarios to consider.¹³⁸ He was able to make such a speedy reply because the shipbuilding proposals for the program had been submitted in May 1888 by DNI Hall. The strategic review afforded an exceptional opportunity to submit the ambitious program and have it considered seriously, which doubtless would not have been the case had the public’s attitude toward naval expenditure not changed enough to make it politically acceptable to the Salisbury ministry.

The events outlined above simply do not support the version of the Naval Defence Act’s genesis and implementation offered by Lady Cecil and intimated in Marder’s account of the episode. Contrary to both and even his own recollection of the events of 1888, Salisbury was clearly not the savior of the navy, nor was he interested in naval affairs other than during the annual budgetary process. Instead, it was he who reacted indignantly to the public campaign conducted by naval officers in 1888.

* * *

Then who or what should ultimately be credited for the Naval Defence Act? Evidence suggests that the underlying impetus stemmed not from external factors such as the existing French and Russian Navies or the

chimerical prospect of an immediate alliance between the two countries, but from strategic ideas shared by naval officers, and that their implementation was made possible by public support. The former's efforts at strategic and force planning were marginalized until 1888 by the political agendas of the Gladstone and Salisbury ministries and, perhaps for that reason, have not been given due weight in subsequent accounts. But from the 1870s onward, forward-seeing professionals attempted to promote strategic thinking as a basis not only for war planning but also for force structure choices and resulting shipbuilding programs. In doing so, they confronted technological upheaval and tactical confusion, in addition to the overarching political desire to keep the Navy Estimates low.¹³⁹ Yet they were able to implement a series of reforms that ultimately led to the Naval Defence Act.

Their first victory came in late 1882, when the Admiralty authorized the establishment of a FIC, supervised by William Hall, who later transformed the ad hoc committee into a full-fledged department. A second opening occurred in 1886, when Charles Beresford was nominated by the Prince of Wales to serve as Junior Naval Lord, and agitated for the creation of a permanent NID.¹⁴⁰ Beresford was a reform-minded officer who grasped the need for greater strategic awareness in upper-level policy debates. He quickly sought to expand and formalize the Admiralty's intelligence unit by creating a permanent, separate department, and resigned in protest when salary cutbacks in the newly-created entity suggested the First Lord's and Cabinet's indifference to the work performed by Hall and his small staff of officers.¹⁴¹

Fearing that the Admiralty would return to business as usual, Beresford then enlisted the support of other prominent naval officers—Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, Rear-Admiral Philip Colomb, and Captain Charles Cooper Penrose Fitzgerald in particular—to organize a campaign to pressure Salisbury's government to transform the process by which naval policy was formulated. Their six-month lobbying effort was successful. Eventually, London *Times* editor George Buckle, who initially sided with the government, was converted by professional opinion.¹⁴² An admirer of Salisbury and his policies, Buckle nonetheless warned in May 1888: “the country will not now be satisfied until the Government is able to assure it that, whatever plan of defence may be ultimately adopted, the Navy is strong enough to carry it into effect.”¹⁴³

In sum, revisiting Marder's account of the Naval Defence Act and contrasting it against the narrative laid out above reveals the limitations of the

policy-and-operations perspective used to support it. Contra his assertion, naval developments in France and Russia posed little if any threat to the Royal Navy, a fact known at the Admiralty thanks to regular intelligence updates which led to confidence in the navy's strength vis-à-vis that of its closest rivals. Nor was civilian intervention a significant factor in the formulation of the Naval Defence Act. Credit for the shipbuilding program belonged to naval professionals, whose lobbying efforts in support of their views, both inside and outside of Whitehall, ensured that policy deliberations would henceforth be conducted with greater consideration of strategic factors.

Indeed, the Naval Defence Act serves as an example of how major peacetime policy decisions can reflect the shaping influence of internal factors such as the ideas and actions of naval and military professionals. In the absence of threats from abroad and in the face of political demands for economy, the impetus for British naval modernization came from the pervasive influence of strategic ideas, coupled with their airing in public by prominent professionals, who thus translated them from theory into practice. The manner in which they did forms the subject of the following two chapters.

NOTES

1. Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1940). Marder's access to the Admiralty's archives was privileged but not unrestricted: there is no evidence that he saw the FIC/NID reports from the 1880s, on which the present study draws extensively.
2. Arthur J. Marder, "English Navalism in the Nineties," (Unpublished Dissertation, Harvard University, 1936).
3. William L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871–1890* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1931) and *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1935).
4. Quoted in Barry Gough, *Historical Dreadnoughts: Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and Battles for Naval History* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), p. 7.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
6. A prominent exception is Andrew Lambert, John Knox Laughton Professor of Naval History at King's College London.
7. Taylor once wrote: "From Professor Marder we can never have enough. His naval history has a unique fascination. To unrivaled mastery of sources he

adds a gift for simple narration ... he is beyond praise, as he is beyond caviel. This book, like its predecessors, is a model of humane learning. It sets a standard which few other historians can approach." Taylor review of *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, vol. 4, *The Observer*, 1970, quoted by Galbraith et al., "In Memoriam: Arthur J. Marder."

8. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 120, 131.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 139, 143. Gough observes that Marder took a dim view of the intellectual capacity of most naval officers: he was "always been keen to portray officers as uneducated in thinking about principles of war, something endemic to their training." Gough, *Historical Dreadnoughts*, p. 121.
11. It also conforms closely to the bureaucratic or neorealist interpretation of organizational behavior described in the previous chapter.
12. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 119–25, 136–40.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 123. Emphasis added. A few pages later (p. 128), however, he admits that the British were quite aware that the French "had a construction program far in excess of their financial resources."
14. *Ibid.*, 131.
15. The footnote at the end of the paragraph deals only with the relative strengths of the British, French, and Russian navies.
16. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, pp. 490–92.
17. General Georges Boulanger served as French Minister of War from January 1886 to May 1887, and in 1888 inspired and led a popular movement that some scholars view as the most serious of the many political crises that endangered the French Third Republic before World War II. Boulanger was also profoundly anti-German. See William D. Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 3.
18. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments*, p. 374. Emphasis added.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 411. See also pp. 376–77, 384–86.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 464
21. *Ibid.*, p. 465. Confusingly, however, Langer also states on p. 463 "that in the course of the year 1888 the Boulangist movement assumed the form of an acute domestic conflict and that the duel between republicans on the one hand and the royalists and imperialists supporting Boulanger on the other diverted the attention of the French from foreign affairs and concentrated all efforts on the struggle nearer home."
22. Charles Dilke, "The Present Position of European Politics. Part I. Germany," *The Fortnightly Review*, vol. 41, no. 241 (January 1888), pp. 9 and 18.
23. Egerton to Salisbury, March 16, 1888, printed in Kenneth Bourne and Donald Cameron Watt (gen. eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part I From*

- the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War. Series F Europe, 1848–1914, vol. 10 France, 1877–1891* (vol. ed. John F. V. Krieger, Lanham, MD: University Publications of America, 1989), p. 389.
24. Lytton to Salisbury, May 18, 1888, printed in *ibid.*
 25. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (hereafter *Hansard*), 3rd ser., vol. 334 (1889), col. 791.
 26. *The Standard*, January 21, 1888, quoted in DNI to Admiralty, January 21, 1888. The National Archives (hereafter TNA): ADM 1/6932. Marder states that the French were making “extraordinary naval preparations at Toulon.” Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, p. 126.
 27. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 126–28. The “blue funk” quotation appears on p. 126.
 28. C. J. Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists: British Foreign Policy 1878–1902* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 147–49.
 29. Admiralty to Foreign Office, January 21, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6932.
 30. Foreign Office to Admiralty, February 2, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6932. This assessment received confirmation when the British naval attaché visited Toulon in April and reported: “There is no doubt that a month or so ago the French armourclads were in a deplorable state of unreadiness for war, a fact of which apparently no notice was taken till recent political events brought war with Italy within a measurable distance.” See NID Report No. 160, “French Fleet and Dockyards (Toulon and La Seyne),” April 1888. TNA: ADM 231/12.
 31. Foreign Office to Admiralty, February 3, 1888 and February 4, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6932.
 32. On this point, see Lowe, *The Reluctant Imperialists*, p. 148.
 33. Foreign Office to Admiralty, February 4, 1888. ADM 1/6932. For a general discussion of these events, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 304–24.
 34. Foreign Office to Admiralty, February 7, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6932.
 35. Roger Parkinson’s assessment is much the same. See Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), p. 109. Shawn Grimes, on the other hand, cites Marder’s account without question. See Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2012), p. 12.
 36. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 131–32.
 37. *Ibid.*, 132.
 38. *Ibid.*, 143.
 39. Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy, 1871–1914* (Stephen Roberts ed., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), p. 205. Ropp’s dissertation was cited by Marder in *Anatomy of*

- British Sea Power*, but remained unpublished until 1987. French naval capabilities in the late 1890s and early 1900s were similarly exaggerated by contemporaries and by subsequent historians. See Matthew Seligmann, “Britain’s Great Security Mirage: The Royal Navy and the Franco-Russian Naval Threat, 1898–1906,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 35, no. 6 (2012). pp. 861–86.
40. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (reprint ed., Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1982.), p. 210.
 41. Shawn Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010)
 42. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 117.
 43. *Ibid.*, 109, 112. Actually, neither Marder nor Langer claimed that the loan business was “duly noted in London.” The former simply assumed that it was.
 44. For an overview of Anglo-Russian relations in the nineteenth century, see Andrew D. Lambert, “Great Britain and the Baltic, 1809–1890” in Gören Rystad, Klaus R. Böhme and Wilhelm M. Carlgren (eds.), *In Quest of Trade and Security: The Baltic in Power Politics, 1500–1990* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 297–334. For the impact of Russia in British defence planning, see Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894–1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 111–43.
 45. John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 203.
 46. Roger Chesneau and Eugene Kolesnik (eds.), *Conway’s All the World’s Fighting Ships, 1860–1905* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1979), p. 172; and *ibid.*, pp. 202–03.
 47. J. W. King, *European Ships of War and Their Armament, Naval Administration, etc.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), p. 167, cited in Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone Disraeli Era, 1866–1880*, pp. 202–03.
 48. John F. Beeler, “A One Power Standard? Great Britain and the Balance of Naval Power, 1860–1880,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 15, no. 4 (December 1992), p. 551.
 49. N[aval] I[n]telligence] D[e]partment] Report No. 119b, “Present and Prospective Shipbuilding Policy of the Principal Maritime Nations,” March 1889. TNA: ADM 231/15.
 50. Matthew Allen, “The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty,” *Mariner’s Mirror* vol. 81, no. 1 (February 1995), p. 69.
 51. F[oreign] I[n]telligence] C[ommittee] Report No. 50, “Naval Manoeuvres in the Baltic,” October 1884. TNA: ADM 231/5. The Foreign Intelligence Committee (FIC) was the predecessor of the Naval Intelligence Department (NID). See Chapter 4 for more on this subject.

52. Ibid.
53. Foreign Office to Admiralty, April 18, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6933.
54. Ibid. On Russian plans to build a base outside the Gulf of Finland, see Nicholas Papastratigakis, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power: Military Strategy and the Build-Up to the Russo-Japanese War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp.73–77.
55. I am indebted to Professor Andrew Lambert for this point.
56. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp.178–79, 186–88; and Fred T. Jane, *The Imperial Russian Navy* (reprint ed., London: W. Thacker, 1983), pp. 202–51.
57. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 275; Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 173–78.
58. NID Report No. 118, “Russian Fleet and Dockyards (The Baltic),” January 1887. TNA: ADM 231/10.
59. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp.172, 178; and Jane, *The Imperial Russian Navy*, pp. 223–29.
60. Foreign Office to Admiralty, June 11, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6934. Hall's response was dated June 22, 1888.
61. Ibid.
62. Roger Parkinson's assessment is in close agreement. See *The Late Victorian Navy*, pp. 50–51.
63. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 178–79. During the same years the Royal Navy laid down only seven first-class and one second-class battleship, but had another seven first-class and one second-class battleship under construction as of 1883, whereas Russia had none.
64. For accounts of lesser naval powers during the decade, see Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp.114–69, 216–82, 334–421, Robert Gardiner and Andrew Lambert (eds.), *Steam, Steel, and Shellfire: The Steam Warship 1815–1905* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 2001), pp. 95–111; Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, pp. 191–201.
65. And forcing the British to seek points on the Russian Black Sea littoral against which to launch offensive operations in the event of conflict. See Barbara Jelavich, “British Means of Offense Against Russia in the Nineteenth Century,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (1974): 119–35.
66. FIC Report No. 64, “General Outline of Possible Naval Operations Against Russia,” March 1885. TNA: ADM 231/6. This report is discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.
67. Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), vol. 4, p. 50.

68. Ibid., p. 106
69. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 205.
70. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, p. 282, and Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, p. 41.
71. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, pp. 204–05.
72. Ibid., p. 208, and Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 15–25.
73. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 286–89, 299. They note that three of these vessels, the Océan class, laid down in 1865–66, were “much inferior” to the contemporary British HMS *Hercules*, which was itself no longer counted as part of the Royal Navy’s frontline strength by the mid-1880s.
74. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, pp. 203–09.
75. Ibid., p. 208; Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, p. 22.
76. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 283–91.
77. Ibid., pp. 27–31.
78. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 221 and 267–80.
79. Roger Parkinson’s assessment closely mirrors that presented here. See *The Late Victorian Navy*, pp. 49–50, 91, 103–05, 114. Indeed, Parkinson observes that there was a fundamental “contradiction in Hall’s outlook in that as Director of the FIC he had access to the attaché reports which showed the French and Russian Navies to be very much less a threat that was suggested in the press and elsewhere, yet when calculating the material needs for a war with either or both powers he resolutely claimed that the Royal Navy was far short of the requisite ships for the task” (p. 114).
80. FIC Report No. 35, “French Fleet and Dockyards (South Coast),” May 1884. TNA: ADM 231/4.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Cooper Key to Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, December 2, 1884, quoted in Oscar Parkes, *British Battleships, 1860–1950* (London: Seeley Service Co., 1957), p. 328. Emphasis added. For more on the Truth about the Navy campaign and its results see John F. Beeler, “In the Shadow of Briggs: A new perspective on British naval administration and W. T. Stead’s ‘Truth about the Navy’ campaign of 1884,” *International Journal of Naval History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (April 2002), <http://www.ijnhonline.org/issues/volume-1-2002/apr-2002-vol-1-issue-1/>.
84. For a discussion of Aube and the *Jeune Ecole* see Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 153–80.
85. War Office to Admiralty, February 15, 1886. TNA: ADM 1/6942.
86. Ibid.

87. FIC Report No. 101, "French Fleet and Dockyards," April 1886. TNA: ADM 231/9. See also Ropp, p. 172.
88. FIC Report No. 119, "Present and Prospective Ship-Building Policy of Foreign Nations," November 1886. TNA: ADM 231/10.
89. FIC Report No. 112, "French Fleet and Dockyards (North and West Coasts)," September 1886. TNA: ADM 231/10.
90. Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, p. 309. Protected cruisers had an armored deck protecting the vitals, but lacked vertical armor on the sides or guns. Despite the dockyards' efforts, only one of these modest-sized (2,000 tons displacement) vessels was completed in less than four years, and one, owing to the failure of its original engines, was under construction from 1887 to August 1894.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 307. Although both also carried full sailing rigs, which reduced speed and endurance under steam.
92. Of this proposed program, three 1,950 tons displacement protected cruisers were laid down in 1886–87, two considerably larger ones (3,000–3,300 tons) in 1887 and three larger still (4,000–4,400 tons) the same year. All were completed between 1890 and 1894. See Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 309–10.
93. FIC Report No. 8Ba, "Naval Dockyard Ports and LaRochelle," December 1886. TNA: ADM 231/10.
94. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, p. 172.
95. For the French perspective of the maneuvers, see *ibid.*, pp. 174–77.
96. FIC Report No. 108, "Naval Manoeuvres in the Mediterranean," August 1886. TNA: ADM 231/9.
97. NID Report No. 130 "Naval Manoeuvres in the Mediterranean," August 1887. TNA: ADM 231/11.
98. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 178, 180.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 181
100. NID Report No. 160, "French Fleet and Dockyards (Toulon and La Seyne)," April 1888. TNA: ADM 231/12.
101. *Ibid.* Note that this activity, and the navy's alleged ignorance as to what was transpiring, was that which prompted Marder to charge that the Admiralty was engulfed in a blue funk. Domville's report demonstrates that nothing could have been further from the truth.
102. *The Times*, February 4, 1888, p. 12.
103. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, p. 132.
104. Cecil, *Salisbury*, vol. 4, p. 187. Marder cites Cecil in his own account of the Naval Defence Act. See *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, p. 143.
105. Salisbury to Goschen, February 10, 1892, quoted in Cecil, *Salisbury*, vol. 4, p. 188. Goschen served in the Salisbury Ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer 1886–92. He later served in the third Salisbury ministry

- (1895–1901) as First Lord of the Admiralty. See Arthur Elliot, *The Life of George Joachim Goschen, 1831–1907* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911), vol. 2, pp. 155–60 and 201–24.
106. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 326 (1888), col. 105.
 107. Edgar Feuchtwanger and William J. Philpott, “Civil-Military Relations in a Period Without Major Wars, 1855–85,” in Paul Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 7.
 108. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 326 (1888), col. 5.
 109. Quoted in Algernon Cecil, *Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), p. 294.
 110. William Gladstone, *The Midlothian Speeches, 1879* (reprint ed., New York: The Humanities Press, 1971), pp. 130–57, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 169.
 111. Aubrey L. Kennedy, *Salisbury, 1830–1903: Portrait of a Statesman* (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 135.
 112. Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), p. 496.
 113. George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868 to 1885* (London: John Murray, 1917), pp. 276–77.
 114. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 244.
 115. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868 to 1885*, pp. 276–77 and Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 330. Cambridge was notoriously conservative, autocratic, and contemptuous of civilian administrators. In his resistance to the last he was fortified by his connection to the throne, being Queen Victoria’s first cousin.
 116. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 126. For more positive appraisals of Hamilton, see J. R. H. Weaver (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1922–1930* (London 1937), p. 389; the more recent entry in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter ODNB) by John Ramsden, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33667?docPos=2>; and C. I. Hamilton’s *Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805–1927* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 119.
 117. Victoria to Salisbury, June 8, 1888, printed in George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria* (3rd ser., 1886–90, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), p. 413.
 118. Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 12, 1888, printed in *ibid.*, p. 414–15.
 119. Extracts from the Queen’s Journal, April 5, 1889, printed in *ibid.*, p. 490.
 120. Salisbury to Forwood, 1 August 1886, quoted in Paul Smith, “Ruling the Waves: Government, the Service and the Cost of Naval Supremacy, 1885–99,” in *idem.*, *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain*, p. 27.
 121. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886 to 1906* (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 35.

122. Forwood to Hamilton, November 17, 1886, quoted in Smith, "Ruling the Waves," p. 27.
123. Ibid. Thomas Brassey, another civilian with extensive knowledge of ships and shipping, had behaved in similar fashion when Civil Lord and Parliamentary Secretary during the second Gladstone administration. See Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 197–99.
124. Forwood to Hamilton, November 24, 1887, quoted in Smith, "Ruling the Waves," p. 32.
125. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences 1886 to 1906*, pp. 87–88; Smith, "Ruling the Waves." pp. 29–34.
126. Smith, "Ruling the Waves," pp. 26–35. Graham was also in poor health.
127. Ibid., p. 33.
128. "First report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee. minutes of evidence, and appendix, *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 12, p. 557. Evidence of Second Naval Lord Anthony Hiley Hoskins.
129. "Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix," *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13, p. 262.
130. Ibid., pp. 240–42, 254. Evidence of First Naval Lord Arthur Hood.
131. Lord Charles Beresford, Junior Naval Lord until his own resignation in January 1888, attested to Hamilton's discretion in his dealings with the Board. See *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), col. 935. The phrase "compass of finance" was used by Hamilton in a February 1888 speech. See *The Times*, February 4, 1888, p. 12.
132. "Evidence, Written and Oral, taken by the Royal Commission appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relationship of those Departments to each other and to the Treasury" (generally known as the Hartington Commission), TNA: HO 73/35/3.
133. Ibid.
134. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 326 (1888), cols. 5–6.
135. Ibid. Editor's note: he was certainly correct. Officers on the Active List had no business publicly criticizing their civilian overseers. If they did not care for Salisbury's stewardship, they should have retired or resigned before going public.
136. Salisbury to Cabinet, "French Invasion (Most Confidential)," June 6, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/21/14.
137. Hamilton to Cabinet, "Navy Estimates," November 10, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/21/24.
138. Smith, "Ruling the Waves," p. 36. Hood submitted the proposal on July 1, 1888. See Admiralty to Cabinet, "The Requirements of the British Navy,"

- July 1, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/22/36. See also *The Times*, April 12, 1889, p. 5, for references made by Hood to the proposal.
139. On the Board's consideration of strategic factors when debate ship designs during the 1870s, see Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 87–96.
 140. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 558.
 141. Matthew Allen, "The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty," pp. 71–74.
 142. Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 296.
 143. *The Times*, May 25, 1888, p. 9.

Ideas and Institutions: The Development of Officer Education, Strategic Thinking, and Intelligence Collection in the Royal Navy, 1870–1888

Although the creation of an Admiralty intelligence unit was a critical step in the translation of strategic ideas from theory into practice, the ideas themselves long predated the FIC's establishment in 1882.¹ They were rooted in the wartime experiences of the Victorian officer corps' predecessors—the naval element of what has been described as the “British way in warfare.”² Royal Navy officers learned in the earliest stages of their careers that naval predominance was the only means to ensure the unimpeded flow of commerce and to protect the home islands from invasion. The service's institutional memory, founded on the exploits of Blake, Hawke, Rodney, Nelson, and a host of others, regarded British naval supremacy as the consequence of offensive naval strategy. “[T]he frontier of our Empire is the enemy's coastline,” Philip Colomb remarked in May 1888:

At the beginning of this century, there was a certain defined way of looking at the situation of these islands surrounded by water, at the water surrounding them, and at the possible enemies' coasts which bounded the water. Our islands were strictly regarded as the capital of an empire, surrounded by a water territory, the frontier of which was the enemy's coast.³

This linkage between culture, history, and strategy in the nineteenth-century Royal Navy was grounded in the development between 1650 and 1815 of a highly effective operational strategy, one which was never promulgated in service manuals or sweeping doctrinal pronouncements.

Instead, senior officers inculcated the following generation of naval leaders with the precepts that they had learned, ensuring that their successors were intellectually prepared to carry out the traditional duties of the Royal Navy: sea-denial, power projection, trade protection, and seeking decisive battle. This point is underscored by Andrew Lambert, who notes that

[t]he Royal Navy did not create doctrine in the nineteenth century, in contrast to the French, Russian, American and German navies, because it was neither rebuilding after defeat nor creating a new service. It relied on its corporate memory, its history for guidance. The transmission of this knowledge was a major part of the intellectual development of career sea officers.⁴

British strategic doctrine in the nineteenth century (and the twentieth as well) was thus grounded in the collective knowledge of service history. Looking to the past reminded naval officers of the value of blockade and other traditional applications of British naval power. From 1815 through the mid-1850s, the principal tool for application of this naval strategy remained the heavily armed wooden battlefleet, consisting of two- and three-decked warships capable of conducting offensive missions such as blockade, coastal bombardment, and power projection overseas.

The technological revolution which began with the application of steam and encompassed iron, and later steel hulls, armor, modern ordnance, torpedoes, and electricity, is alleged by many historians to have thrown the Royal Navy into decades of strategic confusion, as old verities seemed overturned by technological change, leaving the officer corps intellectually adrift, grasping at straws.⁵ This interpretation has, however, been recently and persuasively challenged by several scholars.⁶ So far from losing sight of overarching strategic concepts in a welter of technological minutiae, the Admiralty responded promptly and effectively to the difficulties and opportunities posed by change.

An example of continuity of the strategic traditions of the Royal Navy is seen in the Admiralty's response to steam propulsion and its implications for both naval strategy and the future shape of capital ships. In what Lambert terms the "Cherbourg Strategy," the Navy planned offensive operations to supplement the traditional blockade following the completion of a well-fortified naval base and dockyard at Cherbourg, on the northwest coast of France.⁷ If steam appeared to give the French Navy the capability to mount a "bolt from the blue"—an invasion force capable of evading blockaders—it simultaneously offered the Royal Navy enhanced

power-projection capability, including the means to destroy enemy ships and infrastructure via coastal assault, before the former had the opportunity to put to sea. The primary objective of this strategy was to ensure British naval supremacy in the Channel through the destruction of the new naval base and dockyard.

To accomplish the latter task, Admiralty planners exploited the lessons learned during the last naval campaign against France. “The logic of war at sea after 1805 suggested that the Royal Navy would face its most difficult tasks ashore, or even inside the arsenals of its rivals,” notes Lambert. “In consequence of a new strand of naval thought, pioneered during the Napoleonic conflict, the navy employed technology to enhance the capability of warships to act against the shore, both for amphibious power projection and for the direct assault of fortified harbours.”⁸ This strand was an important component of the forward strategy that prevailed within the Royal Navy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If blockading operations could no longer ensure command of the sea, the employment of offensive coastal operations would. This approach appeared especially useful if the enemy was predisposed to safeguard its “fleet-in-being” rather than risk the loss of its assets at sea in a contest with the Royal Navy. To accomplish this mission in the ironclad era the Admiralty designed and built a series of heavily armed, low-freeboard armour-clads—the “breast-work monitors” and their successors—designed to withstand the fire of heavy shore installations.⁹

After the technological uncertainties of the 1860s and 1870s, the Royal Navy gradually began to regain its traditional strategic footing, due mainly to improved steam technology—water-tube boilers and triple-expansion engines—in British capital ship designs, which enhanced their operational radius and endurance. With faster and more efficient steam engines, the application of blockade again appeared feasible to thwart the egress of commerce raiders from enemy ports. Meanwhile, offensive coastal operations remained an essential mission of the service, as demonstrated by the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882.

As of that date, however, the Admiralty had yet to emerge from the technological upheaval of 1860s and 1870s with a fully developed understanding of the duties the navy was expected to perform, a confusion compounded by bewilderment over the optimal mixture of forces required to accomplish them. This point is again underscored by Beeler: “The British navy was expected (and did) perform a multitude of operations worldwide. This salient fact largely explains why the formulation of a coherent

strategy, and, much more, the construction of a fleet with which to implement it, were so problematic during the mid-Victorian era.”¹⁰ What was required in the Admiralty—in addition to an appreciation of the operational advantages offered by maturing technologies—were administrators who shared an interest in strategic issues and could work together to devise a force structure that met the service’s wartime needs.

If the Admiralty were to develop heightened strategic awareness, the impetus would have to come from the officer corps, particularly from officers with the intellectual foundation and strategic vision to grasp the service’s future requirements. The officers who met these criteria were for the most part associated with and encouraged by Sir John Knox Laughton (Figure 4.1), the influential naval educator and historian who from the 1870s had been urging that history be used as the servant of strategic thought and the basis for modern tactics, service doctrine, and national strategy.¹¹ What appealed to them was Laughton’s revival of strategic ideas that had been obscured by the economic constraints and technological uncertainty that confounded British naval policy in the 1860s and 1870s. Laughton, a mathematician by training and a naval schoolmaster who served in the Baltic campaigns of 1854 and 1855, later studied with the eminent historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner and gained prominence in the service as a distinguished lecturer in naval history at the RNC. The audience he wished to influence during the course of these annual lecture courses were the mid-level officers in attendance at the college—Commanders and junior Captains, many of whom he had taught as midshipmen during his earlier career as schoolmaster—among them future flag officers and framers of naval policy.

His initiative and enthusiasm gradually expanded his audience to include much of the senior officer corps. His most important convert was Astley Cooper Key, the first President of the Naval College at Greenwich and First Naval Lord from 1879 to 1885.¹² Cooper Key encouraged Laughton to continue his historical research and incorporate it in the study of strategic thought. In his presence in 1874, Laughton read a seminal paper at the RUSI on “The Scientific Study of Naval History.” In it he argued that naval history, if done methodically and accurately, and studied painstakingly could yield insights that were just as relevant in the ironclad era as they were to the age of sail: “I have argued against the idea that the study of naval history is useless—is a waste of time; I have argued that, on the contrary, it is a study of vital importance, and that the lessons it conveys are of very direct and practical meaning.”¹³ The following year, Laughton

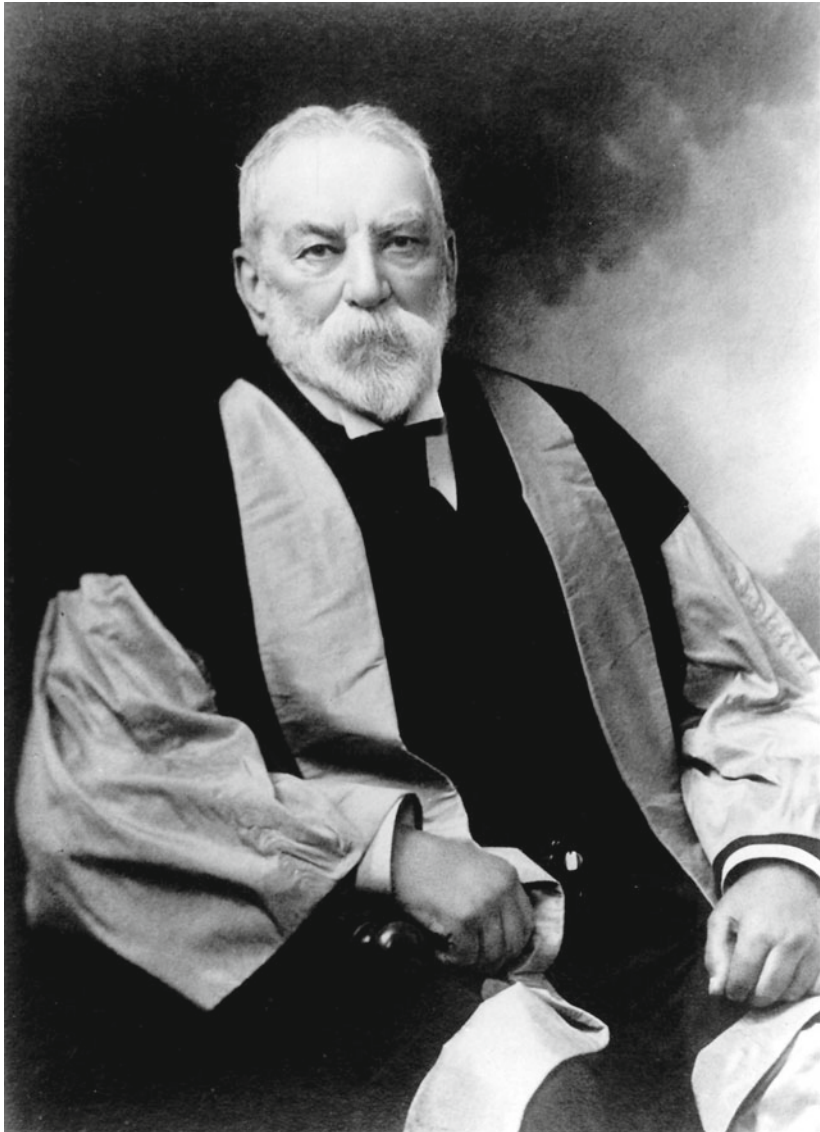


Fig. 4.1 Pioneering naval historian John Knox Laughton (1830–1915) was a critical influence on both British and American policy and strategy during the 1870s and 1880s (Image courtesy Professor Andrew Lambert)

argued that the value of naval history extended beyond mere tactical considerations: “[a] great deal has been said at different times about the study of tactics, but the scientific study of history is the study of tactics; it is a great deal more; it is the study of strategy, of organisation, and of discipline, and it is the only sound basis of that study.”¹⁴

To facilitate his research Laughton was given preferential access to the Admiralty archives and, until retiring from the RNC in 1885, continued to promote to his students an approach to strategic thinking that applied history to solving problems in modern naval warfare. In this effort he received considerable support from the intellectual elite of the senior officer corps, in particular Geoffrey Phipps Hornby (Figure 4.2) and Philip Colomb. Hornby was an ardent supporter of Laughton’s, so much so that the latter honored Hornby by dedicating his *Letters and Despatches of Horatio, Viscount Nelson* (1886) to him. Colomb also came to share Laughton’s enthusiasm for naval history, and was chosen to succeed him as lecturer in naval history at the RNC.¹⁵

Besides these two officers, both of whom later played critical roles in the public campaign for heightened strategic awareness in 1888, Laughton was also close to several officers in the Admiralty’s intelligence establishment. During the critical years of 1888 and 1889, for example, he was in frequent touch with Captains Reginald N. Custance and Sydney M. Eardley-Wilmot, both of whom were working in the NID. Both were also active members of RUSI, which functioned as an unofficial think-tank, and served on its executive council with Laughton.¹⁶ He was also well acquainted with the DNI, having served with William Hall for three years on board the Gunnery Training Ship HMS *Excellent*.¹⁷ In later years, the appointment of Captains Cyprian A. G. Bridge—Laughton’s oldest friend and intellectual companion—and Prince Louis of Battenberg to the NID brought Laughton even closer to strategic deliberations within the Admiralty. Thus, while Laughton never deliberately sought to influence the framing of British naval policy during the 1880s and 1890s, his imprint on the strategic thinking that inspired the Naval Defence Act is unmistakable and thus warrants both acknowledgment and further examination.

The movement to create an intelligence unit at the Admiralty was the first significant step toward institutionalizing the strategic ideas and the formalized study of naval history championed by Laughton. An important addition to the Admiralty’s administrative capacity, its very existence and scope of responsibilities ultimately sparked the re-emergence of a longstanding struggle between politicians and professionals over the

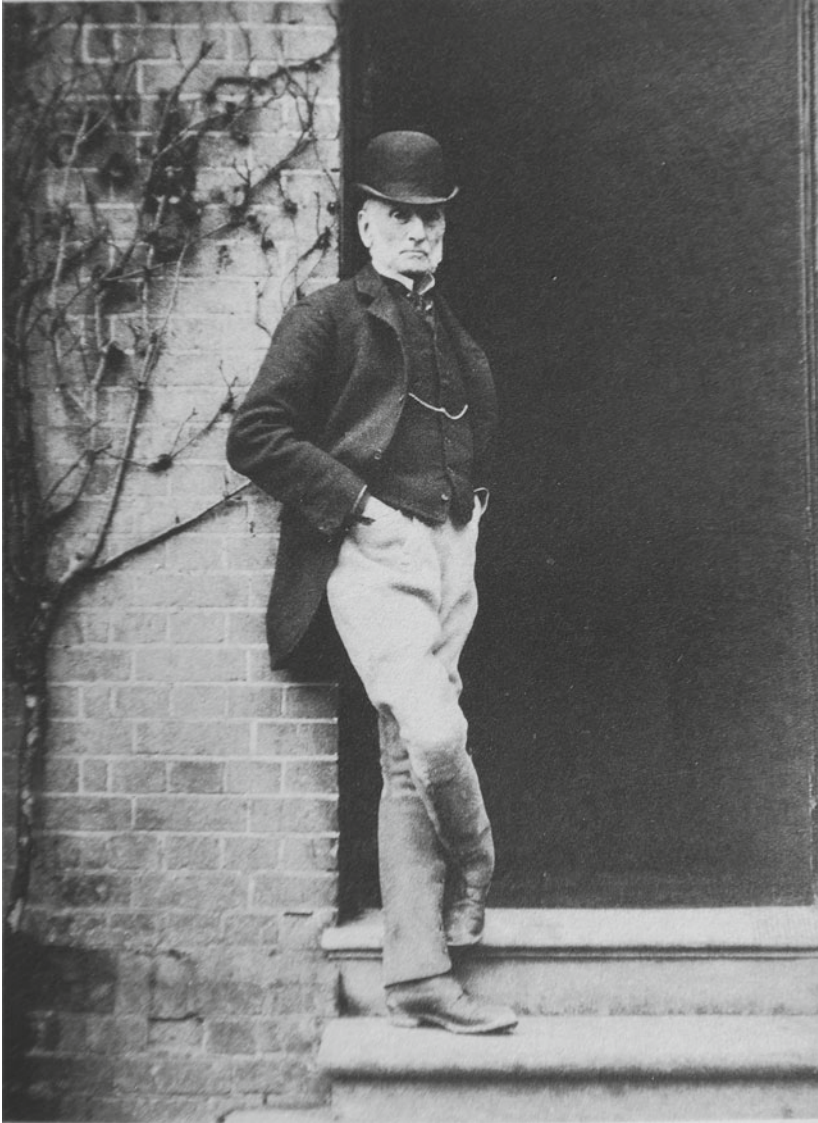


Fig. 4.2 Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby (1825–1895), almost certainly the most respected flag officer and naval tactician of the mid and late Victorian eras, was a longstanding advocate of naval reform (Image courtesy Professor John Beeler)

prevailing budget-driven approach to naval policy formulation. Eventually a minor controversy over the NID was transformed into a public debate that led to the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act.

* * *

Today it would be extraordinary for a military service not to possess a department devoted to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence. The Royal Navy's security environment, however, was much different in the midst of the prolonged general peace that followed Napoleon's defeat. Indeed, until the technological revolution that transformed naval warfare the Admiralty saw little need for such a department: it was already the recipient of adequate intelligence of foreign naval developments from the Foreign and War Offices, and in many cases from its own Department of Hydrography, which collected intelligence while conducting navigational surveys.¹⁸ Moreover, the technological revolution that began with the application of steam power to large ships of war led to the expansion of the existing intelligence-gathering apparatus. By 1860 the Admiralty was appointing naval officers as attachés to diplomatic missions specifically to gather information, two of them to report on European navies and, a few years later, one to do the same in the United States.¹⁹

The first significant effort to add a dedicated intelligence function to the Admiralty's administrative structure occurred in the mid-1870s when Geoffrey Phipps Hornby attempted to remedy the want of a professional staff to assist the Naval Lords in considering strategy, wartime mobilization, and force planning suitable for naval warfare in the machine age. At this point Hornby was widely regarded as the finest tactician in the Royal Navy and he tried to use his leverage on a number of occasions to compel the Admiralty to agree to the creation of a naval staff.²⁰ When asked to join the Board in March 1874, Hornby demanded an inquiry into the state of the fleet and the appointment of a naval officer to assist him in the transaction of business. First Lord of the Admiralty George Ward Hunt refused and Hornby declined the post, although at the urging of colleagues in November 1874 he accepted the position of Second Naval Lord without conditions.²¹

When First Naval Lord Admiral Sir Alexander Milne retired in June 1876, Hornby attempted to form a cabal with Frederick Beauchamp Seymour and Astley Cooper Key, the two other senior officers he thought

most likely to be offered Milne's post. Their condition for acceptance would be the establishment of a naval staff: "if we agree that certain reforms are necessary for the efficiency of the service, and refuse to accept the position of First Sea Lord unless they are carried out, we must carry our point."²² His effort failed: Ward Hunt instead selected the compliant, and ailing, Hastings Yelverton as First Naval Lord.²³ And when the First Naval Lord's position fell vacant in 1879, Cooper Key, who, unlike Hornby, was not independently wealthy and who had recently re-married, accepted the position without conditions and remained in it until 1885. Hornby himself went to sea as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Squadron, in which capacity he was Britain's point man during the Anglo-Russian Crisis of 1877–78. Soon after his return to England he was appointed President of the RNC at Greenwich.

By the early 1880s other voices were also calling for the establishment of a naval staff devoted to intelligence collection and analysis. In an 1881 RUSI lecture Captain John Colomb, a retired Royal Marine officer, Conservative MP, and brother of Philip Colomb, emphasized the importance of intelligence-gathering and strategic planning for naval policymaking.²⁴ In stressing the need for an "organized and far-reaching system of naval intelligence," Colomb listed the classes of information he considered crucial for the protection of commerce and the blockade of enemy ports. The most essential were "the naval policies and arrangements of foreign nations as indicated by the war-vessels they build or buy ... [and] the material resources, active or dormant, of maritime nations, both as regards construction, refitment, and maintenance."²⁵ He also stressed the importance of knowing "the principles and details of construction, armament, machinery, appliance, and efficiencies or deficiencies of ... [rivals'] warships ... [and] all matters relating to the personnel ... of their war navies."²⁶ He did not, however, call for this proposed department to undertake operational or other war planning, which was traditionally the preserve of the Board of Admiralty or local Commanders in Chief.

The demand for a naval intelligence function was bolstered in March 1882 by the recommendations of the Carnarvon Commission on Imperial Defence, a body created in the wake of the Russian War Scare (1878) that included Alexander Milne among its members. The Commission's second report urged the creation of an intelligence unit "as a matter of some urgency."²⁷ In December of that year, Sir George Tryon—a close confidant of Hornby's who had recently been appointed Acting Permanent Secretary of the Admiralty—spearheaded the establishment of the FIC,

an ad hoc group assigned the task of collecting, analyzing, and providing the Board with the sort of information specified by Colomb the previous year.²⁸ The committee was divided into Military, Secret, and Political Branches, the activities of which were overseen by the Secretary of the Admiralty who, thanks to the administrative structure of the Admiralty wielded great, albeit informal, power.²⁹ Major General Sir George Aston, R.M., an early member of the FIC with extensive staff experience elsewhere, referred to the Secretariat as

the greatest power in the Admiralty for good or for evil. They wielded great power by the way they presented the briefs to their Lordships, by the turn of the phrases in the letters they drafted to the Fleet and to other Government Offices, [and] by the influence they could exert upon the tone of the replies from other Departments³⁰

The often overbearing Tryon also selected Captain William H. Hall to chair the Committee. A gunnery specialist, Hall had served aboard HMS *Excellent* with First Naval Lord Cooper Key, as well as Cooper Key's successor, Arthur Hood, the up-and-coming John A. Fisher, Cyprian Bridge, and John Knox Laughton, all of whom voiced strong and well-informed (if not always unbiased) opinions on the course of British naval policy.³¹ While on the *Excellent* Hall probably came to value historical knowledge thanks to his interactions with Laughton and Bridge, both of them later founders of the NRS.³² In time Hall himself became a recognized authority on naval affairs, especially while serving as Director of the NID. By the late 1880s he was "in the van of naval thinkers"—in part due to his "sheer force of *character* and of *knowing*."³³ Hall was also known for his energy and apparently limitless capacity for work.³⁴ His death at the age of fifty-two in 1895 was probably related to overwork. Aston, who served under him, recalled that Hall routinely worked fourteen hours a day and eschewed holidays.³⁵ Like most officers, Hall regarded the navy as the shield of the British Empire. He constantly reminded his subordinates of the service's offensive orientation, as enunciated by the Carnarvon Commission:

The Royal Navy is not maintained for the purpose of affording direct local protection to seaports or harbours, but for the object of blockading the ports of an enemy, of destroying his trade, attacking his possessions, dealing with his ships at sea, and, we may add, of preventing an attack in great force against any special place.³⁶

Enabling the fleet to carry out these tasks required an intelligence unit capable of acquiring and analyzing information on foreign naval developments in timely fashion. The FIC, however, operated on a shoestring and suffered chronic staff shortages, perhaps one reason why Hall worked such long hours.³⁷

Lack of manpower or no, Hall and his staff had little difficulty acquiring abundant information on the naval developments of foreign countries, most notably France and Russia, thanks to the reports of the naval attachés. Obtaining such information was usually easy, thanks to the reciprocal courtesy shown by European governments to foreign officials.³⁸ Naval attachés of every country were routinely allowed to visit foreign naval bases and dockyards, and visit warships in commission and under construction. These visits were vital to intelligence collection, for ship design and the state of the dockyards, were telling indicators of the naval policies and, ultimately, the national strategies of potential rivals.

Within two years of being appointed head of the FIC, Hall was afforded an exceptional opportunity to make the case for the strategic principles that traditionally guided the Royal Navy in wartime. In September 1884 Cooper Key asked him to draft a memorandum outlining a plan of campaign for a naval war against France. The impetus for Cooper Key's request probably came from a series of articles on "The Truth of the Navy," the first of which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on September 8, 1884. Written anonymously by William T. Stead, an alarmist journalist and editor of the paper, the articles appeared under the pseudonym "One Who Knows the Facts" and incited widespread domestic alarm over the alleged inadequacy and unreadiness of British naval assets—ships, shore-side infrastructure, coaling stations and their defenses—in the event of war with France, to say nothing of a maritime conflict with two or more enemies.³⁹ "[W]e are just a little ahead of France in ships, behind her in guns and age of our ships," warned Stead. "Instead of making up lost ground we are losing it"⁴⁰

Nobody at the Admiralty was better qualified to consider the circumstances of a future Anglo-French naval war than Hall. The memorandum he submitted in September 1884 combined awareness of naval history, suggesting Laughton's influence on his thinking, with modern strategic analysis. From the outset he identified two possible naval strategies to secure Britain and its trade from its cross-channel neighbor, both of which boasted rationales rooted in historical precedent. The first was based primarily upon the doctrines of commerce protection and maritime

interdiction, which in the mid-1880s would involve cruiser squadrons patrolling vital sea lanes of communication while convoys would be implemented to protect the merchant marine from attack by enemy commerce raiders.⁴¹ Efforts would also be made to protect dockyard and commercial ports, as well as overseas coaling stations and colonial possessions vulnerable to attack by enemy squadrons.

To employ such a strategy, Hall argued, would be unfeasible given the scope of the operations required: "To carry it out would require far more ships than we are ever likely to be able to procure, and so many weak points would still be left, especially in our lines of ocean traffic, that it could not be effective." But what Hall considered the strategy's "gravest objection" was its *defensive* orientation, which would yield the initiative to France: "it would leave the enemy free to employ his fleet as he thought proper, and to fit out uninterruptedly what ships he likes." To do so would constitute a radical departure from the Royal Navy's strategic heritage, and Hall made it perfectly clear in his report that "a *defensive* policy ... is utterly at variance with the traditions of the British navy, whose role has always been that of *attack*, and not *defence*."⁴²

Thus, the preferable course of action was to adhere to the navy's strategic tradition, conducting offensive operations designed to accomplish three objectives: (1) to seek out and capture all deployed enemy warships at the outset of hostilities; (2) to conduct offensive operations against enemy naval arsenals so that its warships could neither escape nor make an effective defense; and (3) to seek the reduction of enemy coaling stations and commercial ports, as well as naval bases and dockyards, through bombardment. Such an offensive posture would give the initiative to the British and deny it to the enemy. In Hall's words,

Another strong reason in favour of an *offensive* policy is that if *promptly* carried out, by striking simultaneously at several vulnerable points on the French coast and in the French possessions abroad ... the attention of the enemy would be directed from the attack of *our* vulnerable points to the defence of its own.⁴³

With so many objectives in mind, Hall concluded that the fleet could not attain them all at the same time: "... the question naturally arises, if our present resources are unequal to the execution of *all* these operations *simultaneously*, could not the operations be taken in succession, or, if not, what is our fleet capable of accomplishing?"⁴⁴ He answered these

questions by prioritizing strategic imperatives in a war with France. Of paramount concern was the destruction of all enemy ships abroad:

The operation which I place first is the attack of the ships in commission. This I consider to be the most important of all. The ships are distributed on the several stations in close proximity not only to our own war-vessels but our commerce, and frequently to our possessions, are always ready for action, and by a flash of the telegraph can be converted into *active* enemies and started off to harass our commerce and possessions. Their prompt capture is therefore of the most vital importance.⁴⁵

That mission accomplished, the next task would be attacking French home dockyards, coaling stations, and commercial ports, in succession. Hall advocated the immediate bombardment of the French naval bases at Cherbourg and Brest, to be conducted by a squadron of battleships suitable for offensive coastal operations.⁴⁶ In the meantime, the battleships in reserve at home would supplement the Mediterranean squadron to “watch” the French naval base at Toulon. Hall also advocated monitoring both Brest and Cherbourg.

No provision was made for the close blockade of these ports, as had been done during the Napoleonic Wars. Hall doubted whether such a blockade was feasible under modern conditions, in particular the threat posed by torpedoes: “[t]he chief work in which the bulk of our line-of-battle ships were employed in the last war with France, viz, the blockade of the enemy’s ships in his home ports, is ... considered to be an impossible, or, at all events, a most dangerous endeavour at the present time ...”⁴⁷ Despite appreciation of the dangers likely to be encountered when conducting naval operations off the enemy’s coastline, however, Hall was confident of British naval capabilities. Although he doubted the practicality of the close blockade, and substituted for it offensive coastal operations, his analysis makes clear that he was committed to the strategic traditions of the service, while perceiving the operational realities of modern naval warfare.

Hall submitted a similar planning document for a naval war with Russia to the Board the following year, at the height of Anglo-Russian tensions over a boundary dispute at Panjdeh, in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ The report reiterated many of the points made in his plan for war with France. He appreciated that the Russian Navy, still in a state of infancy relative to the Royal Navy, could do little beyond waging a *guerre de course* campaign against

British commerce.⁴⁹ The problem was that it lacked even the capabilities and resources to do that to an extent that it would constitute a serious menace.

As was the case with France, Hall again rejected a defensive naval strategy centered on commerce protection, for such a plan would require protecting “92,000 miles of waterway communications.”⁵⁰ In a subsequent report almost certainly authored by Hall and submitted to the Admiralty in May 1885, the FIC cautioned that “no system of patrolling the ocean highways can of itself secure protection to our commerce”⁵¹ At the same time, however, Hall and his staff discounted the threat posed by purpose-built fast cruisers, of which Russia possessed exactly one as of 1885⁵²:

[i]t is assumed that the class of vessel with which Russia will probably assail our commerce, more particularly our steam trade, on the high seas, is not the low speed and small coal capacity war-cruizer, but the long steam-cruizing armed merchant-steamer of *good*, but not necessarily very high speed.⁵³

As had been the case during the Eastern Crisis in 1878, Russia planned to rely on a “volunteer fleet” of auxiliary cruisers to conduct its *guerre de course*. Such vessels could not stand up to even the smallest purpose-built British warship (although they could escape from many of them owing to superior speed), and it is a measure both of Russia’s backwardness and its desperation that it was prepared to wage war with such inadequate *matériel*.

Not surprisingly, Hall advocated an offensive naval strategy that, “besides being in keeping with the *traditions* of the British navy, is easier to accomplish than the other, and more likely to secure efficient protection to our commerce.”⁵⁴ Due to the fortifications at Cronstadt and Sweaborg, both of them in the Gulf of Finland, guarding the approaches to St. Petersburg, he deprecated coastal operations to reduce these “impregnable” naval bases by means of bombardment. But it would be a straightforward task to deploy a powerful squadron at the entrance to the Gulf, and thus prevent the egress of Russian commerce raiders. A smaller squadron would be employed in the Baltic to hunt down any Russian ships that managed to elude the blockading squadron. A watch would also be maintained outside the Dardanelles to prevent Russian ships from escaping the Black Sea and, if Turkey was allied with Britain, Hall recommended offensive operations against Batum or Sevastopol.⁵⁵ He also advocated attacking Vladivostok which, despite its remoteness, was the best cruiser base Russia possessed.

In the final analysis, Hall was confident that such a strategy would prove successful: “I think we may fairly assume that our fleet should be able to lock up in port the ships of the Russian war navy and her mercantile marine, and to prevent those that may be away from her ports when war is declared from materially injuring our commerce.”⁵⁶ Blessed with the strategic flexibility of superior naval power, Hall formulated a war plan against Russia that reflected the circumstances before him. He was able to do so because the Royal Navy had become quite adept over the years at switching between blockade and coastal bombardment. Assessing the situation persuasively, he deemed the former to be preferable in light of the fortifications at Cronstadt and the disparity in naval strength between the two countries. Thus, while the naval campaign planned for Russia differed from that prescribed for France in 1884, in both cases Hall articulated his clear preference for offensive operations consistent with the traditions inherited by his generation of Royal Navy officers.

In the wake of the Panjdeh Crisis—the so-called Russian War Scare of 1885—much concern was voiced at the Admiralty and in public at the slowness of preparation for naval operations against Russia. A Particular Service Squadron under Geoffrey Phipps Hornby was commissioned for operations in the Baltic but was not ready to sail until after the crisis’s resolution.⁵⁷ No voice of criticism at this apparent slowness was louder than that of Captain Lord Charles Beresford (Figure 4.3), the Junior Naval Lord who, following his appointment to the Board in August 1886, quickly became the self-appointed patron of the FIC. Concerned at the lack of any standing plans for naval mobilization in the event of war, Beresford penned a memorandum in October 1886 that proposed transforming the ad hoc Committee into a permanent department to formulate war plans in addition to the collecting, analyzing, and disseminating of naval intelligence to the Board. Never at a loss for words, Beresford “emphatically” and “distinctly” warned the Board of the consequences of inaction: “the gravest state of affairs would occur in this country if war was declared with a first-rate Maritime Power, simply through want of organization, forethought, and ordinary common sense, which would be simply ludicrous if not so perilous.”⁵⁸

Beresford was surely aware that the Board was unlikely to embrace his alarmism. Lord George Hamilton, the First Lord, was a career politician whose priorities, like those of Gladstone, Disraeli, and Salisbury, were fiscal retrenchment and gradual reform. His initial move upon first assuming office in June 1885 was to replace the existing Board with Naval Lords



Fig. 4.3 Popular naval officer Lord Charles Beresford (1846–1919) was the self-appointed patron of the Naval Intelligence Department and instigator of the 1888 navy scare that resulted in the Naval Defence Act of the following year (Image courtesy Professor John Beeler)

sympathetic to his outlook.⁵⁹ The most significant of Hamilton's choices was First Naval Lord Sir Arthur Hood, who, in addition to being the most capable administrator with whom Hamilton worked, embodied the qualities he sought in his chief naval advisor.⁶⁰ Andrew Lambert characterizes Hood as "a careful, painstaking, and essentially conservative officer."⁶¹ The Second and Third Naval Lords, Sir Anthony Hoskins and William Graham, respectively, were likewise chosen by Hamilton on the basis of their sympathy with his views on naval policy.⁶²

Beresford, however, was appointed at the behest of his friend the Prince of Wales, via Lord Salisbury. Hamilton was not pleased. "Though a very gallant and capable officer afloat," he later complained, "Beresford is not suitable to administrative work. His want of reticence and self-restraint makes him difficult as a colleague, and almost impossible as a subordinate. I have had much trouble with him"⁶³ But Beresford was popular with the public and was furthermore a Conservative MP, so Salisbury initially viewed him more as an asset than a liability. That opinion would change over the next year-and-a-half. Upon Beresford's resignation from the Admiralty in January 1888, Salisbury stated to Queen Victoria that he "was an officer of great ability afloat, but he too is greedy of popular applause to get on in a public department. He is constantly playing his own game at the expense of his colleagues in the Department, which causes much irritation."⁶⁴

In addition to being a popular public figure and an MP, Beresford was independently wealthy and therefore less fearful of retribution for speaking his mind than the other Naval Lords. His memorandum regarding the FIC furnishes a case in point. Unwilling to await the Board's decision, Beresford attempted to force its hand by leaking it to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which published it on October 13, 1886.⁶⁵

Not only was Beresford acting provocatively; his move was unnecessary since Hood was then preparing a proposal to expand the FIC's brief to encompass wartime mobilization. As befit his cautious nature, Hood wanted to study the matter further, but he was overruled by the First Lord who, while incensed by the publication of Beresford's memorandum, was mindful of the strong public reaction to its appearance.⁶⁶ Hamilton immediately ordered a report on the subject to be prepared within a month. Hall, hardly the most disinterested and dispassionate party on the subject, was assigned to justify the expansion of the intelligence unit.

Hall submitted an interim report on November 4, 1886 which, predictably, advocated the creation of an enlarged department with a broad

mandate that included mobilization as well as collecting and analyzing intelligence.⁶⁷ Indeed, he recommended that strategic planning be added to the department's duties. Preparation for war, he argued, could only be properly carried out if it was able to consider "the naval strategical operations that could be necessary in certain probable contingencies and the consequent distribution of the naval forces of the country."⁶⁸ Hall's subsequent argument was even more explicit, while at the same time he sought to assuage fears that such work might usurp the power of the Board, especially the First Naval Lord:

the question of naval strategical operations should be one of the subjects to be dealt with by the Intelligence Department; their duty in this respect being limited to laying before the Senior Naval Lord in the most convenient form, all the information required by him for the preparation of a plan of campaign, which preliminary work, judging from my experience of the Russian fear, it is at present nobody's business to undertake.⁶⁹

The force of Hall's arguments swayed both Hamilton and Hood: the latter recommended that his former colleague on HMS *Excellent* head the new department owing to his "experience" and "knowledge of various subjects."⁷⁰ Hall was not keen at the prospect. While he clearly recognized the importance of his position and its potential impact on naval policy formulation, he maintained that the department would be better served with a more senior officer at its head. He was still a relatively junior Captain, having been promoted to the rank a few weeks after his appointment to the FIC in December 1882.⁷¹ He later observed in a letter to Hornby that "placing a *junior* officer at the Head of such a Department would excite unpleasant feelings" and could be used "as an argument to deny its importance which is what has happened."⁷² Despite his efforts to allay their fears, Hall also encountered Board hostility at the perception that his department might "usurp the[ir] functions and authority" Finally, he urged Hornby to use his service influence and his stature as a public figure to help ensure "that the work we have been ardently doing for the last twelve months may, under an officer of greater experience and more influence, develop into what may be as useful to the navy as is the work of the German Staff to their Army."

Unlike the German Chief of Staff, the terms by which the NID was bound prevented it from assuming full responsibility for war planning: that remained the preserve of the Board of Admiralty. Hence, in addition

to its inherited instructions to “[c]ollect, sift, record, and lay before the board all the information relating to maritime matters likely to be of use in war” and to “[p]repare and keep correct to date, a complete plan for mobilising the Naval forces of the Empire with the utmost possible rapidity, and with the least strain on the Admiralty,” it could only “prepare plans of Naval Campaign, for the consideration of the Board” when instructed to, and while it was charged with furnishing the Board “all points affecting ‘Preparation for War,’” it was “to be distinctly understood that the Intelligence Department is ‘not to indicate to the Board any policy in connection with shipbuilding, armaments, &c., unless called upon to do so.’”⁷³

Hall did have direct access to the First Naval Lord, but reported to the entire Board only at the First Lord’s behest. At the same time, there can be no doubt of the Admiralty’s appreciation of the NID’s value. Shortly after its establishment the Transport Department was ousted from its offices in the Admiralty building to create space for it, as “it was considered desirable that the Intelligence Department be as close as possible to the Board.”⁷⁴

* * *

The newly created department began work on February 1, 1887 with a larger staff than the FIC had had. It was divided into two sections, one for mobilization, the other for intelligence, both of them under Hall’s oversight. Captain Reginald Custance, a future DNI himself, headed the former; Captain Sydney Eardley-Wilmot the latter.⁷⁵ Custance focused chiefly on personnel and logistical issues.⁷⁶ Of central concern to him was wartime coaling arrangements for the fleet, also a favourite topic of Beresford while at the Admiralty.⁷⁷ To that end he solicited the opinions of the Department of Contracts, which bore responsibility for purchasing coal, and that of Transports, which was charged with conveying it to coaling stations, and devised a policy for fitting and employing colliers in foreign waters in support of protracted naval operations.⁷⁸ The policy was then continually reassessed during the annual naval maneuvers.⁷⁹ While the Board dictated the scenarios for these exercises, Custance and his staff oversaw them and the subsequent compilation of reports from the umpires and participants.⁸⁰

The intelligence section undertook the duties formerly carried out by the FIC, its raw material chiefly the reports of the naval attachés, who followed instructions from the First Naval Lord, after consultation with Hall.⁸¹ Acting on those instructions, the naval attachés frequently visited

naval dockyards and facilities in Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, and France. The latter two countries attracted most of their attention, for in the late 1880s both were investing significantly, albeit inconsistently, in the modernization of their fleets.⁸² The reports forwarded to London provided detailed information on the rate of progress, including qualitative specifics about French and Russian ships that were quite revealing. Their contents served to discount the widely accepted belief that France and Russia were undertaking ambitious shipbuilding programs with the intention of surpassing the Royal Navy's battlefleet, either in terms of quality or of quantity. As demonstrated by their handwritten notations, both Hamilton and Hood paid close attention to these reports, and their tenor encouraged the former to keep naval expenditures within politically acceptable bounds.

Yet notwithstanding its value, the NID's activities were viewed with suspicion by Hood, who was concerned that it might pose a challenge to his authority.⁸³ Despite his heavy workload, the First Naval Lord was notoriously averse to delegating responsibility, going so far as to tell a House of Commons Select Committee on the Naval Estimates: "[m]y work principally involves giving decisions on important points; I could not delegate that work to any subordinate, and, therefore, he would be of no assistance to me."⁸⁴

On the other hand, both Beresford and Hoskins thought the NID might serve as the basis for a naval staff to relieve the Board of some of its workload, the latter suggesting to the Select Committee on the Naval Estimates, "the principle which is now adopted with reference to the NID could be usefully extended, so as to have in that department an officer who would act as a staff officer to each of the Naval Lords."⁸⁵ Hoskins testified to the Committee that such a staff "would insure the continuity of principle and policy, which is now entirely or largely broken when a naval officer goes out of office."⁸⁶ In the course of proposing a House of Commons resolution calling for a wholesale reform of Admiralty administration, Beresford stated that

the secretarial department ought to be re-constructed entirely, in which there should be found commanders, lieutenants, or paymasters capable of understanding the orders they might have to frame for the Fleet. These also should only stay for three years and have permanent clerks under them. The result of this would not be to give more power to the experts, but to distribute responsibility and strengthen the hands of the First Lord [that is, *vis-à-vis* the rest of the Cabinet].⁸⁷

Hoskins' and Beresford's views were opposed not only by Hood but by Hamilton, who regarded the existing administrative arrangements as adequate, and who was probably wary of any innovation which would "give more power to the experts." Indeed, both the First Lord and First Naval Lord concurred with a Treasury Department cost-cutting proposal in August 1887 to reduce the salaries of the naval and Royal Marine officers in the department. This move was anticipated by Hall and Custance, the latter informing Hornby in January 1888 that Hall

has been aware for a long time that he has not sufficient standing to hold his own. The strongest proof of this being that his pay has been cut down. Fancy the pay of DNI being less than that of D.N.O. or Director of Transports. This is equivalent to saying that the whole is *less* than its part.⁸⁸

Beresford condemned the Treasury Department's action, arguing that "the efficiency of the whole service was ... bound up with the efficiency of the NID; because that department was created for the express purpose of estimating and reporting what was required to fulfil its duties."⁸⁹ Not content with verbal protests, on January 9, 1888 Beresford resigned over what he regarded as an arbitrary decision that harmed not only the NID but the entire service.

At the time, Beresford's resignation appeared to be counterproductive: he was the only Naval Lord who seemed to have perceived a need to overcome administrative resistance to more robust strategic and force planning, and he now was in no position to affect any change from the inside. The effects of "the long peace" coupled with the inexorable expansion of paperwork coming before the Board meant that "the volume of business accumulating for managerial decision was so great that board members, often including the first sea lord, became so preoccupied with routine administration that strategic policy became a peripheral concern."⁹⁰ Inundated with mundane tasks that might have been handled by a naval staff of the sort advocated by Hornby, Hoskins, and Beresford, the Board suffered from what Christopher Dandeker terms "decoupling" of strategy and structure: "formulating strategy and planning for the future become quite marginal."⁹¹

Hamilton himself pointed to this decoupling in his evidence to the Select Committee on the Naval Estimates. When asked if strategic concerns were considered by the Board when discussing shipbuilding needs, he replied "it is hardly advisable that I should go into a question of that

kind. It is a complicated question of naval strategy, and that would not, of course be discussed at a shipbuilding Board⁹² The decoupling was also apparent in the process by which the First Lord and Board determined the shipbuilding proposals submitted for Parliamentary consideration in March 1888, a process in which, as had been the norm in previous years, budgetary considerations were paramount. The proposals did not, however, jibe with the conclusions of a force planning analysis submitted to Hamilton and Hood by Hall in December 1887.

* * *

Many planning approaches and methodologies are available to devise a force structure capable of accomplishing a military organization's strategic objectives.⁹³ Regardless of the methodology employed, however, it is a complicated undertaking, which is often simplified by prioritizing one consideration over others. In 1887 the Board and the NID adopted divergent analytical frameworks to arrive at estimated shipbuilding requirements that, not surprisingly, differed significantly, both in terms of the types and the quantities of ships proposed for construction. Why these estimates differed is of considerable relevance to the history of the Naval Defence Act of 1889.

Mindful of financial constraints and in keeping with Hamilton's emphasis on economy, the Board employed a budget-driven approach to force planning. What made and makes this approach attractive, both in the past and in contemporary settings, is its fiscal restraint, as strategic and force structure choices are made on the basis of budgetary allocations, rather than vice versa, with constraints on government spending foremost in view. When employed in combination with other assessments of national defense requirements, the budget-driven approach imposes fiscal discipline on the force planning process. Outcomes of policy deliberations should be reflective of realistic and attainable service priorities, given prior and anticipated levels of national defense spending. Yet if not used in conjunction with other yardsticks, the budget-driven approach risks de-emphasizing strategic factors, as decisions based solely or chiefly upon financial considerations may undercut the effectiveness of forces designed to accomplish national security objectives. Operational success and with it national security can thus be endangered by prioritizing economy and failing to design a force structure tailored to the wartime roles and missions of the service.

These drawbacks to the budget-driven approach were evident in the force planning deliberations that took place at the Admiralty in 1887. These began in the summer, when Hood and Graham met with Hamilton to discuss the basis on which they should frame the shipbuilding program for the forthcoming fiscal year.⁹⁴ Having received guidance from the Cabinet, Hamilton informed them that it should not exceed the 1886–87 level of shipbuilding expenditure. Hood and Graham had then to devise a construction program that would allocate the available funds “in the way we considered best for the good of the service.”⁹⁵ Neither man was asked to prepare an alternative scheme that prioritized the strategic objectives of the service without reference to the fiscal constraints imposed by the Cabinet.

This method of proceeding was not unique to 1887–88. In fact, it was so ubiquitous in the 1870s and 1880s that Richard Vesey Hamilton, Hood’s successor as First Naval Lord, stated in his study of the Admiralty, *Naval Administration* (1896) that

no complete scheme, showing what were the naval requirements of the country, had been laid before the Board, apart from the financial limits laid down by the Cabinet, at any time within the knowledge of those most conversant with Admiralty affairs.⁹⁶

The results of this method of proceeding were shipbuilding programs that, according to many naval officers, failed to meet the *matériel* needs of the Royal Navy, which were, or at least should have been, determined by the planned operational strategies of blockade and offensive coastal operations.

When the NID was formed Hall and his staff were given a relatively broad mandate to formulate operational plans. One area off limits to them was force planning, which was traditionally the prerogative of the Board, especially the First Naval Lord. In December 1887, however, apparently acting on his own initiative, Hall prepared a report comparing the naval strength of Britain with that of its chief rivals, France and Russia. The report was subsequently revised and submitted to the Admiralty in May 1888, in the midst of intense public scrutiny of the Royal Navy’s resources and capabilities. To classify it as a formal planning document would be misleading: Hall’s conclusions and recommendations departed significantly from those made by his superiors in their budget-driven force planning deliberations. Hall argued that in a worst-case scenario—a

maritime conflict with both France and Russia—the Royal Navy would be deficient in both battleships and cruisers and thus severely handicapped. The Mediterranean corridor, through which flowed much of Britain's sea-borne commerce, would be particularly vulnerable. He argued that the navy would need an additional thirteen battleships, thirty-eight cruisers, and thirty-two torpedo vessels to blockade enemy ports and provide an ample reserve squadron to be deployed in the English Channel.⁹⁷ In contrast, the Admiralty was content with the addition of nine cruisers, plus several sloops, gunboats, and torpedo-gunboats, the cost of which was estimated at a little under £2.7 million.⁹⁸

In applying his thinking to force planning, Hall advocated a direct linkage between strategy and structure. Not coincidentally, his analysis was based on strategic principles that he believed should guide the Royal Navy in wartime, with particular emphasis upon blockade:

History teaches us that this policy was uniformly successful in preventing invasion, that it afforded good security to our commerce, and that by its adoption we were able to hold our own against the united fleets of the three greatest maritime nations of the time. It is recorded that when blockade was rigorously enforced, it effectually prevented the escape of any *war* vessels.⁹⁹

The Royal Navy's success thus depended on adequate numbers of battleships and cruisers to conduct blockading operations against both countries in multiple theatres. Hall calculated that the service would require a force far superior to that based in Toulon, Brest, and Cherbourg. True, the challenge actually posed by the French Navy was numerically insignificant, but Britain's need for ships was magnified by the requirement for frequent replenishment, especially of coal, the lack of a reserve squadron, and the need to prevent Russian warships from sortieing from the Gulf of Finland or the Black Sea.¹⁰⁰ The report, in short, concluded that Britain's existing fleet would be overwhelmed by the scope of operations required to fulfil the roles and missions prescribed by the strategic traditions of the service.

Hall's analysis was biased in several respects. For example, as Roger Parkinson notes, the comparison of the existing fleets of Britain, France, and Russia accompanying the report concluded not only that Britain's strength in first-class battleships was thirteen to a combined total of eight for France (seven) and Russia (one), and that the combined total of all battleships was thirty-four for Britain, twenty-four for France, and two for Russia; Hall also counted sixteen French second- and third-class battleships

that were either wooden-hulled or second generation ironclads with inadequate wrought iron armor, lacking internal watertight subdivision, and in many cases, suffering from decayed hulls.¹⁰¹

For this statistical creativity Hall was roundly criticized by Director of Naval Construction William White, with whom he shared the report to ensure the accuracy of the ship specifications in his proposed building program. “Although the papers do not come to me for purposes of criticism,” White minuted, “I cannot allow them to pass without an expression of my strong dissent from some of the assumptions made in this Comparison.”¹⁰² He considered Hall’s analysis misleading, in particular his comparison of French and British battleships: “Nearly all the French battleships classed as second and third class have *wood hulls*. Three years hence, 15–21 years will have elapsed since they were launched. To reckon all of these ships as available for battle—presumably at sea—is in my opinion not reasonable.”¹⁰³

White also noted that Hall failed to include British warships that would be available for service in his projections for the next three years: “It is clearly wrong to exclude the 22 vessels to be laid down here in 1888, all of which will be ready by the end of 1890; while including vessels on the French side which are still in the earliest stages of construction” Finally, and most importantly, White took exception to the absence of important qualitative factors that rendered British vessels superior to those possessed by the French:

Comparisons of *numbers* of ships are valuable. But these comparisons do not take into account of the important fact that for twelve or fourteen years we have been building vessels with *protective decks*, whereas the French are only now developing the class. This adds enormously to the relative value of our force¹⁰⁴

Moreover, as noted above, the naval attachés reports provided detailed accounts of the French and Russian fleets’ grave weaknesses. Parkinson labels Hall’s stance in the force planning report “contradictory”. “[A]s Director of the FIC [NID, actually] he had access to the *attaché* reports which showed the French and Russian navies to be very much less a threat than was suggested in the press and elsewhere.” Parkinson, indeed, suggests “that Hall was using the *perception* of naval weakness to promulgate the new approach to naval strategy”¹⁰⁵

Finally, Hall assumed that Britain would fight without allies in a war with both France and Russia. Such an eventuality was improbable. Indeed, in

the late 1880s, Italy was seeking an alliance with Britain against France.¹⁰⁶ The Italian Navy was sizeable, with four up-to-date battleships that could assist British blockading operations off Toulon, thereby enabling the Royal Navy to send vessels elsewhere if needed.¹⁰⁷

That Hall's intention was to scare administrators and politicians into authorizing a much enlarged shipbuilding program rather than to furnish an accurate, dispassionate analysis of French and Russian naval capabilities and aims is suggested by White's criticisms. That this was a tactic used by other professionals at the Admiralty is confirmed by Seymour Fortescue, who was posted to the NID in 1891. As he recalled in his memoirs,

I remember being told to supply their Lordships with a statement of the combined strength of the Navies of France and Russia, against which had to be shown, ship by ship, our own Navy. I was given the hint that, the object being to wring more money for more ships out of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I was to make out as formidable a list as I could of our then possible enemies. Naturally, I did as I was told, and no old lame duck was too obsolete to be trotted out for the occasion.¹⁰⁸

Unsurprisingly, Hood concurred with White's criticisms and instructed Hall to revise the report to answer them and those from the First Naval Lord himself. But Hall's statistical tables were only slightly altered in the final version submitted in May 1888 and he made no more than a vague reference to the qualitative superiority of British warships. Nonetheless, his report provided a force planning argument eventually embraced by politicians, for it was the document that Hood produced on short notice when asked by Hamilton in July 1888 "to state the amount of force which would be required under certain eventualities," and that which formed the basis for the shipbuilding program authorized by the Naval Defence Act.¹⁰⁹ The result was a revised Admiralty shipbuilding program that was in turn authorized by the Naval Defence Act of 1889. It is thus no coincidence that the Admiralty's shipbuilding program differed only slightly from that put forward by Hall.

* * *

William Hall's accomplishments have largely been overlooked by naval historians, doubtless due to his early death, to the fact that he left no papers behind, and to the absence of a "tombstone biography" of the

sort written about Cooper Key and Tryon, to cite two contemporaneous subjects of the genre. As a consequence, documenting his activities as chair of the FIC and as DNI requires piecing together the official papers he produced along with correspondence to other officers and personal recollections like Aston's. Although fragmentary, the evidentiary record of his six years at the Admiralty leaves no doubts as to his significance as a strategic thinker.

Despite his penchant for exaggerating the Royal Navy's threat environment, Hall nonetheless brought to the table a force planning model in which strategic factors were at the forefront at a time when governments, both Liberal and Conservative, prioritized budgetary considerations and were largely indifferent to strategic and operational concerns. In this unpromising environment Hall sought to instill a brand of thinking that touched upon the most critical aspects of naval policy formulation, particularly in the areas of strategic and force planning.

The documents he drafted, especially the December 1887 force planning memorandum, also reflect his agreement with the strategic ideas shared by the intellectual and professional circle around John Knox Laughton and his desire to institutionalize them within the policy framework that prevailed in the Admiralty. This aim was no doubt fostered by the revival of these ideas through the formalized study of naval history pioneered by Laughton, whose interest in the subject emerged during the three years he and Hall served together on board HMS *Excellent*.

That Hall was followed as DNI by Laughton's closest friend and fellow service intellectual—Captain Cyprian Bridge—testifies to the standard he established. Indeed, the roster of Directors of Naval Intelligence down to World War I constitutes a virtual who's who of the navy's intellectual elite: Bridge, Lewis Beaumont, Custance, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Charles Ottley, Edmund Slade, Alexander Bethell, Thomas Jackson, and Hall's own son Reginald "Blinker" Hall. All of these men attained flag rank. Had Hall not died in 1895, there is little doubt that he would have attained his flag too and probably distinguished himself in the Fisher era, either as a supporter of the controversial reformer or, perhaps more likely, as a critic.

Given bureaucratic inertia in Admiralty administration, coupled with the primacy of the budget-driven ship procurement process, it is unsurprising that Hall's achievements were relatively modest until 1888–89. His department's reports were viewed with a skeptical eye by some members of the Board, in particular Hamilton and Hood. Furthermore, he answered to Hood rather than to the Board as a whole, which meant that

the First Naval Lord could suppress unwelcome reports, either on his own initiative or with the concurrence of Hamilton. This appears to have been the fate of Hall's December 1887 force planning memorandum. While it was shared with White, and Hood read and minuted it, there is no evidence that it was distributed to the rest of the Board. Beresford, still at the Admiralty in December 1887, subsequently stated that he had no knowledge of its existence until years later.¹¹⁰ Such was the administrative situation with which Hall dealt in the 1880s, a situation exacerbated by salary reductions that appeared to be an act of retribution against his department. This act prompted Beresford to resign from the Board and to seek other venues to champion the centrality of strategic awareness in naval policy formulation. This was the primary aim of his public campaign of 1888, and therefore the proximate cause of the Naval Defence Act, the subject of the following chapter.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of portions of this chapter appeared as "New Ways of Thinking: The Intelligence Function and Strategic Calculations in the Admiralty, 1882–1889," *Intelligence and National Security* vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 77–97.
2. For more on the naval component of the British way in warfare, see David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688–2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990) and N. A. M. Rodger, "Naval Strategy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in Geoffrey Till (ed.), *The Development of British Naval Thinking: Essays in Memory of Bryan McLaren Ranft* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
3. Quoted in [John Knox Laughton], "Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics," *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 171, no. 349 (January 1890), p. 148.
4. Andrew D. Lambert, "The Royal Navy, 1856–1914: Deterrence and the Strategy of World Power," in Elizabeth J. Errington and Keith Neilson (eds.), *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger 1996), p. 81. See also Rodger, "Naval Strategy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," pp. 29–31.
5. See, for instance, N. A. M. Rodger, "The Dark Ages of the Admiralty, 1868–1885," *Mariner's Mirror* vol. 61, no. 5 (1975): 331–42; vol. 62, no. 1 (1976): 33–46; no. 2 (1976): 121–28, and Oscar Parkes, *British Battleships, 1860–1950* (London: Seeley Service Co., 1957).
6. See, for instance, Andrew Lambert, "The Shield of Empire 1815–1895" in J.R. Hill (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); John Beeler, *Birth of Battleship: British*

- Capital Ship Design, 1870–1881* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2001); Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2010); and Rodger, “Naval Strategy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” p. 30.
7. For more on British plans regarding the naval base at Cherbourg, see Andrew D. Lambert, *The Last Sailing Battlefleet: Maintaining Naval Mastery 1815–1850* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1991), p. 11.
 8. Lambert, “The Royal Navy, 1856–1914,” p. 78.
 9. Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 89–95.
 10. John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 234.
 11. For the impact of Laughton’s historical scholarship and teaching, see Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing Co., 1998); and idem., “History, Strategy and Doctrine: Sir John Knox Laughton and the Education of the Royal Navy,” in William B. Cogar (ed.), *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Twelfth Naval History Symposium* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), pp. 173–87.
 12. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, pp. 34, 46–49 and 74.
 13. John Knox Laughton, “The Scientific Study of Naval History,” *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* (hereafter *JRUSI*) vol. 18 (1874), p. 525.
 14. John Knox Laughton, “Scientific Instruction in the Royal Navy,” *JRUSI* vol. 19 (1875), pp. 233–34.
 15. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, p. 106.
 16. Custance and Eardley-Wilmot served on the council between 1888 and 1890. During this period, Laughton was listed as a corresponding member of the council.
 17. The relationship between Laughton and Hall is addressed further in Chapter 5.
 18. Prior to the FIC’s establishment, the Hydrographer’s Office undertook operational planning.
 19. Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008), p. 49.
 20. See the chapter on Hornby in Andrew Lambert’s *Admirals: The Naval Commander Who made Britain Great* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), especially pp. 260–62.
 21. Rodger, “The Dark Ages of the Admiralty,” Part II, p. 35 and Mary Augusta Egerton, *Admiral of the Fleet Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1896), pp. 183–84 and 198.
 22. Quoted in Philip H. Colomb, *Memoir of the Right Honble Sir Astley Cooper Key, G.C.B., D.C.L., F.R.S. etc.* (London: Methuen and Co., 1898),

- pp. 412–14. See also Rodger, “The Dark Ages of the Admiralty,” Part II, p. 38.
23. Lambert, *Admirals*, p. 278.
 24. For more on the Colomb brothers and their impact on British naval policy in the Victorian era, see Donald M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867–1914* (London: Cassell and Co., 1965).
 25. John C. R. Colomb “Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War,” *JRUSI* vol. 25 (1881) pp. 555, 557. It might be noted that the Admiralty’s existing system of employing naval attachés for intelligence-gathering already collected all of the types of information advocated by Colomb.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 557.
 27. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 82.
 28. For more on this point, see Thomas G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870–1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984), pp. 68, 71, 78–79.
 29. Matthew Allen, “The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty,” *Mariner’s Mirror* vol. 81, no. 1 (February 1995), p. 68.
 30. George Aston, *Memories of a Marine: An Amphibiography* (London: John Murray, 1919) pp. 76–77.
 31. Gunnery was considered the most appropriate technical specialization for future Royal Navy leaders, until World War II. Cooper Key, Hood and Fisher all served as First Naval Lord. Bridge eventually succeeded Hall as DNI in January 1889. For more on gunnery specialization and HMS *Excellent* during the Victorian era, see Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996), and Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*.
 32. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, p. 23. This assertion is unavoidably speculative: Hall left behind no letters or papers following his premature death.
 33. Custance to Hornby, January 9, 1888, Geoffrey Phipps Hornby Papers, National Maritime Museum (hereafter NMM): PHI/120(c). Emphasis in original. As Hall’s subordinate and, eventually, his successor as DNI, Custance was unusually well-qualified to pass judgment.
 34. *The Times*, February 3, 1888, p. 7.
 35. Aston, *Memories of a Marine*, p. 83. See also Sydney M. Eardley-Wilmot, *An Admiral’s Memories: Sixty Five Years Afloat and Ashore* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Co., 1927), pp. 80–81.
 36. Aston, *Memories of a Marine*, p. 83; “Second Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Defence of British Possessions

- and Commerce Abroad” (generally known as the Carnarvon Commission), printed in “Colonial Conference, 1887. Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887. Vol. II. (appendix). Papers laid before the conference,” *Parliamentary Papers*, 1887, vol. 56, p. 918.
37. George Aston, *Secret Service* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930), pp. 20–22.
 38. It might be added that there was a considerable lag between the technological revolution in naval architecture and official appreciation of the value of secrecy: well into the late Victorian era governments and navies routinely shared information—including ships’ plans—that would today be classified top secret.
 39. For more on the impact of the Stead affair, see Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, pp. 265–68; idem. “In the Shadow of Briggs: A new perspective on British naval administration and W. T. Stead’s ‘Truth about the Navy’ campaign of 1884,” *International Journal of Naval History* vol. 1, no. 1 (April 2002),” pp. 265–68; and Ruddock F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 179–81.
 40. *Pall Mall Gazette*, “What is the Truth About the Navy?” (September 15, 1884); “The Truth About the Navy By One who Knows the Facts” (September 18); “The Truth About Our Coaling Stations By One who Knows the Facts” (October 16–17); and “What Ought to be Done for the Navy By One who Knows the Facts” (November 13). These were later compiled and published as a pamphlet (London: Pall Mall Gazette Office, 1884). For a corrective to Stead’s irresponsible and highly exaggerated charges, see [John Knox Laughton], “Past and Present State of the Navy,” *Edinburgh Review* vol. 161, no. 330 (April 1885): 492–513.
 41. Planning for convoy operations had been discontinued by the Royal Navy by 1879 because they were becoming both “wasteful” and “inconvenient” in the face of the threat posed by a handful of steam cruisers. See Lambert, “The Royal Navy, 1856–1914,” p. 29.
 42. FIC Report No. 51, “Remarks on a Naval Campaign.” TNA: ADM 231/5.
 43. Ibid. Emphasis in original. The vulnerable points referred to by Hall included British commerce, foreign coaling stations and depots, and its own commercial ports and naval home arsenals.
 44. Ibid. Emphasis in original.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Such as the breastwork monitors *Devastation*, *Dreadnought*, *Nile*, *Sans Pareil*, *Thunderer*, *Trafalgar* and *Victoria* (and, eventually, *Hood*); and the central citadel battleships *Agamemnon*, *Ajax*, *Colossus*, *Inflexible*, and *Edinburgh*.
 47. FIC Report No. 51, “Remarks on a Naval Campaign,” TNA: ADM 231/5.
 48. M. A. Yapp, “British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India,” *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1987), pp. 647–65.

49. A pamphlet written by a senior Russian Navy officer and obtained in the following month by a British consular official confirmed Hall's prognostication: "... prevent this free exchange [of commerce] for a short time and such complications will arise as are little dreamed of and therefore everything must be done to paralyse sea-borne trade. Thirty good cruisers ... will be more terrible to England than the armed armada of the civilized world." The hyperbole of the last assertion probably elicited a chuckle from Hall and his colleagues in the NID. Foreign Office to Admiralty, June 25, 1888, TNA: ADM 1/6934.
50. FIC Report No. 64, "General Outline of Possible Naval Operations Against Russia," TNA: ADM 231/6.
51. FIC Report No. 73, "The Protection of Commerce By Patrolling the Ocean Highways and By Convoy," TNA: ADM 231/6.
52. The 16.5 knot armored cruiser *Dmitri Donskoi*.
53. FIC Report No. 73, "The Protection of Commerce By Patrolling the Ocean Highways and By Convoy," TNA: ADM 231/6. Emphasis in original.
54. FIC Report No. 64.
55. See Roger Parkinson's description of this plan, *The Late Victorian Navy*, pp. 86–88.
56. FIC Report No. 64.
57. This outcome owed in large part to the speed with which the crisis was resolved.
58. "Reorganisation of the Foreign Intelligence Committee (Now the Naval Intelligence Department)," TNA: ADM 116/3106 (Admiralty & Secretariat Cases). See also Allen, "The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty," pp. 65–78 and Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, pp. 94–96. Editor's note: as the sole "first-rate Maritime Power," the situation to which Beresford hyperbolically alluded could only have occurred had Britain declared war on itself.
59. George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868–1885* (London: John Murray, 1917), pp. 290–91.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 291–92.
61. Andrew Lambert, Hood, Arthur William Acland, Baron Hood of Avalon, *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33966>. This trait was evident in Hood's reluctance to abandon the muzzle-loading heavy ordnance used by the Royal Navy when serving as Director of Naval Ordnance during the 1870s. See Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 83–84. John Knox Laughton, who served with Hood on board HMS *Excellent*, regarded him as "a careful, painstaking officer, without the genius that was much needed in a period of great change, and clinging by temperament to the ideas of the past, when they ceased to be suitable. The four years which followed

[his appointment] were years of great change and advance but it was commonly supposed that Hood's efforts were mainly devoted to preventing the advance from becoming too rapid." Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography*, supplement vol. 2, (London 1912), p. 293. This view is seconded by Bryan Ranft who, on the basis of his evidence to the Select Committee on the Navy Estimates (1888), characterizes Hood as "an irascible if not a stupid man." See Ranft, "The Protection of British Seaborne Trade and the Development of Systematic Planning for War, 1860–1906 in idem. (ed.), *Technical Change and British Naval Policy, 1860–1939* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p. 7.

62. Furthermore, all of the Naval Lords were beholden to the government for their salaries and lodgings. For Hamilton's opinion of Hoskins and Graham, see Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886–1906* (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 87.
63. Hamilton to Posenby, January 1, 1888, cited in Geoffrey Bennett, *Charlie B: A Biography of Admiral Lord Beresford of Metemeh and Curraghmore, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., LL.D., D.C.L.* (London: Peter Downay, 1968), p. 145. See also Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886–1906*, pp. 93–94.
64. Salisbury to Queen Victoria, January 19, 1888, TNA: CAB 41/21/1. There was no gainsaying this judgment.
65. Allen, "The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty," p. 72.
66. Ibid.
67. Hall to Admiralty, "Preliminary Report on Proposals Made With the Organization for War," November 1886, TNA: ADM 1/6820(a).
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. "Reorganisation of the Foreign Intelligence Committee (Now the Naval Intelligence Department)," TNA: ADM 116/3106 (Admiralty & Secretariat Cases).
71. Allen, "The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty," p. 68.
72. Hall to Hornby, January 9, 1888, NMM: PHI/120(c). Emphasis in original.
73. N[aval] I[n]telligence] D[e]partment], "Report on the Work of the Naval Intelligence Department During the Year 1887," February 1888, TNA: ADM 231/12.
74. Ibid.
75. On Custance, see Matthew Allen, "Reginald N. Custance," *Mariner's Mirror* vol. 78, no. 1 (February 1992), and Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918*, pp. 10–16.

76. Allen, "The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty," p. 73. Both officers were highly regarded at the Admiralty and within the service. Andrew Lambert credits Custance with "forc[ing] the intelligence department into the heart of Admiralty policy-making, by a combination of will-power and intellect" while DNI, and describes him as "part of a small but professionally significant group of officers who made a serious study of war in the last quarter of the nineteenth century." See Lambert, "Custance, Sir Reginald Neville," *ODNB*, @. Eardley-Wilmot authored several books on naval history. Custance was a founding member of the NRS, and both were active in the RUSI.
77. Bennett, *Charlie B*, p. 143.
78. NID to Admiralty Board, May 9, 1887, TNA: ADM 1/6869. The report, authored by Custance and Hall, was entitled "Certain Questions Related to Colliers."
79. On the importance of the annual maneuvers to Admiralty war planning, see Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*, pp. 21-26.
80. See, for example, NID Report No. 179, "Report on the Naval Manoeuvres of 1888," October 1888, TNA: ADM 231/14.
81. NID to Admiralty Board, "Relations of Naval Attaches with the Naval Intelligence Department," February 6, 1889, TNA: ADM 1/6970. This office memorandum was an update to one issued in February 1883.
82. See Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905*, pp. 171-72, 178-79, 188-89, 282-84, 292-93, 300, 303-04, 324, 327-28.
83. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 95.
84. "Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix," *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13, p. 250. On the First Naval Lord's portfolio and workload, see Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, pp. 171-77.
85. "First report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix," *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 12, p. 538. Find quotation.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 538-39.
87. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), col. 944.
88. Custance to Hornby, January 9, 1888, NMM: PHI/120(c).
89. Charles William de la Poer Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford* (London: Methuen and Co., 1914) p. 353.
90. Christopher Dandeker, "Bureaucracy Planning and War: The Royal Navy, 1880-1918," *Armed Forces & Society* vol. 11 (Fall 1984), p. 136. Editor's

note: this outcome was, in my estimation, at least as much a consequence of the personal attributes and priorities of the Board members as it was the result of a defective administrative structure or inadequate support staff.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
92. "Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates, p. 279. Editor's note: Hamilton may have been prevaricating. Certainly there is abundant evidence from the 1870s and early 1880s that strategic factors were routinely considered when discussing shipbuilding policy and individual designs, and no reason to suspect that the same situation did not obtain in the later 1880s. Hood's testimony to the Select Committee on the Navy Estimates clearly indicates that the purposes for which ships were built were well considered by the Board as a whole, as had been the case during the 1870s. See "Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates, pp. 230–32, 233–34, 240.
93. For a summary of the more common approaches to force planning, see Henry C. Bartlett, G. Paul Holman, and Timothy E. Somes, "The Art of Strategy and Force Planning," *Naval War College Review* vol. 48, no. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 144–46.
94. Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates, pp. 240, 242.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 246. The statement is Hood's.
96. Richard Vesey Hamilton, *Naval Administration: The Constitution, Character, and Functions of the Board of Admiralty, and of the Civil Departments It Directs* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), p. 167.
97. NID Report No. 149a, "Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia in 1890," May 1888, TNA: ADM 231/12.
98. The actual figure was £2,667,000. Editor's note: there were more than financial reasons for the absence of battleships. Grave doubts existed regarding their continuing utility, doubts heightened by the arguments put forward by the *Jeune Ecole*. See Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 124–26.
99. NID Report No. 149a, "Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia in 1890," May 1888, TNA: ADM 231/12. Emphasis in original. Editor's note: Hall's claim that an effectual blockade would prevent the escape of all war vessels was hyperbolic. Even at its most rigorous, the Royal Navy's blockade of Napoleonic France did not prevent the egress of individual commerce raiders, hence the existence of convoys.
100. Hall concluded that the number of battleships required to blockade a given number of vessels was equivalent to $a + 1/4a + b$, where a represents the number of enemy battleships inside and b represents the number of blockaders always absent coaling. Similarly, the number of cruisers needed was equivalent to $a + 1/3a + c + d$, where a represents the number of enemy cruisers in port, c represents the number of blockaders always absent coaling, and d represents the number required as dispatch vessels between the

blockading squadron and its base. Editor's note: my sense is that this, like many such theoretical calculations, was intended at least as much to extract greater sums from the government as it was to meet operational eventualities.

101. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 108. The actual number of wooden-hulled vessels was thirteen: the second-class ironclads *Colbert*, *Marengo*, *Océan*, *Revanche*, *Richelieu*, *Suffren*, *Surveillante*, and *Trident*, and the third-class coastal defense ships *Belier*, *Bouledogue*, *Cerbère*, *Taureau*, and *Tigre*. The remaining three vessels were iron-hulled second-class ironclads, all of early 1860s vintage, none with armor thicker than eight inches.
102. Hall to Admiralty, "Proofs of the Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia," November 1887, TNA: ADM 1/6873.
103. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.
104. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original. Another instance of Hall's creativity was his approach to the question of coaling. When assessing Russian plans to conduct a commerce-raiding campaign in the event of war with Great Britain in 1885, he evaded the question of where their cruisers might obtain coal in the absence of any Russian-owned overseas coaling stations by arguing that they would not "have any difficulty obtaining coal overseas; neutral countries had no obligation to place any restrictions on the sale of coal to belligerents" (Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 86). Yet when contemplating the means of protecting British commerce in another 1885 report he contradicted his earlier argument: "So much British trade went across the North Atlantic that escorting cruisers would eventually have to coal in American ports and [would] not be allowed to do so" (*Ibid.*, p. 88).
105. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 114. Emphasis added. Editor's note: As Dr. Mullins' research, which predated Dr. Parkinson's, makes clear, this conclusion appears incontestable. Hall's force planning model was based on a hypothetical scenario very unlikely to occur at all, and completely impossible in light of rivals' existing fleets. His own department's intelligence clearly suggested the absence of a credible challenge from either France or, especially, Russia. Hall therefore was arguing that the Navy needed many more ships, and that British taxpayers should foot the bill for a worst-case contingency that was at that point wholly chimerical. Were a genuine threat to materialize, it could only do so over a period of years, during which the Admiralty's intelligence unit would detect the telltale signs in ample time to allow the government to respond. Moreover, given Britain's wealth and shipbuilding predominance, there was not the slightest doubt that any *materiel* challenge would be beaten back in short order, as earlier episodes (1847–51, 1858–63, 1878–83) unequivocally demonstrated. In sum, I see no evidence suggesting that Hamilton and Salisbury were misguided in prioritizing economy.

106. Foreign Office to Admiralty, "Italy and Her Alliances," December 1888, TNA: ADM 1/6935. See also Cedric James Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
107. Italy's battleships were at the cutting edge of design during the 1870s and early 1880s. See Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, pp. 336, 340–42.
108. Seymour Fortescue, *Looking Back* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), p. 194. The denouement to this episode is also recounted:

Personally I was convinced that the device was too transparent to deceive a child, let alone such an old political hand as was Sir William Harcourt, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer. To my secret delight, my precious report came back with the Chancellor's own annotations on it, and very much to the point they were. I felt that with all the knowledge of those Fleets that I had at the moment, I could not have made a better selection of the obsolete and useless vessels than did the Chancellor with his blue pencil.

Fortescue's own navalist credentials, it might be added, were unimpeachable. That one with his views was nonetheless willing to acknowledge both the statistical legerdemain employed by the professional element in this instance (and in others too, as White's criticism of Hall's paper demonstrates) speaks volumes to professionals' willingness to exaggerate both the strength of foreign forces and the weaknesses of the British Navy. That willingness must be kept in view when assessing their claims in 1888–89 and in all subsequent navy scares down to 1914.

109. Hamilton to Cabinet Office, "Navy Estimates 1889–90," November 1888, TNA: CAB 37/21/24; Admiralty to Cabinet Office, "The Requirements of the British Navy," July 1888, TNA: CAB 37/22/36.
110. Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, pp. 353, 361. In his memoirs, Beresford referred to Hall as "a most distinguished and patriotic officer" who had "worked out the problem of naval requirements independently" of the Board in 1888.

Professionals, Politicians, the Press, and the Public: The “Navy Scare” of 1888–1889

Thus far the naval members of the Board of Admiralty, particularly First Naval Lord Arthur Hood, have been depicted as unwilling or unable to sway their civilian political masters during annual deliberations over the shipbuilding program, in which finance was the most important determinant. Perhaps Hood could have done more; he possessed the influence attending to his position as the First Lord’s principal professional advisor and the knowledge that some of his predecessors had deployed “alarmist” assessments of the navy’s relative strength to obtain increased funding for new construction. He was no doubt aware of the tactics of Sir Alexander Milne during the 1860s and 1870s, who attempted to pressure both Conservative and Liberal governments to sanction additional shipbuilding. Milne, supported by the other Naval Lords and Controller Robert Spencer Robinson, persuaded Conservative First Lords Sir John Pakington and Henry Corry to authorize ambitious ironclad building programs in 1866–68 (a total of thirteen armored vessels), despite the strenuous opposition of Chancellor of the Exchequer Benjamin Disraeli. In contrast, he was rebuffed in 1873 by Liberal First Lord George J. Goschen who, thanks to the Liberals’ split over Irish Home Rule in 1886, was Lord Salisbury’s Chancellor of the Exchequer 1886–92.¹ The fact that Hood chose not to pursue a similar course suggests that he shared Hamilton’s and Salisbury’s views regarding the navy’s adequacy and was unwilling to subject them to alarmist claims that lacked corroboration from the NID and that all three men knew to be largely baseless.²

Owing to his Admiralty service, Lord Charles Beresford was well aware of the circumstances that in his view confounded naval policy formulation in Britain, especially the Board's failure to enunciate a coherent strategic doctrine by which to determine future ship procurement policy. Beresford hoped that the creation of the NID under William Hall's direction would encourage greater appreciation of strategic considerations that would in turn manifest themselves in Admiralty policy.³ His view of the department's importance was so pronounced that he resigned over what he believed to be an effort to marginalize its work by reducing the salaries of the officers who staffed it. While the lure of the limelight probably influenced his actions, Beresford's experience at the Admiralty and his own navalist convictions, coupled with the Board's evident indifference to his views, no doubt convinced him of the need to arouse public support in order to reform naval administration and shipbuilding policy. What followed was an extraordinary campaign by naval officers to pressure the Salisbury government to give greater weight to strategic factors in naval policy formulation.

Beresford's resignation doubtless prompted a collective sigh of relief from the Salisbury administration. Within a few days, however, his departure was widely reported in the political press, most especially by the *St. James Gazette* and *The Times*. In the absence of a statement from either the Admiralty or from Beresford himself, newspapers were left to speculate as to the reasons prompting his departure. The editor of the *St. James Gazette*, ardent Conservative Frederick Greenwood, opined confidently that

Lord Charles Beresford understands his business. He knows what he wants because he knows what the Navy wants; and if—as is highly probable—he has spoken his mind with great freedom; if he has been uncompromising and even rudely so, it is because he is convinced that what the Navy wants it wants very badly indeed.⁴

Although *Times* editor George E. Buckle was generally supportive of the Salisbury ministry, he too sympathized with Beresford, portraying the Admiralty as “too snug a nest of well-paid officials and comfortable sinecurists” who performed little work.⁵ The most widely circulated and influential journal in Britain, *The Times* also gave considerable space to letters by senior naval officers who overwhelmingly approved of Beresford's decision. Admiral Sir George Elliot, for example, claimed that “the entire

naval service will admire ... the almost solitary instance of an officer abandoning the sweets of the office and incurring the displeasure of bigoted politicians and breaking up friendly ties out of devotion for the service which he belongs, and of which he is so bright an ornament."⁶ Perhaps the best-informed letter, however, was published in the *St. James Gazette* and, although anonymous, was obviously written by an Admiralty insider and NID partisan:

Lord Charles Beresford represents a strong body of opinion, not only inside but outside the Admiralty, hostile to what they consider the parsimonious policy of politicians who look more to small savings than to the efficiency of the Navy. The issue between the two camps has been taken upon what Lord Charles regards as the most important department in the Admiralty—the Intelligence Department; but it is not so much the department that is in question, as the whole policy of which the treatment of it by the political authorities is an example. It may be that in this particular matter Lord Charles is wrong—upon that it is unnecessary to express an opinion. Certainly his opponents will be able to make out a plausible case in favour of the reduction [of the intelligence department]. But, on the other hand, I for one consider that he is right in the great importance he attaches to the efficiency of the department, and that he has chosen a good point on which to raise the whole question of the efficiency of the Navy generally.⁷

Beresford's first public remarks about his resignation occurred in a speech to his constituency of East Marylebone on January 26, 1888. He explained the contretemps over the NID, pointing out that he and the rest of the board *had* agreed to lowering the staff's salaries by twenty percent, but only at the point that the current officers were replaced by others. It was the Treasury's insistence that the cut be implemented immediately, and Salisbury's and Hamilton's acquiescence to that demand, without first ascertaining the views of the Naval Lords, that he claimed prompted him to give notice.⁸

By objecting to the manner in which the reduction was made, rather than the reduction itself, Beresford was able to illuminate the underlying reasons for his decision. First, he opposed the First Lord's acting unilaterally, without ascertaining the views of the rest of the Board: "he should take the opinions of his Board on all subjects." Beresford proceeded to illustrate the pernicious consequences (as he saw them) of the First Lord's unchecked authority:

There is no doubt in my mind that the disgraceful state of disorganization in the navy, the utter want of preparedness up to the date when Lord G. Hamilton took office, was entirely due to the persistent use of the First Lord's power against the Board. It amounts to governing the navy without the Board if the First Lord likes There is a civil head at the Admiralty who is supposed to act upon the opinions of his assistants. The country thinks he does. If he does not, he ought to tell the country so.

Beresford's conviction that naval officers were more qualified than civilians to pass judgment on professional matters—especially on the critical topics of strategy, force planning, and procurement—was scarcely veiled in these remarks, even though in the course of his speech he paid lip service to the need for the First Lord to be a politician.

Beyond that alleged defect in the navy's administration, Beresford also pointed to what he regarded as a further shortcoming: the Treasury's unchecked power and willingness to act on the basis of incomplete or inaccurate information. Had the Naval Lords' view that the NID's salaries should not be cut immediately and their reasons been known to that department, he argued, it might have been persuaded to act otherwise: "you will never get the money spent rightly on the services until the Treasury itself sees what the experts, the generals and admirals say on the point. Until you do that you will go on wasting money."

Beside Beresford on the dais was Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, almost certainly the most prominent and highly esteemed member of the officer corps. Like Beresford, Hornby was a strong Conservative partisan and a staunch advocate of naval efficiency. He was known throughout the service as "Uncle Geoff," and his numerous admirers regularly sought his counsel on all manner of naval subjects.⁹ Among those who corresponded with him were Laughton, Cyprian Bridge, Philip Colomb, William Hall, Reginald Custance, John Fisher, and George Tryon—the intellectual elite of the British naval establishment. It is thus hardly surprising that Beresford appealed to Hornby to attend the meeting with his constituents. "Please come and support me by your presence," Beresford wrote on January 22, "and I may ask you to say a few words if you support my views as expressed You know the case. I protest against a system of administration that reduced our Navy to such a state of disorganisation that we could not have used what we *have* got."¹⁰

Hornby's remarks were brief and to the point; Beresford's account of Admiralty disorganization was "so extraordinary that people might

naturally feel inclined to doubt it," but he assured the audience it "was perfectly correct." He praised Beresford's advocacy for the service in Parliament, claiming that hitherto it had been "unrepresented there." Finally, perhaps in an effort to reassure the taxpaying public, Hornby stated that "[t]hey did not ask for more money; what they wanted was a more efficient expenditure of the existing grants." His views in this last regard would undergo a sea change over the next four months.

"I felt quite proud when you said that I had another constituency: The Navy," Beresford wrote to Hornby the following day. "My whole object has been and will be to give expression to the views I believe to be those of the service. I do hope it may do good. But I shall peg away in Parliament and keep it going as well as I can."¹¹ Indeed he would. In fact, in introducing Beresford to his constituents, fellow Conservative MP Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Fitzwygram gave a succinct preview of Beresford's subsequent actions:

Lord C. Beresford had resigned because he thought that outside the Administration he could better assist in resisting the civilian influences at the Admiralty which he considered prejudicial to the Navy. (Cheers.) He felt that the great profession of the Navy ought to be ruled by sailors and not by landmen. (Hear, hear.)¹²

The publicity surrounding Beresford's resignation could hardly have come at a more inopportune time for Salisbury's government, in particular Hamilton, who as First Lord had to defend its naval policy when Parliament reconvened in March 1888. He fully expected Beresford to use his seat in the House of Commons as a political platform from which to attack the ministry over its treatment of the NID. Attempting to preempt any such challenge, Hamilton opted to answer Beresford's allegations in his own public speeches and in leaks to the press. In a speech to his constituency of Ealing Broadway, he charged that "Lord Charles has resigned because he objects to the First Lord having supreme power, and because he considers that in a particular instance I made an improper use of it."¹³ Hamilton also provided his version of the events leading to Beresford's resignation, explaining why he approved the NID's immediate salary reduction without consulting his professional advisors beforehand. Hamilton dismissed Beresford's objections to this action, and portrayed him as petulant, willing to resign over the paltry sum of £900 if a decision he disliked was not reversed.¹⁴

Hamilton's speech also adverted to financial reform and accountability in the armed services, historically popular political issues for both Conservatives and Liberals. He stressed dockyard reform initiatives enacted during his naval administration. He observed:

Perhaps you are not aware that a great and much needed reform in this direction has during the last two years been quietly been carried out in the dockyards of this country Ships can now be built as expeditiously in the dockyards as in private yards, and waste has been stopped and reforms initiated in every direction.¹⁵

He credited this achievement to the entire Board, and claimed that it would ensure that the Royal Navy remained quantitatively superior to its potential adversaries in Europe. "By keeping the number of ships building within the compass of finance we are able to put the maximum number of men that can be economically employed upon each, and we advance our building programme about 30 per cent faster than any other nation in Europe." Finally, and most importantly, Hamilton concluded his speech with a bold comparison that would become a recurrent theme in his speeches in Parliament: "Our relative superiority to other fleets is greater now than it has been for years past. Next year and the year after it will be greater still."¹⁶

Hamilton also shared a memorandum with the press, which was published in *The Times* and elsewhere on March 6, prior to its being distributed to MPs. This statement, which was to accompany the presentation of the annual Navy Estimates to Parliament, described the types and quantities of vessels included in the Admiralty's proposed shipbuilding program. This was a modest program, based he claimed on a number of factors, including the force requirements of the navy as well as "careful examination" of "the shipbuilding policy now being pursued by foreign navies."¹⁷ Hamilton made no mention of the linkage between the duties of the service and the force needed to carry them out: a quantitative comparison was all he seems to have thought necessary to reassure the public of Britain's naval superiority to France and Russia:

The experience gained since last year and the opportunities afforded during the time of making close and minute comparison between the strength of this country and that of foreign nations confirms my previous statement that our relative superiority is undoubted, and that we shall, if the present expenditure be maintained, each year increase that superiority.¹⁸

Notwithstanding the arguments put forward by Beresford and his allies, it was and remains difficult to gainsay the common sense of this method of calculation, at least as far as capital ships were concerned (cruisers were another matter, as will be discussed below). Britain's naval needs could be assessed in one of two ways. Navalists pointed to the vastness of the empire, the tens of thousands of miles of sea routes connecting it to the Home Islands and Britain's other trading partners, and the huge volume of commerce, most of it carried by British vessels, which passed along them, and calculated needs on that basis, without reference to the forces that potential enemies could actually bring to bear, which, as at least Beresford knew thanks to his tenure at the Admiralty, were insignificant.

For example, Geoffrey Phipps Hornby informed the 1888 Royal Commission examining naval and army administration and the services' relationship to the Treasury that

it does not follow that because we have a superiority over, we will say, the French Navy, or we will take any second navy, that we have a superiority absolutely over two navies, therefore we have sufficient ships to protect our commerce at the outbreak of a war; we must have a very considerable superiority of force.¹⁹

Philip Colomb argued much the same in his medal-winning 1878 RUSI essay, "Great Britain's Maritime Power." His analysis centered on three fundamental themes, the first of which was that "Britain traditionally based her naval force on her special requirements as a maritime state rather than as a response to foreign construction."²⁰ This was, to put it bluntly, a purely hypothetical exercise based on the supposition that Britain would fight without allies, and without any consideration of the taxpayers who would have to foot the bill for such an extravagant naval force.

Hamilton, on the other hand, followed George J. Goschen's lead. In introducing the shipbuilding program for 1872–73, the latter told the House of Commons, "[i]t cannot be said that we ought to have a certain absolute number of ironclads, but that if our neighbours have much fewer, we also require much fewer. It is a question of proportion."²¹ The matter of adequate fleet size was *not* absolute: it was relative, based in large, although not complete, measure on the size of rival fleets. The Two-Power Standard was itself a yardstick based on that criterion. Hamilton's pragmatic measurement was unquestionably more rational than nebulous

theoretical calculations like Hornby's and Colomb's, based on "certain (usually unspecified) eventualities."

While Hamilton's memorandum did not disclose specific sums to be spent on each class of vessel, *The Times* later revealed that the total outlay for new shipbuilding would be just over £2.7 million.²² Former Admiralty official and arch-navalist Thomas Brassey's analysis of the estimates calculated it to be a bit less—just under £2.7 million—excluding indirect charges.²³ Of it, £1,944,814 was designated for the construction of two first-class cruisers—*Blake* and *Blenheim*—along with five Medea-type second-class cruisers and two third-class cruisers. All were designed to reach or exceed 19 knots, indicating Admiralty appreciation for the need to run down enemy ships bent on commerce destruction. Brassey, however, found it regrettable that the Admiralty proposed to spend £621,186 for sloops, gunboats, and torpedo gunboats, which in his estimation were "designed only for peace requirements, not suitable by reason of insufficiency of speed for the protection of commerce, and not powerful enough for the line of battle."²⁴ Another aspect of the program widely remarked on was the absence of any provision for first-class battleships, the Board having decided to refrain from laying down any more such vessels until the completion of outstanding work on the five *Admirals*—*Anson*, *Benbow*, *Camperdown*, *Howe* and *Rodney*—as well as the four Victoria- and Trafalgar-class turret ships.²⁵ Thus, in total, the shipbuilding program proposed by the Government would provide twenty-four vessels of varied types to the Royal Navy, most of which would contribute little to the wartime strength of the service.

In leaking the memorandum before it was distributed to House members, Hamilton received an immediate endorsement from *The Times* editor Buckle, who announced that "the statement of the First Lord is calculated to afford no little satisfaction to Parliament and the country. We may accept it as an earnest introduction of a new and more business-like spirit into naval administration."²⁶ Yet, at the same time, the memorandum suggested that the First Lord lacked a history-based strategic vision. Indeed, like many other civilians (and some professionals as well) he expressed doubt that the Royal Navy would be able to protect the empire's commerce in a future conflict:

[t]he conditions of naval warfare have so changed and are so changing from day to day that nothing but actual experience could justify any confident prediction as to how a thoroughly effective protection can be given by any

fleet to a commerce whose seagoing steam tonnage is double that of the rest of the world.²⁷

Statements like this, to say nothing of the apparent prioritization of finance over force structure, generated alarm among many naval officers. "For the first time in my life I think," confessed Philip Colomb to Hornby in early March, "I am quite seriously alarmed at the A[rmy] and N[avy] Estimates. It is not so much the actual state of these, as the spirit which has dictated them that I am frightened at."²⁸

Colomb was particularly concerned that the service budget was framed without any consideration of the offensive naval strategy enunciated by William Hall and others, and the protection it would afford to the merchant marine in wartime. What was required, he reminded Hornby, was sufficiently strong and numerous squadrons to ensure "command of the sea" and with it the protection of commerce:

[I]f we provide moderate blockading squadrons—proportionate to the number of ships we know to be within the enemy's ports—and a moderate reserve squadron at home ... there cannot be any of these attacks feared. But if these squadrons are not provided, and the home reserve squadron is not part of a settled policy, then our ports will be blockaded and our people starved.²⁹

Upon reading Colomb's dire prognosis, one could be excused for wondering who might have considered blockading Liverpool or Glasgow in 1888 or 1889, and how they might have managed it. In this context it is worth considering John Knox Laughton's analysis of the 1889 naval maneuvers, which, like those of 1888, were designed to test the efficacy of blockade.³⁰ The failure to contain the blockaded force in 1888 was widely cited by navalists to urge a huge increase in the fleet to give Britain a five-to-three superiority in capital ships (roughly the same ratio Hall sought) to maintain a blockade. The blockaded vessels that "escaped" during the maneuvers in both years went on to "raid" extensively along the northeast and northwest coasts of England and Scotland, culminating in 1888 with the "capture" of Liverpool.³¹

Laughton quoted both fortifications expert Sir Andrew Clarke and Colomb himself on the "lessons" of the maneuvers, especially the escape of the blockaded force: "so long as the superior fleet is ours," Laughton wrote, "this raiding, requisitioning, or blockading in force, is

an impossibility.” Colomb himself was no less explicit in a September 24, 1889 letter to *The Times*, quoted at length by Laughton:

The enemy [the “escaped” force], in his first attempt to damage territory in the face of superior naval force, sacrificed two-ninths of his battlefleet. In his second attempt he sacrificed two-sevenths of the remainder. In a fortnight ... he had lost quite half his fleet, and all he had to show for it was the bombardment of Peterhead, Aberdeen, and Leith, each for a very limited time

I should say that if Peterhead, Aberdeen, and Leith are such temptations that the enemy will give up half his navy to us for the pleasure of firing into them for eight hours, it would be well worth our while to keep them open to him, as it will enable us to finish the war triumphantly in a fortnight.

But what we depend on for the safety of these towns is the threat of our superior fleet. We may be very sure that if any possible enemy was thinking of this kind of thing—I never heard of one that was—he will not think of it any more. He will henceforth know that it is madness³²

“The fact,” Laughton himself continued,

is that the result of the manoeuvres justified this contention even more completely than appeared on the surface; for the ravages committed by the [“enemy”] squadron ... before it was caught by the superior [British] force ... were entirely fictitious, and quite impossible in real war. The realities of the situation were further reinforced by Sir Andrew Clarke, who as a soldier, an engineer, and late Inspector-General of Fortifications, can scarcely be suspected of under-estimating the importance of the issues.³³

In sum, Laughton, Colomb, and Clarke all concluded that mounting a blockade was in fact unnecessary for home defense: as long as the British retained overall naval supremacy in home waters, no enemy fleet would be so rash as to attempt to blockade or even raid British ports.³⁴ Preventing commerce raiders from putting to sea was another matter, however, and in fact became the justification for professionals arguing the need not only for a strategy centered on blockade, but for an overwhelming superiority of force (i.e. five-to-three) in order to prevent the escape of commerce raiders.

In addition to bemoaning the threat of starvation, Colomb also beseeched Hornby in March 1888 to state his views in a letter to *The Times*: “you hardly know what an influence your name has not only on the

Navy, but on the Country"³⁵ Rear-Admiral Richard Charles Mayne, a Liberal Unionist MP, also sought Hornby's assistance in disputing the Government's account of its naval policy:

I propose to endeavour to show the "system"—for it is that we must attack—is bad from top to bottom, and that nothing shows this more clearly than Lord George Hamilton's own speeches. Is there any chance you will be in town soon? As I should like to have a talk with you about it.³⁶

Hornby quickly complied, providing Mayne with his views on the fleet's strength and readiness that prompted the latter to admit that "[t]hough I was cognisant of the fact that we were deficient in fast cruisers ... I never realised it fully till I read your list."³⁷

* * *

Naval policy and the Beresford resignation were the two foremost topics of discussion when Parliament convened in the second week of March 1888. True to expectations, Beresford wasted no time in airing his objections to the manner in which Hamilton and the Board calculated the navy budget, with a particular emphasis on their alleged failure to formulate a shipbuilding program that took into consideration the wartime contingencies of the Royal Navy. He invited Hamilton to state the extent to which the Admiralty was prepared for hostilities with one or more competitor: "I challenge the First Lord to produce any plan of campaign, any plan for the protection of the Mercantile Marine, or any organisation for war whatever, except a defective paper on mobilisation. I know from experience they do not exist."³⁸ Beresford also accused his former classmate (the two men had attended school together as children) of devaluing the work of the NID, as it "ought to be the best brains of the whole Service, and the best men ought to be in it."³⁹ Finally, he attacked the manner in which British naval requirements were assessed, on the basis of simple numerical comparisons with France and Russia. He referred to this caustically as "the book-keeping way of measuring the strength of the Navy, simply by adding up two columns to see whether we had more ironclads than any other country."⁴⁰ Such measurement was, according to him, analytically unsound, as the duties of the Royal Navy in wartime far exceeded those of its adversaries, owing to the vastness of the empire, the extent of ocean, and the size of the merchant marine to be defended.⁴¹

Again, however, while the hypothetical demands on the Royal Navy were indeed far greater than those on any other navy, the *actual* demands on it were intimately tied to the strengths of its potential adversaries, of which Beresford and his allies rarely spoke in more than vague and often exaggerated terms. Moreover, as of 1888 most of the British Empire's vital strategic bases were either well enough defended—Malta, Halifax, Portsmouth, Plymouth—or so remote as to be all but unreachable by anything beyond a (slow) sail/steam hybrid cruiser. Similarly, it is difficult to see how either France or Russia, especially the latter, could have sustained wide-ranging commerce raiders in the absence of adequate coaling facilities. France could have done so in the waters around Africa and Indochina, but nowhere else. Russia could not have done so at all, unless neutrals were willing to supply the coal.

To be sure, there was an immense amount of British shipping on the world's oceans, and many colonies, but a large proportion of both were only remotely and ephemerally at risk of enemy attack. Contemporaries and subsequent commentators pointed to the destruction wrought by the Confederate commerce raider *Alabama* as indicative of the danger Britain faced, but, again, Laughton provided a perceptive rebuttal of such claims. "The story of the '*Alabama*,'" he stated bluntly, "so often referred to ... as showing what a small cruiser, ably commanded, can do, seems to us, on the contrary, to show very clearly what she cannot do. The '*Alabama*'s' whole work was achieved on well-known crossings or tracks" used by the bulk of oceanic shipping, "near the Azores, on the coast of Brazil, off the Cape, or in the Strait of Sunda."⁴² To accentuate his point, Laughton cited the view of the *Alabama*'s captain, Raphael Semmes:

If Mr. [Gideon] Welles [American Secretary of the Navy] had stationed a heavier and faster ship than the "*Alabama*"—and he had a number of both faster and heavier ships—at the crossing of the thirtieth parallel; another at or near the equator, a little to the eastward of Fernando de Noronha, and a third off Bahia, he must have driven me off or greatly crippled me in my movements. A few more ships in the other chief highways, and his commerce would have been pretty well protected.⁴³

In reply to Beresford's challenge, Hamilton defended his method of comparing the naval strengths of Britain, France, and Russia: "I do not know by what means you can test the relative superiority of this country as compared with other countries except by taking the number of ships, the

number of men, and the guns, which those respective countries have.”⁴⁴ He implored his former colleague to accept the fact that “our relative superiority as far as fighting power is concerned is established, and that if we continue upon our programme we shall continue to make a greater advance in superiority.”⁴⁵

What Hamilton failed to address to the navalists’ satisfaction, however, was their concern over whether or not British naval capabilities were sufficient in light of the global responsibilities of the service in wartime. Conservative MP Sir Robert Penrose Fitzgerald reminded the First Lord of a point seemingly lost in quantitative comparisons, that being the fact that in the past “England occupied a different position from other nations with regard to her Navy Of such importance to England was the command of the sea that it was little short of madness not to be assured that our Navy was able to perform all the duties which would be required of it.”⁴⁶ Equally unconvinced was John Colomb, another Conservative MP, who sought to transform the debate into a general discussion of British naval policy. No doubt advised by his brother, Colomb reminded the House that organization for war had to be fashioned according to the naval policy of the country, which in turn had to be informed by the experience of the past, which had demonstrated the efficacy of an offensive naval strategy, centered on blockade. With this in mind, Colomb asked Hamilton whether such a strategy was still advocated by the Admiralty. Only then could he and the rest of the House ascertain whether the Royal Navy was capable of performing its wartime tasks.⁴⁷

The upshot of this debate was an agreement to refer the issue to a Select Committee with a mandate to consider the adequacy of the Navy Estimates and, by implication, that of the navy as a whole. The seventeen Committee members included spokesmen for both sides of the debate: Hamilton and Forwood on the one hand, Beresford and Mayne on the other. The rest of the committee consisted of Robert William Hanbury (Conservative), James Mackenzie Maclean (Conservative), Colonel Lord Arthur William Hill (Conservative), Sir William Coddington (Conservative), William Sproston Caine (Liberal Unionist and Civil Lord of the Admiralty, 1884–85), Thomas Sutherland (Liberal), Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Liberal), Sir Robert William Duff (Liberal and Civil Lord of the Admiralty, 1886), Sir Edward Reed (Liberal), Sir William C. Plowden (Liberal), Sir Edward Grey (Liberal), Dr. Charles Kearns Deane Tanner (Irish Nationalist), and Daniel Crilly (Irish Nationalist). The party affiliations were therefore seven Conservatives, six Liberals, two Liberal Unionists, and two Irish Home Rulers.

Far more important than party affiliations, however, were their individual attitudes toward naval administration and policy; that is, whether these should be controlled and directed by civilians or by professionals. Their first meeting, on March 23, highlighted this divergence. Hamilton moved that Campbell-Bannerman be appointed chairman. Beresford countered by nominating one of his supporters, Hanbury. The Committee divided, and Campbell-Bannerman was chosen by a vote of eight to six. Supporting him were Hamilton and Forwood, plus Liberals Sutherland, Grey, and Campbell-Bannerman himself, and both of the Irish Nationalists. Only a single Conservative unconnected with the government—Maclean—voted with the majority. These members preferred civilian over professional control of the direction of naval policy, and prioritized finance in determining shipbuilding programs, for Campbell-Bannerman was not only a former Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty (1882–84) and future Prime Minister (1905–08), but a staunch proponent of governmental fiscal responsibility and unchallenged civilian authority.⁴⁸ Opposed were those who placed efficiency ahead of economy and, by extension, the ascendance of professional over civilian judgment as to the navy's needs: Conservatives Hanbury, Hill, Coddington, and Beresford, Liberal Unionist Mayne, plus Plowden, the sole Liberal to support Hanbury.⁴⁹

Given the outcome of the tussle over the chairmanship, the Fourth Report's endorsement of the existing system of determining shipbuilding needs should come as no surprise: "it is difficult to see on what other footing the control of naval expenditure, consistently with responsibility to Parliament, could be placed."⁵⁰ The proponents of civilian control and fiscal prudence were in the driver's seat, and one of them—Campbell-Bannerman—was penning the committee's reports. Yet they did attempt to mollify the minority:

But your Committee are of opinion that the responsibility of the Board of Admiralty and the Government respectively for the efficiency of the Navy would be more clearly defined and accentuated if the wants of the country were carefully considered, and a programme drawn up and submitted by the First Lord on behalf of the Board to the Cabinet *before any decision is taken as to the amount of money to be spent during the year.*⁵¹

The four reports and reams of evidence compiled by the committee further underscored the struggle, now fully out in the open, between the advocates of economy on side other and those of efficiency on the other.

The testimony and subsequent questioning of Arthur Hood by the committee are particularly illustrative in this regard. Hanbury, for instance, tried to pin him down as to whether Hood, "as First Sea Lord, form[ed] an exact opinion as to what are the requirements of the country, and submit[ed] to the Board a programme based on those requirements," only to have Hood tersely answer "That is not my duty."⁵² When Hanbury pressed him as to whose it was, Hood replied "It is the duty of the Board of Admiralty in its collective capacity." A few questions later Hanbury tried again:

Q: Then you really are in your estimates guided to a very large extent by finance and not by the absolute requirements of the country?

A: We are guided by both.

Q: You cannot be guided by both, because the two things are totally different.

A: We are guided by the requirements of the Service, as I have already said, in so far as they can be provided for out of the money which is allowed to us for building purposes.⁵³

When finally cornered, Hood stated that he was "satisfied with the relative number of battleships" in the fleet, provided that older vessels were steadily replaced, and that "in the event of any other power laying down more armour-clads, we should, at the same time, lay down vessels which would be certainly more powerful and faster."⁵⁴ That being the case, the navy's most pressing need, he thought, was fast cruisers, and he expressed his wish for half a dozen more such vessels.

The hostile questioning eventually grew so hectoring that Hood's testimony clearly reflects his irritation and frustration; when pressed repeatedly by Hanbury on whether any statement of the navy's needs was prepared independent of financial considerations, Hood's exasperation is palpable: "As I have stated before half a dozen times, we look to fulfilling the requirements of the service in so far as they could be provided for by the money from which the expenses were to be met." And when Hanbury injudiciously followed up that question by asking "On what basis does the First Lord tell you how much money he can afford," Hood indicated Hamilton's presence and shot back "There is the First Lord and he can answer that question"⁵⁵

As far as professional estimates of the fleet's adequacy for the duties likely to be demanded of it, Hood was satisfied. Indeed, he at one

point used the word “supremacy,” prompting a series of questions from Dr. Tanner, which revealed his view on whether the government or the Board was responsible for determining the strength of the fleet:

Q: You made use of the term “the supremacy of the Navy;” what are we to understand by that; is that supremacy over one or more foreign powers, or supremacy as regards invasion?

A: Supremacy is rather a curious term to define. I mean by supremacy that it is superior to any other foreign navy.

Q: Did you mean supreme to a combination of two powers?

A: No, I would not say that. I used the word “supremacy” considering that the Navy is in a state as compared with that of the next most powerful navy in the world.

Q: As compared with any other navy?

A: As compared with the navy of any other nation in the world

Q: You have also stated, have you not, that the money advanced by Parliament is sufficient, in your opinion, to meet the requirements of the navy?

A: I do not think I said that.

Q: Do you think the requirements of the Navy demand that more money should be spent at present?

A: That is a political question altogether for the Cabinet to consider.⁵⁶

In sum, Hood fully and rightly recognized the Board’s subordination to civilian authority. The naval members could and did represent their views of the needs of the navy, and of its adequacy or want thereof, but they could only advise, not dictate. The proper strength of the navy was ultimately not a professional matter, no matter how valuable professional assessments of it were: it was a political one, which in turn inevitably involved finance. If the government chose to maintain a navy superior to only the next most powerful one in the world, that was its prerogative. Beresford, Hornby, Fitzgerald, and their supporters took a wholly different view of what was at root a fundamental and simmering issue of civil–military relations: they maintained that professional naval opinion should guide key strategic and force structure choices, and that their judgment as to the navy’s needs should be heeded by the Cabinet and Parliament.

Hood’s view of the fleet’s adequacy was generally shared by Second Naval Lord Anthony Hoskins, although the latter declined to make an explicit statement to that effect, pleading “I am not sufficiently aware of what the exact comparison with foreign nations may be”⁵⁷ By contrast, Junior

Naval Lord Charles Hotham returned emphatic "noes" when asked if he was satisfied with the numbers of battleships and cruisers, respectively. Beresford clearly had at least one ally on the Board. And probably owing to his supporters on the committee, its final report noted that Hood testified that "so far as he [was] aware no complete scheme has ever been laid before the Admiralty, showing, apart from financial limits laid down by the Cabinet, what, in the opinion of responsible naval experts, the strength of the Fleet should be."⁵⁸

In the spring of 1888, Beresford's Parliamentary allies managed to pressure the government to appoint a second investigating body in addition to the Select Committee on the Navy Estimates: a Royal Commission on the civil and professional administration of the naval and military departments and their relationship to each other and to the Treasury (generally known as the Hartington Commission after its chairman, Liberal Unionist MP the Marquess of Hartington). The latter's origins can be traced to a March 5, 1888 debate on the Army Estimates initiated by John Colomb's resolution that before the estimates were considered, the Commons should be furnished with a statement by the Government "setting forth the general principles of defence which have determined the gross amount proposed to be allocated to Naval and Military purposes, respectively, and *indicating the main lines of the general plan, or programme, of British Defence, to which the Admiralty and the War Office ... are respectively to conform.*"⁵⁹

Colomb eventually withdrew his resolution prior to a vote, but the following speaker, Conservative MP Sir Walter Barttelot moved that "a humble address be presented to her Majesty praying that, in order accurately to ascertain our position, She may be graciously pleased to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the requirements for the protection of the Empire."⁶⁰ The debate that followed stretched over two nights, during which Beresford charged that had war with Russia come in 1885, "... any seaman could have told the country that it would have lost its Mercantile Marine, and that its food supply would have been stopped. If that had come to pass, would poor Lord Northbrook have been hung? [Laughter]."⁶¹ Although Beresford chided the House that "it was no laughing matter," his hyperbole, one is tempted to say hysteria, must have prompted many MPs to do so. The idea that a handful of converted merchantmen—the only commerce raiding force possibly available to Russia—operating from the Gulf of Finland or Vladivostok, and dependent on the good will of neutrals for coal, could have destroyed the whole of the British merchant marine and cut off the islands' overseas food supply was so palpably absurd that it invited ridicule.

Yet the number of MPs supporting Barttelot's resolution (almost every one of them Conservative) persuaded the government to agree to an inquiry into the organization of both War Office and Admiralty. Former First Lord and Conservative leader in the Commons W. H. Smith informed the House that he had "no desire whatever to maintain any portion of the organization or administration either of the Army or Navy which upon inquiry may be found to be defective."⁶² He bluntly told MPs, however, that the investigation would not consider the efficiency of either of the armed services. He subsequently explained that even the scope to which he originally consented was so broad as "to render it impossible for any Commission to report within a reasonable period upon any of the points about which the House and country want advice and guidance," and that the terms of reference had "been restricted to those points upon which the greatest desire for inquiry prevails," not to mention those acceptable to the government.⁶³ These were "[t]o inquire into the civil and professional administration of the Naval and Military Departments, and the relation of those departments to each other and [the] Treasury; and to report what changes in the existing system would tend to the efficiency and economy of public service."⁶⁴ Alas for the advocates of efficiency, in addition to Hartington, the Commission contained two ardent economists—Henry Campbell-Bannerman and W. H. Smith—and, beyond service representatives Rear-Admiral Frederick William Richards (First Naval Lord, 1893–99) and Lieutenant General Henry Brackenbury, no hawkish allies of the navalists.⁶⁵

Their attempts to alter the direction and control of naval policy via committee or commission thus stymied, Beresford and his supporters turned increasingly to the forum of public opinion via letters to newspapers, journal articles, and public meetings, while their opponents continued to tout their own views. The exchanges typically followed a predictable pattern. They normally began with a speech by either Hamilton or Forwood, printed in *The Times* the following day. Their statements usually provoked rebuttals in the form of letters to *The Times*, either by Beresford himself or by naval officers and MPs who supported his views. A representative exchange occurred at the end of March, when Hamilton was invited to speak at the annual dinner of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects. With Beresford and Philip Colomb in attendance, the First Lord pointedly remarked that, "great as was the experience of the naval officers in matters needing administration, there were many which were in the main civil, and of which the naval officers had not the monopoly of experience."⁶⁶

Hamilton argued that his pronouncements should satisfy skeptics, and assured his audience that the navy was sufficient "to guard the nation against risk of danger from any hostile combination." Forwood spoke in a similar vein two days later, when he addressed the annual dinner of the London Chamber of Commerce. He dismissed the "exaggerated" charges being made against the Admiralty, and insisted that the navy was capable of "cop[ing] with any reasonable combination of foreign powers."⁶⁷ As evidence, he pointed to the "battleship-gap" between Britain, France, and Russia. He claimed that Britain possessed thirty-four battleships at the end of 1887, whereas France and Russia together had only twenty-six, and that the existing ratio would not change in the near future.

The two speeches generated a lengthy response from Beresford. In a letter to *The Times* published on March 26, he took particular exception to Forwood's comments. He reminded readers that the Parliamentary Secretary's sphere of responsibility (and, by implication, competence) extended only to the financial aspects of naval administration, but in his speech he took "responsibility for the fighting efficiency of the fleet by making statements which the British public will think are made by a person who is entirely conversant with the matter on which he gives his *ipse dixit*."⁶⁸ He sought to discredit Forwood's comparison of naval strength, charging that the numbers cited were "totally and dangerously misleading." Moreover, such comparisons were fallacious if the Board did not have a plan of campaign to fight the next naval war: "[W]hat is the use of flashing these comparisons before the British public when there is no organization or suggestion of what you would do with these vessels when you came to the actual test of fighting?"⁶⁹

Beresford's counterblast was followed in less than a week by a letter in *The Times* from Fitzgerald. While Beresford was well supported by naval officers far more distinguished than the relatively junior Fitzgerald, he was instrumental in organizing the important City National Defence Meeting in June 1888, as will be seen later in this chapter. Similar to Beresford in many respects, Fitzgerald shared with his more famous colleague a penchant for meddling as well as a deep devotion to the profession. "Being of a restless disposition and failing to appreciate the charms of idleness," Fitzgerald later observed in his memoirs,

I looked around for some object which might be at least innocent and perhaps worthy of my attention ... and it was not long before I joined a gang of conspirators known as the "panic-mongers and chronic alarmists," who

were trying to awaken their countrymen to the fact that our Navy has been allowed to fall in a state of weakness⁷⁰

In his letter of March 30, Fitzgerald embraced the role of alarmist. He seconded Beresford's condemnation of the numerical comparison used by Hamilton and Forwood: despite a thirty to forty percent superiority over its French counterpart, the Royal Navy did not possess enough ships to carry out the tasks that would be required of it in wartime. This state of affairs, he claimed, would become immediately apparent to policymakers if they would "take the trouble to sit down with a paper and pencil and add up a few figures, and then look at the problem by the twin lights of history and geography."⁷¹ By invoking the navy's and nation's history, Fitzgerald further warned that numerical superiority would not by itself assure British naval supremacy in the event of war with France and Russia. Indeed, he referred to the situation that confronted Britain in 1805, when the combined fleets of France and Spain in Cadiz outnumbered that of Lord Nelson. The Royal Navy ultimately prevailed despite a numerical disadvantage, and the fact that it did so devalued simple numerical comparisons when assessing naval strength.⁷² "In estimating what will be required of the British navy in case of war," Fitzgerald observed, "history will be a tolerably correct guide ... always bear[ing] in mind that our difficulties will be increased by the introduction of steam and quadrupling of our commerce." Finally, and most importantly, Fitzgerald implored his readers to reach their own conclusions after full consideration of the arguments made by John and Philip Colomb.

* * *

Having retired from active service in May 1886, Philip Colomb (Figure 5.1) embarked on a second career. Formerly a professional interested in naval history and its relevance to contemporary policy questions, he became an historian first and foremost. The range of his activities during his "retirement" was remarkable, and the scope of his knowledge of naval history and affairs was unmatched by any of his colleagues, whether active or retired. Only his close friend Laughton, whom he followed as lecturer in naval history at the RNC, surpassed his historical knowledge. Colomb was furthermore very active at the semi-official think-tank, the RUSI where, in the presence of officers and often politicians as well, discussions frequently turned on issues of naval technology, strategy, and



Fig. 5.1 Philip Howard Colomb (1831–1899) was at the forefront of British strategic and tactical thinking during the 1870s and 1880s; his prolix writings played a large role in educating naval officers, politicians, and the public to the Royal Navy’s historical role in national and imperial defense (Image courtesy Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History, Im1899EnV88-p403)

tactics. He was a frequent lecturer at the RUSI, and the first of two papers he presented there in 1887 received the Institute's highest honor in the annual essay contest.⁷³ His reputation as an essayist and service intellectual firmly established, Colomb undertook a number of activities in 1887–88 calculated to influence administrators and politicians over the course of British naval policy.

Colomb used lectures and frequent letters to *The Times* to put forward his views on policy and strategy, and via those media reached those in Whitehall and Westminster whom he wished to influence most. Moreover, he was invited by the Admiralty in March 1887 to continue the course of lectures in naval strategy and tactics at the RNC that Laughton had originated.⁷⁴ He promptly accepted the invitation, his enthusiasm no doubt due to his view of the importance of the subject and the imperative need to carry on the work of his predecessor.⁷⁵ Laughton considered Colomb to be a logical choice to succeed him. "Always a man of strong literary instincts," he wrote of Colomb in his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, "in his retirement he devoted himself more and more to the study of history as a key to the many problems of naval policy and strategy which are continually arising."⁷⁶

Laughton's remark that Colomb was also an "untiring correspondent of *The Times*" was, if anything, an understatement. He wrote not only often, but usually at great length to share his opinion on any naval subject being aired publicly. His penchant in this regard was so well known in the service that he was derisively referred to as "Colombus," "Colomb-Inches," or "Colomb-and-a-half" of *The Times*.⁷⁷ It was thus unsurprising that he responded to a communication from Fitzgerald with one of his own. "The allusion which Captain Fitzgerald has made to my views on this question will, perhaps, excuse me for asking a little space to develop them," wrote Colomb.⁷⁸ In it he aligned himself with Fitzgerald and Beresford. His response was both supportive and didactic, expounding on the value of history as a guide in shaping British naval policy, despite the transition from sail to steam: "As I studied the past and compared it with the present, I found point by point arising and convincing me that the historical chain was complete, and that steam, so far from breaking it, had hardened and strengthened the links."

From his perspective, naval history provided support for an offensive naval strategy based on blockade and coastal assault. Offensive operations such as these would ensure command of the sea, which in turn would afford adequate commerce protection and shield the Home Islands from

invasion. And the mixture and level of forces required to secure command of the sea were the same as in years past. First, “[w]e require a naval force of the ironclad sort, or whatever may, in naval opinion, represent the line-of-battle ship of the past, in sufficient quantity to watch and render neutral the same sort of force which the enemy may be able to prepare in his great war ports.” Colomb then added that a reserve force of capital ships was required in case an enemy fleet managed to evade a blockading squadron, and since “such blockade is nearly certain to be imperfect, we must have light cruising or patrolling forces, and possibly convoys, to watch over commerce routes; and we must have local guards in the vicinity of ports or wherever the shipping thickens.” He claimed that such an operational strategy had been abandoned and closed his letter by asking “[w]hen did we part from these old rules of naval war? And if an answer could be forthcoming—which is not the case—we should further ask why did we part from them?” Colomb was venting his frustration at the Admiralty’s apparent failure to articulate a coherent naval policy. It was, he charged, not only displaying a careless disregard for history, but had strayed from the strategic traditions of the service.

His lectures during his first year at Greenwich reflected his desire to ensure that history remained the common currency of naval strategy and tactics. The underlying themes of these lectures were ultimately reflected in the questions he prepared for the final course examination. He shared them with Hornby in May 1888, knowing well that his old patron would appreciate his endeavor to foster historical and strategic awareness amongst his students:

1. Explain the effect of the growth of sea-borne commerce on the course of naval war.
2. What is the nature of “Convoy,” and how has it been carried on for outward and homeward bound commerce? Show where it has failed, and consider its application to present conditions of commerce.
3. Define and illustrate by historical examples what is meant by the “Command of the Sea,” and how it is asserted and maintained.
4. Trace the principles of “Blockade,” and consider its application to existing conditions.⁷⁹

Questions two and four had been the topics of lectures Colomb delivered at the RUSI in 1887. The first of these was devoted to a discussion of convoy operations and their possible contemporary application in light of steam propulsion. Employing Laughton’s work as his guide, Colomb

surveyed the efficacy of convoying in the past, and concluded that, so far from being detrimental to the practice, as many other naval officers believed it to be, “steam is in every way in favour of a revival of convoy, and if nothing else prevented such revival but the change in the mechanical condition of trading ships, convoy in the next war might be expected to revive.”⁸⁰ He did note that, unlike sailing ships, merchant steamers did not constitute a “helpless flock of sheep” that could be preyed upon by cruisers. Many possessed the requisite speed to evade capture by the enemy. Nevertheless, a system of protecting slower vessels was critical, especially at the onset of hostilities.

Yet having defended convoying, Colomb, like DNI William Hall, expressed his preference for an offensive orientation, owing to “the change in mechanical conditions of trading ships,” that is to say their speed and independence of the wind, whereby vessels in the Channel would be protected by a chain of cruisers cooperating with one another through the use of signal posts. These posts could be used to request reinforcement should a superior enemy force appear. Once merchant ships left the Channel they would be free to pursue their own course, but should carry light armament to drive off any isolated marauders. British squadrons abroad, meanwhile, would be concentrated on major trade routes, around straits and other strategic chokepoints where shipping converged and enemy raiders would do the greatest damage.⁸¹

How the Royal Navy would protect commerce in wartime was also the subject of Colomb’s second 1887 lecture at the RUSI, albeit less obviously. In it he examined the strategic doctrine of blockade. His arguments and conclusions were again rooted in examples drawn from history, which he argued retained their relevance despite the change in technology: “it is impossible to form correct views of the present and future of naval warfare unless they are based on a pretty thorough investigation of its history in the past.”⁸² He distinguished between three different forms of blockade, which he termed “sealing-up,” “observation,” and “masking.” Citing several historical examples, and acknowledging the impact of technology, Colomb conceded blockades were no longer impenetrable (not that they ever had been), due to the advent of steam propulsion and cruisers that could exceed 20 knots. As a result, British naval squadrons could not hope to seal-up enemy ports and prevent the egress of every enemy cruiser attempting to evade the blockade.⁸³

However, Colomb maintained that it was possible for British squadrons to observe and mask an enemy *fleet*. He envisioned the use of the new

"torpedo-catchers" of the Sharpshooter class—torpedo gunboats of 735 tons displacement with a speed of 19 knots and shallow draught—to close with and observe enemy warships in port for the purpose of collecting intelligence on their intentions and anticipated movements.⁸⁴ These specialized vessels would keep the main fleet of capital ships apprised of enemy movements. "In the case of vessels [chiefly commerce raiders] or squadrons attempting to escape," Colomb explained, "it would be less the duty of these [specialized] ships to engage them, than to hang on their flanks and continually report their movements by signal to the off-shore squadron, which would detach and concentrate sufficient force to intercept the runaways."⁸⁵ In sum, he maintained that although a close blockade of the sort employed by Lord St. Vincent off Brest during the Napoleonic Wars was, owing to enemy torpedo boats, impracticable, an observational or masking blockade of the sort he outlined was a viable means of achieving and exploiting command of the sea. Convinced that the importance of command of the sea was often taken for granted by civilian policy makers, Colomb concluded his lecture with an ominous warning: "Keep command of the sea as you value your national life. With it you can do everything. Without it you will be blotted out from the list of great countries."⁸⁶

Thus, in the course of two 1887 lectures, Colomb provided the Admiralty with the broad outlines of a strategic policy on which to base future ship procurement decisions. That the Board evidently did not do so seemed to him to demonstrate its failure to grasp the importance of strategic thinking in naval policy formulation. Furthermore, given his prolixity, it was virtually inevitable that he would not stay quiet in the debate between Beresford and Fitzgerald on the one hand and Hamilton and Forwood on the other. In May 1888, Colomb returned to the lecture podium at the RUSI, where his audience undoubtedly included a mixture of well-connected politicians and professionals. The seemingly innocuous title of the paper—"The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom"—hinted strongly at a general overview of the subject, but in actuality Colomb had prepared a tightly argued case in favor of the core strategic principles that, historically, had shaped British policy decisions in wartime.

He compared two naval strategies employed in the past, which he respectively attributed to Lords St. Vincent and Howe. St. Vincent, Colomb stated, favored a forward strategy by which British squadrons tightly blockaded the ports of their French and Spanish adversaries. This constituted the first line of defense; the second consisted of an ample reserve squadron in home waters, the third of two auxiliary squadrons.

In contrast, Howe believed that active blockading conferred an advantage to the enemy, especially because of the *matériel* damage and psychological stress wrought on the blockading force by keeping the sea in all weathers, for weeks, even months, at a time. As a result, he adopted a more defensive orientation, preferring in 1793–94 to base his main fleet at Torbay, with a reserve fleet at St. Helens, keeping only reconnaissance vessels off the entrances to Brest. Only if and when the enemy fleet emerged would the main fleet put to sea to intercept it.

Before assessing the pros and cons of each approach, Colomb posed a number of questions, which reveal his overall agenda and the target audience of his lecture—the Admiralty:

Now there are before us two systems of naval defence, one older than the other and superseded by it. Do we still hold by the system to which experience ultimately led us? If we do not hold it, why have we abandoned it? And what have we substituted for it?⁸⁷

He then made clear his preference for the operational strategy employed by St. Vincent. “I think it is imperative on us to prepare to adopt St. Vincent’s method,” Colomb explained, “and that solely on account of our commerce.”⁸⁸ He argued that Howe’s system did not afford adequate commerce protection. By keeping the main fleet at home, he yielded the initiative to the enemy and with it the opportunity to pursue a destructive *guerre de course*. Colomb stressed the commerce protection afforded by British blockading squadrons, claiming that

[w]hen the system of blockade was adopted, the necessity for large convoys was to a great extent abrogated, and latterly it appears as if only the single privateer, or the very small group of privateers, were able to escape to sea and attack our commerce, which, to suffer, must have either been very slenderly guarded or not guarded at all.⁸⁹

He then addressed recent trends in naval shipbuilding, warning of the “strategical error” of building warships that were not reflections of a clearly articulated naval policy.⁹⁰ He also criticized the construction of coastal defense vessels and fortifications as both wasteful and excessive, especially when battleships designed for both blockade and coastal assault would afford better protection for less expense.⁹¹ “The error we have fallen into,” Colomb observed, “arises from forgetting that the strategy of a naval Power in command of the sea is necessarily diverse from that of the

naval Power which cannot hope to have it."⁹² To underscore this point, he cited the construction of the coastal defense vessels in France as the manifestation of a reactive and defensive naval strategy that automatically yielded command of the sea to Britain. It was imperative for the Admiralty to base force requirements and capital ship design policy on the offensive wartime roles and missions of British squadrons. He had made the same argument in 1887: "we want in our shipbuilding policy to settle, before we build the ship, exactly what she is wanted to do, and when we know what she is wanted to do ... then I think we may proceed to build her on a proper design for the object in view."⁹³

Colomb developed this point even further in 1888, reminding his audience that strategic choices—whether those made by St. Vincent or Howe—should always precede and inform the Admiralty's force structure decisions. It was imperative for the Board to make these important choices, and to pursue a ship procurement policy reflective of strategic principles. He argued that the situation confounding the Admiralty's deliberations would be permanently effaced if heightened attention to strategic factors became a component of naval policy formulation. And he made clear his preference for St. Vincent's strategy: "I say in my own belief that the blockade system is the system which we ought to work for, and begin ... to build our ships on purpose for it."⁹⁴

Public reaction to Colomb's lecture was considerable. *The Times* provided expansive coverage of this "very important and striking lecture," which doubtless delighted him and the naval officers who shared his views.⁹⁵ The editor proclaimed Colomb's arguments to be "logical, coherent and intelligible, and based on successful experience." More importantly, for the first time since Beresford's resignation, Buckle, the *Times'* influential editor, sided firmly with the professionals rather than the politicians:

the paramount necessity is manifest of adopting a coherent, intelligible, and adequate scheme of naval policy, adopted with the utmost nicety to such conditions of modern warfare as are determinate and leaving a reasonable margin of security for such as are uncertain and indeterminate.

Unwilling to leave the subject there, *The Times* also published a lengthy article written days later by an anonymous contributor, appropriately titled "The Higher Policy of Naval Defence," which bears the hallmarks of Laughton's knowledge and views. It endorsed Colomb's line of strategic thinking as a proper guide for the direction of British naval policy:

Admiral Colomb's valuable essay has prepared the way for discussion on the only true lines of bringing sober history to bear upon the airy generalities which have been plentifully scattered around. The policy which has been successful in the past, which has brought the Empire not safety alone, but conquest, may apparently be our guide today. We are here on firm ground at last and, starting from such a basis, it becomes possible to lay down the outlines of ... higher policy⁹⁶

As was his wont, Colomb himself contributed yet another letter to *The Times* on May 31, in which he responded to critics who doubted the feasibility and efficacy of blockade and elaborated further on its value.⁹⁷ He claimed that Hornby, whose tactical and strategic acuity was widely acknowledged, considered his distinction between the three forms of blockade to be of paramount importance when formulating naval strategy. Returning to the themes he had advocated since 1887, Colomb argued that blockading operations should be limited to masking the enemy fleet in its home anchorages. Again using France as the example, he envisioned a scenario whereby the Royal Navy would mask the enemy forces harbored at Cherbourg, Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon, while sealing-up the commercial ports of Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Le Havre, and St. Malo.

These tasks accomplished, the British Navy would then undertake offensive operations including mining French naval ports and the seizure of territory for use as forward naval bases. Preparations for these operations, if known to potential adversaries, would also provide an element of deterrence: "I know of one thing which would altogether prevent our indulging in these various naval pleasures, and that is that the whole world should know we are ready and willing to begin about them at short notice."⁹⁸ All that was needed was for the Board to adopt the professional arguments advanced by Beresford, Colomb, Fitzgerald, and others over the past few months. In the coming weeks their efforts would alter the political atmosphere at Whitehall and compel the government to conduct an unprecedented cabinet-level strategic review.

* * *

As of late May 1888 the campaign for heightened strategic awareness was limited primarily to speeches, lectures, and letters published in *The Times*. Aside from the literary exertions of Philip Colomb, Beresford continued to write lengthy contributions to *The Times* and expanded his

efforts to articles in monthly journals. Beresford had informed Hornby of his intention to write at least one of these articles per month, and the first two duly appeared in the highly-respected and politically and ideologically nonpartisan *Nineteenth Century* in May and June 1888.⁹⁹ Numerous letters and articles were also contributed by Charles Fitzgerald, who continued to write to *The Times* and furnished articles for the rabidly Tory monthly journal *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.¹⁰⁰

These officers had in common a mutual regard for Hornby, whose already high public stature was further enhanced by his promotion to Admiral of the Fleet in May 1888. Up to this point Hornby had privately supported their efforts, providing information and encouragement to those arguing the service's case. Now he was receiving letters from them and others urging him to play a more active role in the public campaign. Colomb had already suggested as much in early March. Fitzgerald made his own appeal on April 10:

[w]rite to *The Times* and stir them up; your name would have great weight, and they will all go to sleep unless the ball is kept rolling; the only way to make people pay attention is to keep on irritating them. A few isolated shots are not much good, but a steady continuous fire from all quarters might cause the country to think seriously of its situation whilst the day of grace still holds. The more one looks into the matter of our naval weakness even as against France alone, the worse it appears; and this is also the opinion of all three Captains [Hall, Custance, and Eardley-Wilmot] of the Intelligence Department, whose special business it is to study the subject.¹⁰¹

Hornby was a strong supporter of the NID in general and Hall in particular, praising the latter publicly in January 1888: "No one values more highly than I do Captain Hall and the remarkable work he has done."¹⁰² He therefore agreed to address the London Chamber of Commerce on May 28.¹⁰³ Beresford was asked to introduce him at the meeting, at which Hornby was expected to outline the shortcomings of Admiralty policy and criticize the inadequacy of its measures and resources for commerce protection. Beresford was delighted to learn of Hornby's public adherence to the navalists' cause. "Perhaps you don't know it," he wrote the latter on April 25, "but the whole service looks to you as our big man, and you can do more than all of us together to drive the nails home that reformers are striking into the public mood."¹⁰⁴ Beresford also expressed confidence that Hornby's speech would spark public interest in the subject of commerce protection:

Your paper will give a tremendous feeling to the question of the defence of our mercantile marine. The present advertised system seems to do nothing till war is declared and then by personal experience of loss, to see what should be done on another occasion.¹⁰⁵

To assist in his preparation, Hornby wrote to Hall and Director of Naval Ordnance (DNO) John A. Fisher, seeking information. Both men promptly complied, despite a “special” warning from the Board.¹⁰⁶ Fisher evaded the letter, if not the spirit, of the prohibition, providing Hornby with a newspaper article that was written “independent of official information.”¹⁰⁷

During the critical months of April and May 1888, Hornby also became involved with plans for a public meeting in the City of London. The purposes of what became known as the City National Defence Meeting were twofold. The organizers first wished to appeal directly to commercial leaders and businessmen, especially those in the maritime insurance and commerce sectors. Such an appeal had been useful in the past. In 1885 a similar meeting was convened at the behest of former First Lord W. H. Smith, Conservative House of Commons leader opposing the second Gladstone ministry.¹⁰⁸ Whether or not pressure from the City was responsible, naval expenditures did increase from £10.7 million in 1884–85 to £11.4 million in 1885–86. But the aims of the organizers in 1888 differed considerably from those of Smith three years previously. First, he had used the 1885 meeting to apply pressure to a Liberal government, whereas Beresford and his allies were publicly and pointedly attacking their own party’s policies. Second, while they certainly sought more money for the service, they also sought to accomplish something much more far-reaching: overhauling the process by which naval policy, in particular ship design and procurement, was formulated by the government.

The idea for the City National Defence Meeting seems to have originated with Beresford, who speculated as to the possible value of such an event in late March.¹⁰⁹ But Fitzgerald served as the principal organizer, via overtures to his cousin Henry Hucks Gibbs (later 1st Baron Aldenham), the financier of the *St. James Gazette*, whose participation had been critical to the success of Smith’s 1885 meeting.¹¹⁰ Once the ball was rolling, Beresford sought Hornby’s participation: “I hope you will be able to attend and say a few words there too, as your name on the circulars will be such a tremendous strength to the object we have all in view.”¹¹¹ Beresford was so anxious that Hornby be involved that two days later he dispatched

another letter, urging him not only to attend himself, but to lobby others to do so as well: "[d]o go on and get others to go on too People are beginning to listen We are sure to win but it will take us a little time and a heap of trouble."¹¹²

Ironically, the trouble anticipated by Beresford arrived in the form of letters from W. H. Smith, who attempted on behalf of the government to dissuade the renegade former Naval Lord and his collaborators from proceeding with their plans.¹¹³ His plea was unsuccessful: Beresford and Fitzgerald continued their preparations for the meeting, with the cooperation of three prominent civilians, Hugh O. Arnold-Forster, John J. Jackson, and Alex Wood.¹¹⁴ Arnold-Forster was a journalist, a former Liberal and future Liberal Unionist MP, and a future Admiralty Parliamentary Secretary. He was also an arch-navalist who had furnished the impetus for William T. Stead's 1884 Truth about the Navy series in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.¹¹⁵ Jackson was a prominent civil engineer specializing in marine works (he laid the foundations for London's Tower Bridge) and owner of the Westminster Shipping Company. Wood was Managing Director of the Western and Brazilian Telegraph Company.

On May 10, the organizers asked *The Times* to publish a circular to advertise the upcoming meeting. Its stated purpose was to promote public awareness of the subject and to demand action from the Salisbury ministry:

[t]he only remedy to avert disaster is to demand from the Government an immediate inquiry into the strength of the Navy, and more particularly with regard to the urgent necessity of adding several fast cruisers to the fleet for the safeguard and protection of our mercantile marine, which carries out food supplies and raw material, and also the completion of our coast and harbour defences and coaling stations.¹¹⁶

In the days following the public notice, an organizational meeting was held at the Cannon Street Hotel, coincidentally the site of Smith's 1885 meeting. Hornby attended and offered to speak about commerce protection and the inadequacy of the fleet.¹¹⁷ The organizers decided at this meeting to ask permission to hold the public event at the Guildhall, which required the approval of the Lord Mayor of London, Polydore de Keyser. Their request was rejected in no uncertain terms by de Keyser, who owed his appointment to Salisbury. Siding firmly with the Prime Minister, he wrote to *The Times* expressing his conviction that most of London's citizens did not sympathize with the organizers or support their aims.¹¹⁸

“On the contrary,” he remarked, “I believe there is a strong feeling among them that the discreditable panic which has been recently created in the matter of national defences has gone too far already.” He concluded that “a public meeting would, I am sure, have no effect whatever, moral or otherwise, and I can be no party to fomenting an unpatriotic agitation which is unworthy of this great nation.”

The government was already attempting to minimize the potential impact of the upcoming meeting. In a speech at the annual banquet of the Royal Academy of Arts, Hamilton refused to waver in his assessment of British naval strength and his proposed shipbuilding program. “We are now stronger than we were this time 12 months back,” he confidently proclaimed, “and if our present policy and programme be not interfered with, year after year we shall continue to gain strength and to accumulate a reserve of power.”¹¹⁹ Noting Beresford and Hornby in the audience, the First Lord urged them not to use their public standing to incite alarm. Instead, he suggested that these “distinguished and gallant officers” employ their energies in a more constructive fashion. “If they will only exercise their influence on trying to steady public opinion and prevent it from rushing to any ephemeral extremes,” Hamilton concluded,

they will do much to permanently promote the efficiency of the service in which they are interested, and they will certainly do much to lighten that burden of anxiety and responsibility which must ever rest on the shoulders of those who are temporarily entrusted with the administration of Her Majesty’s Navy.¹²⁰

It is not known whether Philip Colomb conferred with the City National Defence Meeting’s organizers, but his May 18 RUSI lecture provided an historical underpinning for their campaign. The publicity that followed it afforded him a further opportunity to focus public interest on the issues that would be addressed by his colleagues when their meeting took place on June 5. But Colomb was not the only service intellectual active in this regard during the intervening two weeks. Future DNI Cyprian Bridge wrote to *The Times* on May 23, to take advantage of the upcoming Armada Tercentenary commemoration.¹²¹ His purpose was to draw attention to the lessons to be learned from the Armada campaign, in particular the comments of his friend Laughton at a lecture on the subject at the RUSI on May 5.¹²²

To this point Laughton had remained aloof from the controversy over the navy and its needs, but his lecture alluded to what, in characteristically Liberal fashion, he regarded as the core issue and the means to redress it: "[m]oney will do a great deal, but the want shown is not that of money, but of intelligence, care, judgement and economy. In these matters, we should do well to imitate the great men in the past."¹²³ Bridge went further, warning in his letter that "it will be a pity if we fail to learn the lessons which that stupendously important event ought to teach us."¹²⁴ The most valuable lesson to be derived from the Armada's defeat, he stressed, was the overarching importance of "undisputed" command of the sea, by which the peoples and commerce of the Empire were protected. It was therefore a strategic imperative for the Royal Navy to be prepared for similar challenges in the future. His assessment of its current state, however, was glum:

[n]otwithstanding all the millions the British taxpayer gives we are now farther from being able to do so than we were in the year of Poitiers or the year of Blenheim. At the same time our interests on the sea have enormously increased, and we are less than ever in a position to fritter away what should be devoted to their protection.¹²⁵

Hornby was well aware of the historical arguments put forward by Bridge and Laughton, the gist of which had no doubt been shared with him by Laughton when Hornby was the President of the Royal Naval College (1880–81). On May 28, he premised his address to the London Chamber of Commerce on the lessons of naval history. With Beresford presiding, Hornby's speech was attended by an impressive number of senior naval officers and influential politicians, many of whom would also attend the City National Defence Meeting the following week. The address itself contained many facts and figures, some of which originated with Fisher and Hall at the Admiralty, coupled with ominous warnings of the inadequacy of the existing means and system for protecting Britain's vast seaborne commerce. Hornby framed his arguments around two principal observations, both of them already publicly adumbrated by Philip Colomb. The first related to the impossibility of preventing the egress of all commerce raiders from enemy ports. "[O]n the whole," he told his audience, "it is far more difficult than ever to prevent an enemy from putting to sea." The second pertained to the importance of strategic choke-points for protecting merchant vessels from those enemy corsairs that did

escape from enemy ports: “[t]he points of danger during war to merchant ships are, manifestly, those where they draw together, such as straits and projecting capes; their safety is in the vicinity of neutral waters, or of points occupied by friendly squadrons.”¹²⁶

The speech, while exposing the weaknesses in the existing system of commerce protection, was also highly provocative and alarmist. Hornby maintained that the navy needed, at that moment, 186 cruisers of 16 or more knots speed, and that it possessed only 42 such vessels: “we have not one-fourth of our *minimum* wants.”¹²⁷ As for the exigencies of a major war, he drew upon history:

... we had in 1793 185 cruisers to protect 16,806 ships of a tonnage of 1,589,798. In 1814 we had 489 to protect 24,411 ships of 2,616,965 tons. In 1887 we see that we want at least 186, and we have to protect 36,752 ships of 9,135,512 tons. Are we going to give them up or do as our forefathers did? We see no insurmountable obstacle if you will go with us. Doubtless we, too, may have to raise our cruisers to 489

In sum, Hornby sought to stoke alarm, no doubt to stampede businessmen and the public at large to support the senior officer corps’ views. He was certainly the most alarmist of the naval officers active in the public campaign, a fact underscored by a subsequent plea from Beresford to tone down his rhetoric and shipbuilding demands. “Such demands, though they may be right,” Beresford warned Hornby in October 1888, “will drive the country into thinking we had better take our chances as we are than go into any extra expense at all if it takes so much The politicians know that and [will] play on it, as Forwood has already with great effect. And we shall get nothing.”¹²⁸

Despite his alarmist rhetoric, Hornby’s presence was still deemed essential by his colleagues in what became the final act of their six-month public campaign. He had every intention of attending the City National Defence Meeting, but was prevented due to hepatitis.¹²⁹ For a time it was even uncertain whether “Uncle Geoff” would survive his illness. His presence at the meeting on June 5 was clearly out of the question, but his prepared remarks were forwarded to the meeting organizers and read during the proceedings.¹³⁰ Despite his absence—John Fisher likened it to Hamlet failing to show up for his own performance—the meeting went forward as planned and was attended by many senior naval officers, politicians, and London businessmen, among them some of the most senior members

of the British naval establishment: flag officers Beauchamp Seymour, 1st Baron Alcester; Sir George Elliot; Sir Edward Gennys Fanshawe; Sir John C. D. Hay; Sir Edward Ommanney; Sir Robert Spencer Robinson; and Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton.¹³¹ In addition to Hornby's prepared remarks, they heard speeches by Philip Colomb, Beresford, and Fitzgerald: the three officers who for the past six months had publicly championed the strategic ideas enunciated by themselves, Hall, and Laughton, and endorsed by much of the senior officer corps. Each speaker emphasized the importance of heightened attention to strategic factors in the formulation of naval policy. If their goal were to be achieved, it would inevitably be reflected in future force planning and resultant ship design and procurement policies. The meeting concluded with a strongly-worded resolution:

This meeting calls upon Her Majesty's Government to take immediate steps to place the security of the country beyond doubt, and it is convinced that in any financial scheme that may be necessary to place the Navy and defences of the country upon proper footing for the protection of the Empire, her Majesty's Government may be assured of the hearty co-operation of all classes.¹³²

The evidence suggests that the Admiralty's and government's opposition to the professionals' demands was beginning to crumble by the time the City National Defence Meeting took place. On May 23, the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, Conservative MP Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, allowed at a meeting of the Conservative Party-affiliated Primrose League (with Beresford in the audience) that he "would not grudge any expenditure necessary to put the Navy or Army upon a strong or equal footing."¹³³ Ashmead-Bartlett even went so far as to acknowledge that "it would require millions and millions alone to complete this work." Within two weeks of this admission, Salisbury set in motion a series of events that led to the drafting, debate, and passage of the Naval Defence Act.

This outcome, however, is scarcely imaginable without the five months of letters, lectures, meetings, and speeches, to say nothing of press support, initiated by Beresford and taken up by similarly minded officers to rally the public on naval policy.¹³⁴ While the Prime Minister privately deprecated the opinions of "service experts," as a politician he was sensitive to the slightest change in the political atmosphere and quickly acquiesced to demands for a review of naval policy when circumstances convinced him of the political expediency of so doing. That the atmosphere was transformed

to such an extent was the achievement of the 1888 public campaign, the principal spokesmen of which sought to incorporate into Admiralty policymaking strategic principles grounded in the navy's history, principles enunciated by Laughton, Hall, and Philip Colomb, and endorsed by naval officers like Fitzgerald and Hornby. The aim of the campaign was achieved on July 1, 1888, when Arthur Hood unveiled an unprecedented ship-building proposal that not only reflected the strategic ideas articulated by Hall's NID: it was closely modeled on the force planning memorandum that he had submitted unsolicited the previous November. The public campaign had achieved through external pressure what the Board and the government had hitherto resisted: greater professional input in the formulation of naval policy. Both were forced to confront and act upon proposals that they had earlier ignored.

The articulation of Admiralty strategic policy in July 1888 was the final act needed to initiate a new era in British naval policy formulation, where professional opinion received priority over financial considerations.¹³⁵ Hood had been requested by the Cabinet to "state the amount of force which he would require under certain eventualities."¹³⁶ More specifically, the First Naval Lord was asked to answer three questions drafted with Salisbury's input:

What is the amount of naval force necessary in a naval war between this country without allies, and France under similar conditions, in order to protect the coasts of the United Kingdom against invasion or bombardment, and to protect the fortresses of Gibraltar and Malta, if attacked by the enemy's fleet?

What force is required to afford (1) reasonable protection to trade routes, and (2) relief to coaling stations if attacked by a fleet?

What is the amount of naval force necessary in a naval war between this country without allies, and a combination of France and Russia, in which case Constantinople would have to be defended?¹³⁷

In responding, Hood relied entirely on the recommendations of Hall articulated in the May 1888 force planning memorandum. Like Hall, Hood advocated a combination of blockade and offensive coastal operations. In the event of war with France, for example, he envisioned the deployment of two naval forces, one assembled at Gibraltar and superior to that of the French fleet at Toulon, and the other at Portland, superior to French naval forces at Cherbourg and Brest. These two battlefleets would be constantly informed of enemy fleet movements by fast cruisers keeping

close watch on all three ports, and would be quickly dispatched to intercept French squadrons if they emerged to contest British naval supremacy in the Channel or the Mediterranean. The overall objective was to obtain a decisive outcome if the opportunity arose. At the same time, Hood conceded that some fast enemy cruisers might elude British squadrons and, for this reason, the Royal Navy would station its own cruisers along the principal trading routes and at critical strategic chokepoints (i.e. the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca). Finally, Hood envisaged the immediate reduction of Cherbourg through coastal bombardment, and the capture of Goree on the west coast of Africa, which was regarded as a vital coaling station and a potential base from which French cruisers could launch attacks against British commerce. In sum, he maintained that this plan of campaign would afford adequate protection to both the Home Isles and the ships and trade flowing to and from Britain.

In such a war, Hood stated that Britain possessed the requisite naval assets to accomplish these tasks. The Gibraltar fleet was expected to consist of fourteen battleships, two armored cruisers, with two additional battleships and armored cruisers to be added to its strength by April 1889. Its Portland counterpart included eight battleships, one armored cruiser, and three armored coastal defense vessels, to be augmented the following year by one battleship, five armored cruisers, and three armored coastal defense vessels. Both fleets were to be furnished with the "necessary numbers of cruisers and torpedo-vessels."¹³⁸

But in the event of war with both France and Russia together, this force would be inadequate for the additional demands of blocking Russian egress from the Baltic and Black Seas. These tasks would require diverting forces from both the Gibraltar and Portland fleets: "I should propose to station at the entrance of the Baltic, if war broke out *now*, four battleships—two battleships from the fleet to be stationed at Gibraltar and two from the fleet proposed for Portland." While new ships would be available in 1889 and 1890, from which a squadron for Baltic operations could be formed, there remained the vexed problem of blocking the Straits of Constantinople, to say nothing of the want of a powerful reserve fleet to meet unforeseen contingencies. The navy would be overstretched in such a situation, which in Hood's estimation could be remedied by a shipbuilding program conceived "to place this country in a position to meet with undoubted success a combination of France and Russia in a naval war"¹³⁹ He included in this program eight first-class and two second-class battleships, thirty-eight fast cruisers of the *Mersey*, *Medea*, and *Barham*

classes, and eighteen torpedo-gunboats of the Sharpshooter class. These numbers were scaled down somewhat from those proposed by Hall, who had calculated a deficiency of thirteen battleships, thirty-eight cruisers, and thirty-two torpedo-gunboats.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the program proposed by Hood represented an abrupt reversal of opinion, for only two weeks had passed since he had testified in front of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates that he wished only for six more fast cruisers to be completed by the end of 1890.¹⁴¹

Still to be settled were the designs for the first- and second-class battleships. While historians have commonly regarded the “Three Admirals Report” on the 1888 naval maneuvers as the impetus for the Naval Defence Act, the archival records indicate that the shipbuilding program was in place before the submission of the report to the Admiralty on November 21, 1888.¹⁴² Three weeks earlier Director of Naval Construction (DNC) William White submitted a memorandum outlining the schedule for the proposed program to the Cabinet.¹⁴³ On November 10, Hamilton completed the draft of the 1889–90 service estimates, which dealt with the financial aspects of the program.¹⁴⁴ And the Admiralty held a special board meeting on November 16 to discuss the design of the first-class battleships.¹⁴⁵ Invited to this meeting were DNC White, DNO John Fisher, Vice-Admiral John Kennedy Erskine Baird, who had commanded the blockading (British) fleet in the maneuvers, and Hamilton’s Private Secretary Captain Lord Walter Kerr. The authors of the Three Admirals Report: W. M. Dowell, Richard Vesey Hamilton, and Sir Frederick Richards were also invited, as was George Tryon, who had commanded the blockaded (“French”) fleet in the maneuvers. Tryon was unable to attend, however.¹⁴⁶ The meeting produced a clearly articulated capital ship design policy, from which the first battleships of the pre-dreadnought era—the Royal Sovereign class—were subsequently designed and built (Figure 5.2). The Board formally approved their design on November 19 and, in less than a year the first of these powerful battleships was laid down at Portsmouth.¹⁴⁷

On December 11, Salisbury wrote to Queen Victoria to inform her that the shipbuilding program had been formally approved by the Cabinet and was to be brought before Parliament when it convened in February 1889.¹⁴⁸ With much anticipation and broad support in the House, the first order of business in the new session was a brief announcement by Hamilton, assuring impatient MPs that the government would introduce the Naval Defence Bill the following week.¹⁴⁹ The Bill called for the allocation of £21.5 million over five years for a shipbuilding program



Fig. 5.2 HMS *Royal Sovereign* (authorized 1889) was one of ten battleships resulting from the Naval Defence Act of 1889: it and its six sister vessels set the standard for all “pre-dreadnought” battleships over the following decade and a half (Image courtesy US *Naval Historical and Heritage Command, NHHC 46082*)

that was unprecedented in peacetime. The only difference between the proposal submitted by Hood and the final version was the addition, at the behest of the Cabinet, of four more cruisers.¹⁵⁰ The First Lord also 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.¹⁵¹ Although the Bill was debated by the Commons for two months, in such a supportive political atmosphere the outcome was never in doubt. After three readings it was approved on May 20, albeit by a very small House of Commons, 183 to 101, and officially became the Naval Defence Act on May 31, 1889.¹⁵²

Thus, in the span of a year, the government was compelled by public pressure to reform how it formulated British naval policy, giving heightened emphasis to strategic considerations that virtually ensured that professional

opinion would trump finance as the most crucial determinant. The Naval Defence Act reflected this sudden shift in emphasis from finance to strategy in naval policy formulation, and its passage can be attributed not to civilian intervention, as Marder argued, but to ideas originating in the NID that were transformed into the basis for policy and political action through a coordinated public campaign that unfolded in the first six months of 1888. Beresford and his allies became the institutional patrons of strategic preferences rooted in the wartime experiences of their predecessors and shared by many within the officer corps. Although the transformation of these ideas from theory to practice had already given rise to a new line of strategic thinking within the Admiralty, as evidenced in the planning documents of the NID, external pressure was necessary to overcome considerable bureaucratic and political opposition to them. That pressure came about when Beresford, Hornby, Colomb, and Fitzgerald rallied public opinion in support of their cause.

* * *

The public and often vitriolic debate that immediately preceded the Naval Defence Act also revealed the longstanding struggle between governmental emphasis on economy versus professional emphasis on efficiency. This struggle, fundamentally a constitutional one, is inherent in the context of representative forms of government in which the electorate consists of taxpayers, and the defense services are subject to civilian control. It was thus longstanding in British constitutional and political history, but rose in significance as the fruits of the industrial revolution, including the phenomenon of rapid technological obsolescence, impinged on warship design, and grew in rancor, as both the electorate and literacy increased rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century. What once had involved tussles over tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds was now, owing to vastly increased shipbuilding and maintenance costs, arguments over millions, and what had once been resolved in private deliberations was increasingly played out in public, with similarly escalating rhetoric, accusations, alarmism, and acrimony.

The professionals had won previous battles: in the late 1840s and early 1850s; in the late 1850s and early 1860s (abetted by Lord Palmerston, an invaluable civilian ally); in 1867–68 (again with civilian aid in the form of two Conservative First Lords); modestly in 1874–77 (again in conjunction with a Conservative First Lord); and most recently and spectaculo-

larly in 1884 with William Stead’s “Truth About the Navy” campaign. But all of these victories had been ephemeral. In 1887–88, however, the professionals achieved their immediate aim of securing many more ships (although not as many as most of them, Beresford included, wanted), and with it the formalization of the Two-Power Standard. More importantly, with the experience acquired in manipulating the press and public opinion during the 1888 campaign, navalists now had the weapons to triumph in most, if not all, subsequent battles with their civilian counterparts, as William Gladstone’s resignation over the Spencer Program illustrates. In the wake of the Stead scare *The Times* had editorialized:

It has hitherto been the habit of the country to trust for the efficiency of its naval resources to those who were responsible to Parliament. That habit must now be abandoned. The country must henceforth take matters into its own hands; it must judge for itself whether the navy is efficient and sufficient, and if it finds that it is not, it must insist on the Board of Admiralty making it so forthwith, and, what is more, it must not rest until it finds a Board of Admiralty that is ready to do its bidding.¹⁵³

In 1888 the country and its press decided that they were content to let Lord Charles Beresford, Charles Fitzgerald, Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, and other hawkish navalists, whose position was by no means one of dispassionate, professional disinterest, judge for them whether the navy was “sufficient and efficient.”

It should be emphasized that they were, as Marder recognized, the beneficiaries of the “spirit of the age.”¹⁵⁴ The naval balance of power was clearly, even decisively, in Britain’s favor in the late 1880s and likely to remain so even without the program authorized by the Naval Defence Act, but there were at the same time many other reasons for unease: growing economic rivalry with the rest of Europe and the US as Britain’s industrial pre-eminence eroded; imperial competition over Africa and Asia that generated repeated international crises; the impact of Social Darwinism and the belief that human societies were as subject to “the struggle for survival” as the natural world; the widespread belief in (and enthusiasm for) the inevitability of war; and contradictory belief that peace was best preserved by preparing for war. In all these regards, the navalists could play on existing fears, and missed few opportunities to do so, as Conservative MP and Navy Estimates Committee member James Maclean eloquently charged in the course of the Naval Defence Act debate:

... we are told about the strong public opinion which was aroused in this country on the subject of the defencelessness of the nation and the weakness of the Government. Well, how has that public opinion been aroused? By what I think I may, without offence, call a Syndicate of Admirals, who have gone around promoting a panic; and whenever anybody is seen to be engaged in defence of the House of Commons, then you see columns upon column of the *Times* filled by them, and they hold a public meeting to denounce any unfortunate Member of Parliament who has ventured to think he has a right to say anything about this expenditure.¹⁵⁵

Yet the Syndicate had been so effective in its work that Maclean eschewed opposing the Naval Defence Bill, reflecting the attitude of many of those who decried panics and alarmism, yet acknowledged that the Navy's efficiency was critical to national and imperial security. In this regard, his attitude paralleled that of Henry Campbell-Bannerman, whose masterful speech during the debate illustrates the dilemma in which he and other steadfast opponents of navalism found themselves in 1889. Campbell-Bannerman fully accepted the principle "that it is necessary for this country to hold the supremacy of the seas," and that the proper standard for measuring that supremacy "is that our Fleet should be as strong as the combined strength of any other two Fleets in the world."¹⁵⁶ And he further stated:

I am strongly of opinion that, upon the grounds of the extensive and increased duties which the Navy will have to discharge in time of war, there is a case for proceeding with that gradual strengthening of the Navy which has been going on for some years, without precipitancy and without panic.¹⁵⁷

Yet having said that, he most strongly deprecated the Syndicate's tactics, which consisted chiefly of

... exaggerated estimates of our requirements; whether these are put forward in magazine articles, or in speeches at public meetings or in this House. And I had occasion last summer to enter a protest against the insidious attempt which was made in connection with the Naval Manoeuvres to frighten the country into an expenditure of money on the Navy. No doubt these manoeuvres are most useful ... but what I objected to was the ridiculous movements in the shape of raids round the coast in order to frighten people out of their senses. These movements were unreal and misleading representations of what will actually happen in time of war¹⁵⁸

Like Laughton, Campbell-Bannerman recognized the navalist propaganda component of the maneuvers and the ensuing Three Admirals Report with its indemonstrable assertion that a five to three superiority in capital ships was necessary to maintain an effective blockade. But, like James Maclean, he declined to oppose the Naval Defence Bill, even though the government's erratic course in the run-up to the Bill and its failure "to furnish grounds for the precise extent of this demand, have made it difficult for us to support it, even for those of us who yield to them not one whit in our desire to maintain the position and power of the British Navy."¹⁵⁹

Laughton's own attitude toward the Naval Defence Act is more difficult to discern. Like Campbell-Bannerman he was a Liberal by ideology, and like Campbell-Bannerman too he deprecated scare-mongering and alarmism. He had been unsparing in his denunciation of the Stead "Truth about the Navy" scare in 1885, concluding a lengthy piece on it in the *Edinburgh Review* with a ringing denunciation of Stead and his supporters:

The alarm has really sprung from ignorance and misrepresentation: ignorance of the facts of the navy as it has been, misrepresentation of the state of the navy as it is. That much of this misrepresentation has been made in perfect good faith, there is no reason to doubt; that some at least of it has been made to serve some hidden party or personal end, there is also no reason to doubt. But panic is the child of darkness and ignorance; with light and knowledge comes a return of steadfast courage and sober judgment.¹⁶⁰

No such denunciation followed the 1888–89 navy scare. The farthest Laughton would go was to contest the five to three ratio claimed by navalists to be requisite for maintaining a blockade and to imply that some of the overall estimates of the *matériel* wants of the navy were exaggerated. "[I]t may perhaps be doubted," he remarked on the Three Admirals Report,

whether the ratio of 5 to 3, or even that of 4 to 3, is not based too exclusively on the evidence of the manoeuvres of 1888; whether the excess of the blockading squadron might not more correctly be referred to absolute rather than to relative number; and whether a cloud of small craft might not keep more efficient watch than a largely increased number of battleships.¹⁶¹

As for the estimate of the necessary force in order to put the navy in a state of perfect efficiency, he noted that it had "possibly been exaggerated"

and “certainly characterized as Utopian,” but having thus hinted at his dismay with the navalists’ tactics and pronouncements, he admitted “evidently it must be very large to be at all commensurate with the interests which it has to defend, including not only our own shores, but those of the colonies, our maritime communications and our commerce.”¹⁶² Laughton’s own conversion between 1885 and 1890 is perhaps the most telling indicator of the magnitude of the navalists’ achievement.

But their victory was not total, as is suggested by the actions of one of the most vocal critics of the Naval Defence Act: Lord Charles Beresford. When the First Lord announced the shipbuilding program to the House of Commons on March 7, 1889, Beresford, modestly noting at the outset of his speech that he had “taken a somewhat prominent part in the country on the Question of Naval Defences,” denounced the proposal:

... the noble Lord [Hamilton] has not brought forward any clear and definite reason for what is proposed by the Government. I cannot for a moment object to an addition to the Fleet, but I think what is proposed is very much of a phantom addition. It is all very well for the noble Lord to say that he is going to add 70 ships to the Fleet, but he must put down what is the waste of the Fleet [over the next five years] and what [existing] ships are obsolete. He ought to tell us the reason that the Government come down and asked [*sic*] for this extension of the Fleet.¹⁶³

Beresford then repeated his oft-iterated demand that the Cabinet “should call on the experts to say how our trade and commerce and our import of raw material is to be defended” and, while piously adding “I do not say that the First Lord of the Admiralty should go by what the experts say,” left no doubt as to conviction that he should. If he failed to, “the First Lord ought to be directly responsible”¹⁶⁴

So unhappy did Beresford profess himself to be with the government’s program that, in order to “avoid these periodical scares and panics” (one wonders how he managed to keep a straight face when uttering those words), and to “get a definite basis to work upon,” he planned to introduce a resolution that

the Fleet of England should be able to defend its coasts, its commerce, and its trade, to insure the punctual and certain delivery of its supply of food and raw material, as well as to secure the safety of the Colonies against the fleets of two Powers combined [adding] that one of those Powers should be France.¹⁶⁵

Finally, he again professed his desire not to "aggravate the panic or scare" (again prompting speculation as to how he maintained a serious demeanor) but added that he "would honestly prefer to wait another year and do this thing in a proper, business-like manner, and let the people understand how the defences stand, than to proceed in a haphazard way"¹⁶⁶

The implication was that, given another year, he and his allies could bludgeon the government into an even larger expenditure and into giving "the experts" unchecked control of naval policy. As he remarked in a subsequent debate on naval defense, "men like myself ... are endeavouring, to the best of their ability, to let the country know what is wanted, and to give their reasons."¹⁶⁷ He also announced that his criticism of the shipbuilding program when unveiled had convinced some officers that he intended to "throw the scheme over," and that they had urged him "to acquiesce in everything." Ever-defiant, Beresford announced "[w]ell, I am not going to acquiesce in everything," before revealing his true, Hornbyesque, colors: "*I know that £21,000,000 is not half enough to spend on the Navy, and what the Government ought to do is to tell the people so.*"¹⁶⁸ Lord George Hamilton, he charged, "has tried to induce the House to believe that his programme will meet the full requirements of the country. I say it will do nothing whatever of the sort."

As James Maclean stated when objecting to the government's proposed program, "I am afraid we shall never succeed in pleasing the Admirals, who continue to urge that we are only doing a small portion of what the country wants."¹⁶⁹ He was right, and his and Beresford's utterances point to the limits of the navalists' success in 1889. They got part of what they were after, that is to say, more money and the prioritization of professional opinion over Treasury control. The latter, along with their demonstrated ability to mobilize public and press opinion, would give them powerful leverage in future struggles over naval expenditure and shipbuilding policy, leverage that would be enhanced by the creation of a navalist lobbying organization, the Navy League, in 1894.¹⁷⁰ For most of the period 1815–89 economy had trumped efficiency in deliberations of naval policy, above all shipbuilding and procurement. After the Naval Defence Act, however, the positions were reversed, and so they would remain until the aftermath of World War I.¹⁷¹

Another novelty of 1888–89, one with equally portentous implications, was the phenomenon of officers on the active list publicly denouncing the government. To be sure, they had participated in previous agitations:

much of Stead's information for his "Truth About the Navy" series had been furnished by John Fisher. But Fisher had played no public role in 1884, being content with behind the scenes activity. And his behavior was the norm prior to 1889: disgruntled professionals eschewed the limelight, relying on journalists and sympathetic politicians for publicity. Beresford thus initiated a new era in navalist tactics, as Lord Salisbury angrily recognized in May 1888.

At the same time, he, Hornby, Colomb, Fitzgerald, and their supporters did *not* secure unchallenged control over ship procurement policy, the power to build as many ships as they sought: civilians continued to exercise a restraining influence on what was spent. Indeed, they did not even get the five to three superiority in capital ships over France and Russia combined that the Three Admirals demanded. Moreover, as Marder pointed out, the Two-Power Standard was itself subject to more than one interpretation, depending on one's predilections.¹⁷²

And the failure to place their opinions ahead of civilians' in both ship-building policy and spending decisions, more than the "inadequate" sum of money voted or number of ships authorized, is why Beresford and others objected to the Naval Defence Act: they wanted professional voices ultimately to prevail in naval policy formulation, with minimal civilian interference. To some, the implications were clear. As one Conservative MP observed prior to passage of the Naval Defence Act:

I am sure, speaking for myself as a civilian Member of Parliament, and not at all as a supporter of the Government in this matter, that I resent very keenly the tone which some military and naval Gentlemen have thought fit to assume in speaking of the action of the House of Commons. One noble Lord, in a high position in the Army, has thought it becoming to speak of the "curse of Party Government" as if, whatever the curse of Party Government may be, it is half so bad as the curse of Military Government, to which this country has never been exposed, at all events since the death of Oliver Cromwell.¹⁷³

NOTES

1. For more on these episodes, see John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 69-80, 152-53.
2. This supposition is corroborated by Hood's testimony to the Select Committee on the Navy Estimates. See "Fourth report from the Select

- Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix,” *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13. p. 249.
3. Charles William de la Poer Beresford, *The Memoirs of Lord Charles Beresford* (London: Methuen and Co., 1914), p. 353.
 4. *St. James Gazette*, January 19, 1888, p. 3.
 5. *The Times*, January 27, 1888, p. 9.
 6. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1888, p. 7.
 7. *St. James Gazette*, January 25, 1888, p. 4.
 8. All of Beresford’s and Geoffrey Phipps Hornby’s remarks on January 26, 1888 cited or quoted in this and the following paragraphs are found in *The Times*, January 27, 1888, p. 7.
 9. For more on Hornby’s career and his influence in the Royal Navy, see Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996), pp. 184–89 and 279–83.
 10. Beresford to Hornby, January 22, 1888, National Maritime Museum (hereafter NMM): PHI/120(c). Emphasis in original.
 11. Beresford to Hornby, January 27, 1888, NMM: PHI/120(c).
 12. *The Times*, January 27, 1888, p. 7.
 13. *The Times*, February 4, 1888, p. 12.
 14. For an account of this controversy see Matthew Allen, “The Foreign Intelligence Committee and the Origins of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty,” *Mariner’s Mirror* vol. 81 (February 1995), p. 73–74.
 15. *The Times*, February 4, 1888, p. 12.
 16. *Ibid.* Editor’s note: Hamilton’s claim should be taken with a grain or two of salt, but was unquestionably closer to the truth than the alarmist pronouncements of his foes.
 17. *The Times*, March 6, 1888, p. 4.
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. Quoted in Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 250. This body was referred to as the Hartington Commission, after its chairman, Lord Hartington. Its appointment is addressed at greater length below.
 20. Shawn Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2012), p. 17
 21. Quoted in Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 245.
 22. The actual quoted sum was £2,700,270. *The Times*, March 12, 1888, p. 9.
 23. £2,667,000. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 328 (1888), cols. 694–96.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *The Times*, March 6, 1888, p. 4. The Victoria class consisted of HMS *Victoria* and *Sans Pareil*, both of which were completed in 1890–91, about the same time as the two Trafalgars—HMS *Trafalgar* and *Nile*. For more on these vessels, see Roger Chesneau and Eugene M. Kolesnik (eds.),

Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905 (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1979), pp. 29–31. Marder points out that Hamilton informed the House of Commons on March 15, 1888 “that the reason why the Board did not lay down a large number of ships at the same time was that they would probably be obsolete or useless in ten or fifteen years, so rapid was the change in design and in the development of speed.” *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), cols. 1350–51, cited in Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, p. 126. In addition to the concern over rapid obsolescence, the widely-shared contemporary view that the heavily-armed and armored capital ship had been rendered passé by torpedoed and torpedo boats, as the *Jeune Ecole* claimed, exercised an inhibiting influence on building further battleships. France itself did not lay down a single battleship between 1882 and 1889. Nonetheless, in 1888 the Royal Navy had nine first-class battleships under construction, and there may simply not have been slipway space for commencing any more.

26. *The Times*, March 6, 1888, p. 9.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 4. On the difficulty of protecting such a vast and far-flung commerce, and the contemporary concerns it generated, see Marder's chapter on “The “*Guerre de Course*” Nightmare,” in *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 84–104, especially the observation on p. 89:

In the 80s the protection of commerce seemed so insoluble a problem that even Arthur Forwood, the great Liverpool ship-owner, [Sir Charles] Dilke, and [Sir Thomas] Brassey, a former civilian member of the Board of Admiralty, saw in the transfer of British commerce to the flags of neutrals at the start of war the only solution.

Admiralty planners, quite sensibly, did not share their pessimism.

28. Philip Colomb to Hornby, March 4, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
29. *Ibid.*
30. [John Knox Laughton], “Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics,” *Edinburgh Review* vol. 171, no. 349 (January 1890), pp. 160–61.
31. Marder provides a lurid account of their escapades in *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 107–08.
32. [Laughton], “Naval Supremacy and Tactics,” p. 160. Note that in his advocacy of a “superior fleet” as a threat against hostile intentions, Colomb phrased it in the declaratory, not the conditional.
33. Clarke's views appeared in a September 18, 1889 letter to *The Times*.
34. As was demonstrated in World War I, when the German fleet resorted to shore bombardment on only a handful of occasions, all of them designed to lure a portion of the British Grand Fleet to its destruction. Shore bombardment for its sake alone was not part of German strategy.
35. Philip Colomb to Hornby, March 4, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).

36. Mayne to Hornby, February 15, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
37. Mayne to Hornby, March 1, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
38. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), col. 933. See also *The Times*, March 13, 1888, p. 7. As detailed in Chapter 4, such plans did exist, having been crafted by Hall in 1884 (France), 1885 (Russia), and 1887–88 (both). The first two documents were written prior to Beresford’s arrival at Whitehall; the last was not shared with the Board.
39. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), col. 945.
40. *Ibid.*, Col. 938.
41. [Laughton], “Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics,” p. 176.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat, During the War Between the States* (Baltimore: Kelly, Piet and Co., 1869), p. 692, quoted in *ibid.* This, by the way, was exactly the trade protection strategy adopted by the Royal Navy in the 1870s and codified in the 1880s. See Bryan Ranft, “The Protection of British Seaborne Trade and the Development of Systematic Planning for War, 1860–1906,” in *idem.* (ed.), *Technical Change and British Naval Policy, 1860–1939* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).
44. *The Times*, March 13, 1888, p. 7.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), cols 981–82.
47. *The Times*, March 16, 1888, p. 7.
48. On Campbell-Bannerman’s views regarding military institutions generally, see Donald M. Schurman, *Imperial Defence, 1868–1887* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 8–10.
49. Caine, Duff, and Reed were absent from the meeting. Had they been present, Caine and Reed would probably have sided with Beresford, and Duff with Hamilton, resulting in a nine to eight vote in favor of Campbell-Bannerman.
50. “Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix,” *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13, p. 105.
51. *Ibid.* Emphasis added.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
56. *Ibid.*, 246–47.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 196. This prevarication should not be taken to suggest that Hoskins was incompetent: the Second Naval Lord’s responsibilities did not include assessments of foreign navies, which was done by the Naval Intelligence Department, the First Naval Lord, and the Third Lord and Controller.

58. *Ibid.*
59. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), col. 229. Emphasis added.
60. *Ibid.*, cols. 251–52.
61. *Ibid.*, cols. 309–10. Northbrook was First Lord in the second Gladstone ministry, 1880–85
62. *Ibid.*, col. 317.
63. *The Times*, May 5, 1888, p. 9. Ironically, in spite of the restricted terms of reference, the Commission's two reports (1889, 1890) were both preceded by the Naval Defence Act.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Evidence, Written and Oral, taken by the Royal Commission appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relationship of those Departments to each other and to the Treasury*, (generally known as the Hartington Commission), TNA: HO 73/35/3. The remaining members were White Star Line founder Thomas Henry Ismay; Conservative MP Sir Richard Temple; Baring Brothers partner, Bank of England Director, and Lloyds Chairman Charles Edward Baring; Baron Revelstoke; and Conservative MP Lord Randolph Churchill. Although the Commission itself was not disposed to side with Beresford, it did hear a great deal of lurid, albeit not especially accurate, professional evidence, so much so that the full reports were deemed confidential, and only a bowdlerized version, containing none of the testimony, published. See Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, p. 250.
66. *The Times*, March 22, 1888, p. 10.
67. *Ibid.*, March 23, 1888, p. 10
68. *Ibid.*, March 26, 1888, p. 10.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Charles Cooper Penrose Fitzgerald, *From Sail to Steam: Naval Reflections, 1878–1905* (London: Edward Arnold, 1916), p. 156–57.
71. Fitzgerald to *The Times*, March 30, 1888, p. 4.
72. Perhaps fortunately for Fitzgerald and his allies, none of their opponents seized on this argument which undercut their insistence on the necessity for overwhelming *matériel* superiority.
73. P. H. Colomb, "Convoys: Are They Any Longer Possible?," *JRUSI* vol. 31 (1887).
74. Admiralty Board Minute, March 15, 1887, TNA: ADM 167/19.
75. Admiralty Board Minute, April 11, 1887, TNA: ADM 167/19.
76. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (eds.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, supplement vol. 1 (London 1901), pp. 49–50. Entry by John Knox Laughton.
77. Gordon, *The Rules of the Game*, p. 186. The last name was found in an unpublished manuscript written by his daughter E. E. Colomb. I am

- indebted to Andrew Lambert for sharing this manuscript. Editor's note: the derision apparent in these nicknames may have been a manifestation of widespread anti-intellectualism within the officer corps, or it might reflect the fact that many, among them John A. Fisher, regarded Colomb as a pedantic bore.
78. Philip H. Colomb to *The Times*, April 5, 1888, p. 3. Fitzgerald had written "Captain Colomb, the M.P., or his brother the Admiral, besides many other naval officers, would be able to give you very reliable statistics as to what is required" to place the navy on adequate footing.
 79. Colomb to Hornby, May 29, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
 80. Colomb, "Convoys: Are they Still Possible," p. 304. John Knox Laughton agreed with Colomb. In 1890 he wrote: "The days of convoy, it is often said, are past, never to return; but many, who are professionally well qualified to judge, hold a different opinion; and it would seem by no means improbable that, in exceptional instances at least, ships will still sail with convoy." [Laughton], "Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics," p. 176.
 81. Ibid. See also Ranft "The Protection of British Seaborne Trade and the Development of Systematic Planning for War, 1860–1906" for a succinct summary of the evolution of trade protection policy during the 1880s.
 82. Philip H. Colomb, "Blockades: Under Existing Conditions of Warfare," *JRUSI* vol. 31 (1887), p. 735.
 83. Shawn Grimes addresses Colomb's views on blockade at some length in *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918*, pp. 17–18.
 84. *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905* states that these vessels' "resemblance to contemporary small cruisers was marked." See Chesneau and Kolesnik, *Conway's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905*, p. 89. On the use of torpedo gunboats, and later destroyers and light cruisers, for inshore work in an observational or masking blockade scheme, see Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918*, pp. 27–28, 37–40.
 85. Philip H. Colomb, "Blockades: Under Existing Conditions of Warfare," p. 751.
 86. Ibid., p. 752.
 87. Philip H. Colomb, "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom," *JRUSI* vol. 32 (1888), p. 569.
 88. Ibid. These questions were very similar to those with which he ended his April 5, 1888 letter to *The Times*, quoted above.
 89. Ibid., p. 579. Colomb's claim was highly exaggerated. In *The Age of Nelson*, G. J. Marcus states that "by the middle of the [Napoleonic] war the [French] attack on British trade had attained unexampled proportions and, added to the cumulative effect of the Continental Blockade, represented a grave threat to our national economy," despite the British blockade. See G. J. Marcus,

The Age of Nelson: The Royal Navy 1793–1815 (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 361.

90. Editor's note: most of the warships built by the navy during the 1870s and 1880s were reflections of clear strategic principles; those principles were simply not articulated publicly. Neither the Admiralty nor most senior officers were in the habit of discussing strategic principles, but lack of discussion should not be taken to indicate lack of existence. See Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 87–96.
91. Editor's note: the criticism of coast defense vessels is suggestive of Colomb's outsider status in the formulation of naval policy, for those vessels, smaller and of shallower draft than first-class ironclads, but sharing with them heavy guns and armor, and low freeboard, were designed for a specific role in the navy's offensive strategy: to attack small, shallow enemy ports or to advance in tandem with bigger ironclads, covering shallower water into which the latter could not venture, to prevent the escape of small enemy vessels such as would be used as commerce raiders. They were passed off as coast defense ships partly to keep the French from divining British intentions (without much success) and partly to placate ("fool" would be a more apposite term) Liberal and Radical politicians (with greater success) who decried the use of force for any purpose other than defense. Many subsequent historians have been similarly fooled. See Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 102–03.
92. Colomb, "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom," p. 577.
93. Philip H. Colomb, "Convoys: Are They Any Longer Possible," p. 322. The approach Colomb advocated was precisely that used by the Board in most instances, again reflecting his ignorance of naval administration and policy. See, for instance, the discussion surrounding the design of HMS *Shannon* detailed in Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship*, pp. 183–86, and also Arthur Hood's testimony to the Select Committee on the Navy Estimates, Fourth Report, *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13, p. 230.
94. Philip H. Colomb, "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom," p. 598.
95. *The Times*, May 19, 1888, p. 11.
96. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1888, p. 8.
97. *Ibid.*, May 31, 1888, p. 12.
98. *Ibid.*
99. "The Admiralty Confusion and its Cure," *Nineteenth Century*, (May 1888), pp. 760–65 and "Imperial Safety: A Workable Admiralty," *Nineteenth Century* vol. 23 (June 1888), pp. 908–16. On his intentions, see Beresford to Hornby, April 27, 1888. NMM PHI/120(c).
100. "The Balance of Power in Europe," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 143, no. 868 (Feb. 1888), pp. 280–96; "Our Naval Policy," *ibid.*, vol. 143, no. 870 (April 1888), pp. 581–94; "The Navy and the Country," *ibid.*, vol. 144, no. 874 (August 1888), pp. 279–96.

101. Fitzgerald to Hornby, April 10, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
102. *St. James Gazette*, January 9, 1888, p. 3.
103. Beresford to Hornby, April 25, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*
106. Fisher to Hornby, May 12, 1888; Hall to Hornby, May 17, 1888; and Fisher to Hornby, May 21, 1888. All in NMM PHI/120(c).
107. Fisher to Hornby, May 12, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
108. For more on Smith and the results of the 1885 meeting, see Stephen R. B. Smith, "Public Opinion, the Navy and the City of London: The Drive for Naval Expansion in the Late Nineteenth Century," *War & Society* vol. 9, no. 1 (May 1991), p. 32–36.
109. *The Times*, March 26, 1888, p. 10.
110. Fitzgerald to Hornby, April 10, 1888. NMM PHI/120(c). See also Smith, "Public Opinion, the Navy and the City of London," p. 33.
111. Beresford to Hornby, April 25, 1888. NMM PHI/120(c).
112. Beresford to Hornby, April 27, 1888. NMM PHI/120(c).
113. Bruce to Hornby, April 29, 1888. NMM PHI/120(c).
114. Smith, "Public Opinion, the Navy and the City of London," p. 38.
115. Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1925), vol. 1, pp. 146–48.
116. *The Times*, May 10, 1888, p. 12. The prospectus made no reference to capital ships, only cruisers and shore defenses, suggesting the organizers' preoccupation with the protection of seaborne trade and commercial ports.
117. *The Times*, May 15, 1888, p. 10.
118. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1888, p. 10.
119. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1888, p. 12.
120. *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1888, p. 6.
122. The lecture was entitled "The Invincible Armada." See Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, pp. 98–99.
123. *The Times*, May 7, 1888, p. 5
124. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1888, p. 6.
125. *Ibid.*
126. Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, "The Defence of Merchant Ships in Case of War," *The Chamber of Commerce Journal*, vol. 6 (June 1888), p. 126.
127. *The Times*, May 29, 1888, p. 12. Emphasis in original.
128. Beresford to Hornby, October 13, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c). Beresford's fears were further corroborated when Radical MP Caleb Wright quoted Hornby's figures in the debate over the Naval Defence Act. See *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 334 (1889), cols. 794–95.

129. Mary Augusta Egerton, *Admiral of the Fleet Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1896), p. 371.
130. *The Times*, June 6, 1888, p. 6.
131. Fisher to Hornby, June 6, 1888, NMM PHI/120(c).
132. *The Times*, June 6, 1888, p. 6.
133. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1888, p. 7.
134. C. J. Lowe also points to the international situation as a factor pushing Salisbury's acceptance of a major building program. See *The Reluctant Imperialists: British Foreign Policy 1878–1902* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1967), pp. 150–53.
135. On this point, see Paul Smith, "Ruling the Waves: Government, the Service, and the Cost of Naval Supremacy, 1885–99," in *idem.* (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856–1990* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 39: "Under Lord Salisbury's second administration, the decisive and irreversible shift had been made from policy driven by finance to policy driven by defence needs, and the relationship between government and its service chiefs was modified accordingly."
136. Hamilton to Cabinet, "Navy Estimates," November 10, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/21/14.
137. Admiralty Board to Cabinet, "The Requirements of the British Navy," July 1, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/22/36.
138. *Ibid.*
139. *Ibid.*
140. NID Report No. 149a, "Comparison of the Fleets of England, France and Russia in 1890," May 1888. TNA: ADM 231/12.
141. "Fourth report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix," *Parliamentary Papers* 1888, vol. 13, p. 237. Editor's note: technically Hood was not contradicting himself, for he stated explicitly to the Select Committee that his opinion as to the adequacy of the fleet was based on its superiority over the French Navy alone. He equally explicitly refused to state that he regarded it as adequate for a war with France and another naval power.
142. Their report, while reiterating professional demands for a new shipbuilding program, has received attention by historians because it advocated transcending the Two-Power Standard: "[N]o time should be lost in placing our Navy beyond comparison with that of any two Powers." The government refused to go that far, but the articulation of the Two-Power Standard nonetheless served as the basis for the Naval Defence Act and subsequent capital shipbuilding policy down to 1909. See Hood to Admiralty Board, "Committee Upon Late Naval Manoeuvres," October 11, 1888. TNA: ADM 1/6926. For the report itself, see "Extracts from the Report of the

- Committee on the Naval Manoeuvres of 1888, together with the Narrative of the Operations and the Rules laid down for conducting the same, *Parliamentary Papers* 1889, vol. 50, pp. 735–95.
143. W. H. White to Cabinet, "Special Programme for New Construction, 1889–90 to 1894–95," November 1, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/22/30.
 144. Hamilton to Cabinet, "Navy Estimates 1889–90," November 10, 1888. TNA: CAB 37/21/24.
 145. Admiralty Board Minute, November 16, 1888. TNA: ADM 167/20.
 146. See Frederic Manning, *The Life of Sir William White* (London: John Murray, 1923), pp. 241–42; and Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone*, pp. 196–97.
 147. Admiralty Board Minute, November 19, 1888. TNA: ADM 167/20. See also Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone*, p. 197.
 148. Salisbury to Queen Victoria, December 11, 1888, printed in George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria* 3rd ser., 1886–1890 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), p. 456.
 149. *The Times*, February 22, 1889, p. 7, and March 5, 1889, p. 6.
 150. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 333 (1889), cols. 1171–95.
 151. *Ibid.*, col. 1171.
 152. No fewer than 366 MPs did not vote, perhaps because the course of the debate and attempts at hostile amendments (all of which failed by large margins) convinced them that the outcome was a foregone conclusion.
 153. *The Times*, March 17, 1885, pp. 9–10.
 154. Although his account of the Naval Defence Act is unpersuasive, Marder's chapter "Imperialism and the Spirit of the Age" remains required reading. See *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 10–23.
 155. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 334 (1889), cols. 1313–14.
 156. *Ibid.*, col. 1272.
 157. *Ibid.*, col. 1276. Note that even Campbell-Bannerman succumbed to the hypothetical standard employed by his navalist foes. The extensive and increased duties to which he alluded were of course inextricably tied to the size of the force that the navy would face in wartime, not to some nebulous calculation of tonnage of merchant shipping combined with the length of the globe's sea lanes, yet he failed to make that point in the course of his speech.
 158. *Ibid.*
 159. *Ibid.*, col. 1279.
 160. [John Knox Laughton], "Past and Present State of the Navy," *Edinburgh Review* vol. 161 no. 330 (April 1885), 513. The whole of Laughton's piece is well worth reading as a contemporary corrective to allegations which for the most part were and continue to be accepted uncritically.
 161. [John Knox Laughton], "Naval Supremacy and Naval Tactics, p. 155.
 162. *Ibid.*, p. 152. Like Campbell-Bannerman, Laughton appears to have accepted the navalist contention that the theoretical scope of the navy's

- duties, rather than the actual size of the force opposed to it, was the proper yardstick for determining its requisite strength.
163. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 333 (1889), col. 1202.
164. *Ibid.*
165. *Ibid.*, col. 1203. He never brought this resolution forward; later in 1889 he was appointed captain of HMS *Undaunted*, forcing him to resign his seat in Parliament.
166. *Ibid.*
167. *Ibid.*, vol. 334, col. 1259.
168. *Ibid.*, 1263–64. Emphasis added.
169. *Ibid.*, col. 1313.
170. See Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 48–56, also W. Mark Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1889–1914* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1986).
171. Smith, “Ruling the Waves,” p. 51: “Once the centrality to the national interest of a Navy built to a two-power standard became a bipartisan assumption, the First Lord easily turned into a spokesman of the admirals and the Admiralty into a near-independent power within the government as a whole.”
172. Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, pp. 105–07.
173. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 334 (1889), col. 1313. The speaker was James Maclean.

PART III

Strategic Reconfiguration in the
United States, 1873–1889

British Ideas in an American Context: The Underpinnings of Strategic Debate and Organizational Maturity, 1873–1884

In March 1889, the month in which Parliament first deliberated the Naval Defence Bill, Benjamin F. Tracy became Secretary of the Navy, the fifth man to hold that office during the 1880s. Within his first year in office, Tracy sponsored an historic repudiation of the US Navy's traditional strategic posture. The culmination of this policy shift was an appeal to Congress to fund a formidable fighting force of battleships and armored cruisers with which to carry out an offensive naval strategy. "We must have a fleet of battleships to beat off the enemy's fleet on approach," wrote Tracy in his annual report in November 1889.¹ This assertion was in itself novel, for the US Navy's traditional strategy was one of *guerre de course*, and although it had built a handful of ships of the line during the sailing era, these had constituted tokens, chiefly to serve as flagships of overseas squadrons or, in many cases, to rot in ordinary squadrons. There was no historical precedent since the service's founding in 1794 for it to structure its force around a fleet of battleships, even for purely defensive purposes. Defense of America's coasts had hitherto been entrusted to gunboats or, more frequently, land fortifications, of which Fort McHenry, which thwarted the British assault on Baltimore in 1814, was both prototype and exemplar.

More unprecedented still, Tracy then enunciated a variation of the adage that a best defense is a good offense: "we must be able to divert an enemy's force from our coast by threatening his own, for a war, though defensive in principle, may be conducted most effectively by being

offensive in its operations.”² What followed in the 1890s was an historic (and historical) transformation of American naval strategy, as Congress provided—albeit reluctantly at first—funds for the construction of four classes of pre-dreadnought battleships.

Of equal significance, this transformation, like that in Britain, was driven by a new line of strategic thinking emanating from a group of intellectual naval officers, which subsequently gained traction among senior officers in charge of the service’s bureaucracy, and was eventually accepted by the civilians responsible for US national security policy. This epochal shift has traditionally been attributed to the influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose works collectively provided an historical argument in favor of the *guerre d’escadre* and constituted a virtual blueprint for modern United States sea power and naval strategy.³ In fact, although he was among the officers advocating strategic transformation, Mahan’s published justification for it was preceded by the transformation itself, and historical focus on his writings has obscured both the actual sequence of events and the roles played by other actors, several of whom were more critical than Mahan.

The origins of the shift can be traced to the founding of the USNI in 1873, an organization analogous to the RUSI in Britain. In both, many of the most active members within the officer corps espoused a multi-faceted reformist agenda encompassing not only strategic, but personnel, training, and educational reform. From their professional arguments emerged the intellectual underpinnings of a service culture that in time would revolve around the membership and activities of this voluntary association of naval officers. The most prominent naval reformers of the 1880s were not coincidentally active members of USNI.

The work and achievements of Mahan and, to a lesser extent, Stephen Luce are frequently cited by naval historians. Generally overlooked is a supporting cast of naval reformers—Foxhall Parker, Caspar F. Goodrich, French Ensor Chadwick, William T. Sampson, Charles Belknap, and others—whose contributions warrant further scholarly consideration. Together these officers represented the intellectual vanguard of a service culture inspired by ideas of naval reform, strategic innovation, and the “lessons” of naval history, not to mention professional self-interest.

From 1775 to 1898, the naval component of American strategy was shaped largely by political and geographic circumstances that encouraged a largely defensive orientation. Until the outbreak of the Spanish–American War, American policymakers, mindful of the country’s insular *continental* position, were divided over whether a *maritime* component

was a necessary ancillary or an unnecessary adjunct to its national security strategy and force structure.⁴ Some, like Jeffersonian Republicans, thought America should have no more than a purely defensive force of gunboats, manned by seaborne militia, if that. Others, like Jefferson's Federalist rival John Adams, advocated a modest-sized blue-water fleet capable of upholding and extending US commercial interests abroad during peacetime, and protecting them, along with preying on enemy commerce, in wartime. The country's rapid economic development in the early nineteenth century lent weight to Adams' position, and by the outbreak of the Civil War most regions accepted the need for a *guerre de course*-structured force, although sometimes only grudgingly.⁵

American conceptions of security thus rested on strategic insularity and the doctrines of coastal defense and limited commerce destruction. A moderate naval force, to be augmented by privateers in the event of a conflict, was eventually found to be politically acceptable, but securing funds for shipbuilding, especially during peacetime, remained a much more fraught process than in Britain, where politicians of all ideological stripes accepted the necessity of maintaining naval supremacy. Since the US had no analogous benchmark for determining national security requirements, the "proper" size of the navy remained a contentious issue, especially during the annual appropriations process in Congress.

There was, moreover, little incentive in Washington to develop a maritime strategic doctrine and dispense with the informal security guarantees extended by Britain and the overwhelming presence of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic. "For a century after the Peace of Ghent," one American historian has remarked, "the Royal Navy was the main shield of the American Republic against the distresses of Europe."⁶ Indeed, its role was even larger, for British warships functioned at times as *de facto* agents of American foreign policy. Bluntly put, enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine (1823) rested on Britain's acquiescence to it, and her willingness to use sea power to uphold it. The US was also partly dependent on the Royal Navy to protect its commercial interests in other regions, especially the Far East and Mediterranean.

With the Royal Navy thus providing "free" protection in peacetime, and in light of the general congruence of British and US commercial interests, there was no rationale for peacetime American naval expansion, nor even for developing a maritime strategic doctrine based on the idea of going it alone. There would have been overwhelming political resistance to the price tag affixed to the fleet required to carry out any such doctrine

and, as long as the US focused its expansionistic impulses continent-ward, or was distracted by the Civil War and Reconstruction, the realities of domestic politics ensured that anti-navalists in Congress would predominate over politicians from New England and New York who might have been prepared to foot the bill for serious naval expansion. Only when other factors emerged was this state of affairs to be altered.

Of course, the strategic situation just sketched out applied only to peacetime: in wartime the US could not depend on the Royal Navy. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century Britain was the most likely enemy, and the 1813 and 1814 British raids on the Chesapeake, culminating in the destruction of much of Washington in the latter year, pointed to the damage that could be wrought by the Royal Navy's formidable force projection capabilities. Yet neither that menace, nor the possibility of its being unleashed again, prompted the US government to do much beyond investing millions of dollars in coastal defenses over the course of the century. US naval policy in wartime, such as it was, remained based on two complementary assumptions. First, it was politically impossible to create a navy capable of competing with that of any major European country. But, second, it was unnecessary to, because the US's geographic insularity from major naval powers, an insularity that increased as steam supplanted sail, coupled with Canada's perceived vulnerability to invasion in the event of another confrontation with Britain, undercut the need for a powerful navy. The only naval power able to "get at" the US in a damaging manner also happened to be one with a huge strategic liability, one which was, after 1865, indefensible by naval measures of the sort used in 1813–14 or contemplated in 1861–62: threatening America's eastern seaboard. That Britain itself was aware of this vulnerability is made clear by its granting Canada dominion status in 1867 and, more tellingly, its willingness to submit US claims for compensation for the destruction wrought by British-built Confederate commerce raiders—the "*Alabama* Claims"—to binding arbitration soon after the Civil War's end.⁷

So US naval policy remained inextricably bound up in its peacetime roles and missions and even more so in the global threat environment. British and American peacetime interests—fostering overseas commerce, protecting trade, combatting piracy—largely coincided; the US held a trump card (Canada) in a war with Britain; and there was no other naval threat worth serious consideration beyond the destruction of American merchant shipping, of which there was very little after the mid-nineteenth century "flight from the flag." Ergo, there was scant reason to give lengthy

thought in peacetime as to how to deploy/employ the small US Navy in wartime, as the discussions that took place between Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton and senior naval officers at the outbreak of the War of 1812 suggest.⁸ US naval strategy in wartime for the first century of the nation's existence was, at the risk of slight exaggeration, a largely extemporized *guerre de course*, excepting the Mexican and Civil Wars, during both of which the United States Navy exercised *de facto* command of the sea.

There was, in the immediate wake of the latter conflict, little incentive to depart from the American way of warfare that had remained largely intact for close to a century.⁹ The situation was further complicated in the 1870s by rapidly evolving naval technology, the articulation of competing naval strategies abroad, and the general lack of public debate regarding American naval policy.

In response to these challenges, a self-selected group of naval officers formed a voluntary organization in October 1873 for the purpose of providing a forum in which discussion and debate on subjects of professional interest could be fostered among naval officers. In attendance at the organizing meeting at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis were fifteen officers, most of whom remain little known to modern naval historians.¹⁰ Among the original members of what eventually became the USNI were accomplished naval practitioners and service intellectuals, the most notable probably being Commodore Foxhall Parker, Lieutenant Commander Caspar F. Goodrich, and Lieutenant Charles Belknap.¹¹ Parker, the chairman of the committee which organized the Naval Institute, was well regarded in the naval community for his work on tactical issues, first *Squadron Tactics under Steam* (1864), and later *Fleet Tactics under Steam* (1870).¹² Belknap, whose naval career was unremarkable, became the most active of the original members after Parker's death in 1878, but his efforts were soon overshadowed by Goodrich's, whose subsequent collaboration with Stephen Luce and William Sampson was critical to fostering the conditions favorable for strategic transformation in the 1880s.¹³

At that first gathering, an executive committee was established to organize and schedule future meetings, which were to be convened once a month during the academic session at Annapolis. This arrangement was convenient to the initial members, as most were faculty or administrators at the Naval Academy. To encourage membership and promote the evolving aims of the new organization, it was also agreed to solicit the Navy Department's support.¹⁴ Accordingly, a letter was sent to Commodore Daniel Ammen, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation who, along with

Commodore Christopher R. P. Rodgers of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, was judged to be one of the two Bureau chiefs most receptive to the concept. Ammen, as hoped, endorsed the group and their aims: “[t]here is, I think, nothing more likely to promote an interest in professional matters, or to increase the usefulness of officers, or their devotion to the service, than a properly organized society as is now initiated.”¹⁵ Also of immediate concern was finding a suitably qualified and distinguished officer to deliver the next meeting’s lecture on short notice. Upon receiving the invitation in Boston in late October, Captain Stephen Luce (Figure 6.1) promptly accepted and within two weeks had prepared a lecture on one of his occupational passions: apprentice training in the navy.¹⁶ While not present for the organizing meeting the previous month, Luce was later credited by Goodrich for originally encouraging the formation of the Naval Institute.¹⁷ This claim is plausible, as Luce was a frequent visitor to the Naval Academy in the 1870s and corresponded with Foxhall Parker.

In subsequent meetings, a constitution for the organization was drafted and adopted by the full membership, which comprised thirty-six officers by the end of 1873. The constitution stated the official purpose of the Institute to be “the advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy” (“literary” was added in 1884).¹⁸ The most important clause in the constitution, however, pertained to the presentation of new ideas and their dissemination throughout the service. It specified that “whenever papers read before the Society, and the discussions growing out of them, shall accumulate in quantities to make one hundred octavo pages printed matter, they shall be prepared for issue in pamphlet form”¹⁹ In February 1874 the pamphlet was first referred to the *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* (USNIP), later known simply as *Proceedings*. The format of the quarterly journal was to follow that employed in the successful *JRUSI* in Britain and *La Revue Maritime et Coloniale* in France.

First appearing in 1875, the journal quickly became a popular medium for the transmission of innovative ideas, technological reports and progress summaries, appraisals of foreign navies, and other policy-related aspects of American naval thought. Among the papers published in *Proceedings* that touched on strategic issues—albeit largely indirectly—during the 1870s were essays by Parker, Captain William N. Jeffers, and Lieutenant Theodorus B. M. Mason, the last of whom was instrumental in the creation of the ONI in 1882.²⁰ In a paper published in the first issue of *Proceedings*, Parker made sobering observations on American naval capabilities following the seizure of the American-registered *Virginia* by the Spanish cruiser



Fig. 6.1 Tireless reformer Stephen Bleecker Luce (1827–1917) was the key figure in American naval modernization between 1870 and 1890: among other achievements he was instrumental in the foundation of the United States Naval Institute (1873) and the creation of the United States Naval War College (1884) (Image courtesy US *Naval History and Heritage Command*, NHHC 46082)

Tornado off the coast of Cuba in 1873. When seeking retribution for the summary execution of thirty-seven crew members, who were (rightly) suspected of aiding Cuban insurrectionists, the US assembled a squadron off Key West for maneuvers and quickly discovered that its vessels were ill-prepared and equipped for a confrontation with Spanish ironclads. Parker, who witnessed the maneuvers first-hand, decried the dreadful condition of the assembled force, and suggested a remedial shipbuilding program on the basis of functional specialization. He envisioned a fleet of cruisers, rams, and torpedo boats, all of which would be expected to close with and destroy an enemy squadron off the coast of the United States.

In the same issue Jeffers transformed a discussion of naval armament into a critique of American shipbuilding policy. The then Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance was particularly critical of the prevailing naval strategy and operational doctrine:

It is very right that when a vessel of war encounters a superior force, speed should be able to make her safe, but the necessary diminution of offensive power should not be so great as to disable a first-class steamer from matching any vessel of her own class of inferior speed, but provided with a proper armament; otherwise its usual business would be running—fighting [would be] the exception!

Although the large vessels of the *Tennessee* and *Florida* class were constructed on the theory of cutting up an enemy's commerce and flying from its cruisers, yet it is repugnant to our nation to employ such large and expensive vessels for this purpose.²¹

In a lecture published in 1876, Mason adopted a more creative and imaginative approach to underscore the near-term potential for American naval modernization, while at the same time alluding to the consequences of failing to address perceived shortcomings in naval policy. These themes were highlighted by Mason via fictional exchanges of correspondence between naval officers, first in 1880 and later in 1906. The first exchange purportedly took place after the “War of 1880” when, following a disastrous naval campaign, one officer bitterly complained about the inferior quality of American warships and the political short-sightedness that resulted in the unfortunate outcome: “As soon as they were in range, we opened fire, but we might as well have been throwing peas at a stone wall, whereas we received a number of heavy shells, some passing through us and some bursting onboard us ... and our ship went down in no time.”²² By contrast, the “letters” exchanged in 1906 describe a modernized

American battlefleet composed of armored vessels, cruisers, and rams. Mason's chief imaginary letter-writer also provided a detailed description of a modern system of American naval tactics, which emphasized the offensive advantages of concentration and superior firepower to engage and destroy an opponent approaching the American coastline. Thus, by the late 1870s, Parker, Jeffers, Mason, and other members of the Naval Institute were considering a departure from the strategic and ship design practices traditionally followed in the United States. The *Proceedings* ensured that these innovative ideas were available to naval and congressional authorities in Washington. Such availability did not, however, guarantee a receptive audience.

The influence of the Naval Institute and its members in the 1870s should therefore not be exaggerated. It was indeed emerging during this period as an "informal guild" and a "lobbying body for career officers," as aptly described in an examination of the intellectual roots of American naval strategy.²³ Moreover, from public discussions of professional subjects arose a service culture that essentially defined itself around the aims and activities of the Institute. "[T]he absorption with strategy and ship design was ultimately a self-perpetuating concern," observes an American student of naval affairs, "arising from an inner circle of common intellectual interest Their world of thought and social activity was the realm of strategic debates."²⁴ Among the most active members in the 1870s were the most celebrated naval reformers of the 1880s—Luce, Mahan, Sampson, Goodrich, Mason, and James Russell Soley—all of whom shared an agenda that led them to promote strategic transformation and naval modernization.

But although it included among its numbers a cadre of service intellectuals, overall membership remained low throughout the 1870s and 1880s: only 267 in 1879 and barely 860 a decade later.²⁵ Additionally, the potential influence of the Institute and its members was constrained in the 1870s for reasons due primarily to its outsider status vis-à-vis the naval establishment. What was required was a powerful patron in the Navy Department, if not the Secretary of the Navy himself, then a Bureau chief who wielded considerable influence in the business of naval administration.

In the 1880s, support for the Institute gradually increased through the growing popularity of the *Proceedings* and the topics it addressed. In December 1881, in fact, it received acknowledgment from the Secretary of the Navy himself. In a response to a solicitation to purchase one hundred subscriptions of *Proceedings*, Secretary William H. Hunt ordered fifty

for use by officers in the Navy Department. Although the order was only half of the suggested amount, the work of the Institute finally received the “solid foundation” it sought from the Navy Department, especially since Hunt extended his “official” approval of the Institute’s efforts to encourage the “advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy.”²⁶ But selling subscriptions to the Navy Department was one thing; patronage beyond the honorific was something else. To translate ideas about naval reform into policy required the active support of a highly-placed department official with power, influence and political capital to expend for the sake of small minority within the officer corps. The USNI and the reforms advocated by its members needed such a person if they were to make any progress toward technological modernization of the fleet and a new strategic doctrine.

* * *

The most obvious choice was Admiral David Dixon Porter, the most senior officer in the Navy. The son of Captain David Porter and the foster brother of David Farragut, the younger Porter established his own reputation during the Civil War, commanding Federal blockading squadrons in the Atlantic and riverine forces on the Mississippi. In the decade following the conflict, Porter emerged as the most powerful and influential officer in the service, benefiting from a personal connection with President Ulysses Grant, and his appointment in March 1869 as “technical advisor” to Adolph E. Borie, the weak Secretary of the Navy.²⁷ In June 1869, George Maxwell Robeson was appointed to replace Borie, thus ending Porter’s brief reign in the Department. But although his tenure as *de facto* Secretary of the Navy had ended, Porter continued to wield influence within the Navy Department as the head of the Board of Inspection, an appointment he held until his death in 1891, although his power waned after 1880.

But Porter never ceased his efforts to influence the formulation of naval policy, and he maintained contacts in both Congress and in the White House. In April 1881, Porter wrote to President James Garfield, whose Republican administration was less than a month old. He urged the new chief executive to shake up the department with the appointment of a fresh group of officers to replace several Bureau chiefs he considered grossly negligent in their duties. Porter’s suggestions were not acted upon during Garfield’s brief tenure as President, but four Bureau chiefs were replaced later in 1881, among them Commodore William Danforth Whiting at

the Bureau of Navigation who, Porter accurately claimed, was blind and incapable of performing his duties. In his place Porter suggested Captain John Grimes Walker (Figure 6.2) who, in his opinion, was “one of the



Fig. 6.2 As head of the US Navy’s powerful Bureau of Navigation 1881–89, John Grimes Walker (1835–1907) provided crucial institutional patronage and protection for the Office of Naval Intelligence (founded 1882) and the Naval War College (founded 1884) (Image courtesy US *Library of Congress*, LC-USZ62-75401)

most ablest [*sic*] officers of his grade, noted for his administrative ability and integrity, and he will lend all his energies to put a stop to fraud [in] the Navy Department.”²⁸ Walker was notified of his appointment by Secretary Hunt four months later, and became Chief of the Bureau of Navigation on October 18, 1881.²⁹ He would remain in that post until late 1889.

Porter knew Walker well. Another Civil War veteran, Walker had distinguished himself under Porter’s command in a number of campaigns, first with the Mississippi Squadron and later on the Atlantic coast. Porter considered Walker one of his finest subordinate officers, so much so that the latter was appointed to his staff when Porter served as Superintendent of the US Naval Academy 1866–69. While at Annapolis Walker’s position as personal aide to his mentor afforded him opportunities to interact with some of the brightest minds among the faculty and midshipmen.³⁰ Among those then at Annapolis were Lieutenant Commanders William Sampson and William Bainbridge-Hoff, and Cadets Theodorus Mason, Raymond Rodgers, Seaton Schroeder, and Richard Wainwright. Their talents would all later be utilized by Walker during his tenure as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation.

The most important relationship formed during this period was that between Walker and Luce. Walker’s duties at the academy no doubt required him to work closely with Luce, another Porter protégé, who served as Commandant of Midshipmen during the first two years of Walker’s tenure at Annapolis. Although Walker was more a practitioner than a service intellectual, his later efforts to sustain the efforts of Luce and his cohort strongly suggests a commonality in outlook, most obviously in the areas of naval education and history. Both men shared an avid interest in the naval operations of the Civil War, and either Luce or Porter recommended Walker to a prominent publisher as a potential author for *The Gulf and Inland Waters*, the last of a three-part series collectively entitled *The Navy in the Civil War*.³¹ Walker declined the offer and the book was eventually written by Mahan.³²

That Walker and Luce respected and confided in each other is evident in the correspondence between the two. Luce’s biographer Albert Gleaves, who knew both men well, termed Walker a “strong friend” of Luce and “one of the most able administrators and executives the Department has ever had.”³³ Gleaves also called Walker “politically the most powerful man in the service,” due to his close relationship with William B. Allison, his brother-in-law and a Republican senator from Iowa.³⁴ From 1881 to 1893 and from 1895 to 1908 Allison served as the chairman of the powerful

appropriations committee in the Senate, which controlled the Navy Department's budget.³⁵

While it was clear to friends and colleagues that he was a talented and well-connected naval officer, Walker himself harbored doubts as to his prospects in the service. Like many of his contemporaries he took a mid-career leave of absence to explore alternative employment in the private sector. He chose the railroad industry, securing a position with the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (CB&Q) Railroad in 1879.³⁶ During the following two years, he immersed himself in his new profession and had little contact with other naval officers. This did not mean, however, that he forgot about the navy. As his leave of absence drew to a close, he confided to other officers his hopes for reform in the navy, beginning with the Navy Department. He was particularly optimistic in the months before Garfield's inauguration in March 1881, observing that "the best interests of the Navy will be served by putting into those places men not identified with the present clique."³⁷ Writing to Commander Albert Kautz, himself aspiring to be Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, Walker clearly sided with the reformers, even those that he did not know:

I shall be glad to see the incoming Secretary make a clean sweep and make a fresh start with men who can spare some time to look out for the Navy rather than devote their whole to log rolling for themselves I do not know who the younger men will unite upon, but you can count upon me to support "the ticket." I shall be glad to aid the good cause, or yours personally, or both at once Keep me posted.³⁸

Meanwhile, he continued to ponder his own future in the navy. When the time came to make a decision, he resigned from the CB&Q to assume command of the USS *Powhatan*.³⁹ Even then, however, he doubted whether his decision to return to the navy was the right one. Prior to leaving his railroad job Walker apprised Commander (later Admiral) George Dewey of his apprehension, admitting that "Our people here are very grumpy and disgusted at my leaving them, and I am half inclined to think that I am making an ass of myself."⁴⁰

Walker arrived in New York in April 1881 to take command of the *Powhatan*. The surviving correspondence between him and Porter provides little insight into whether or not Walker was aware of his mentor's efforts to place him in the Bureau of Navigation. His response upon hearing of the appointment, less than half a year after his assignment to the

Powhatan, suggests that he was surprised. “I desire to most heartily thank you,” Walker wrote to Secretary Hunt in August 1881, “for the evidence of my professional attainments and for the very kind way in which it is conveyed.”⁴¹ Porter was equally pleased upon hearing of the appointment. In his letters to Luce, Porter frequently decried what he saw as the corruption and gross incompetence of the officers who were supposed to advise the Secretary on naval matters. “If you knew all the trouble to get [Hunt] to do things you would wonder at my patience,” Porter wrote Luce in the wake of Walker’s appointment. “[H]e has some bad fellows around him, regular Samson’s [*sic*] who are willing to pull down the gates of Gaza even if it causes their own destruction in the end.”⁴² Once Walker’s appointment was assured, Porter was confident that the deplorable situation would soon be corrected: “[I]n 10 days from now, Walker will be in the Bureau of Navigation and Detail and then I can have somebody at the Secretary’s side to keep him posted in my absence. Everything then will then go right.”⁴³

Porter’s prediction was only partially realized. True, Walker was indeed a scrupulous reformer, adept at promoting the interests of the service over the parochial machinations of the Bureau chiefs.⁴⁴ Yet despite the installation of a protégé as a powerful Bureau chief, Porter’s belief that Walker would serve as a mouthpiece for his own agenda inside the department was mistaken. Walker had his own ideas about naval reform, and they did not for the most part jibe with Porter’s.

Upon assuming his duties in October 1881, Walker and his assistant—Lieutenant Commander Bowman Hendry McCalla, also formerly of the *Powhatan*—quickly became members of the USNI, in 1882 ordering an additional 50 subscriptions of *Proceedings* for use by officers in the Bureau.⁴⁵ Under his careful direction, the Bureau of Navigation soon became a haven for the brightest minds in the department, and his unconditional support for the ONI and the NWC—both founded on his watch—created the intellectual framework, and hence the conditions favorable for the decisions of 1889.

Walker was in charge of the most expansive of the eight bureaus in the Navy Department, complete with the largest budget and staff.⁴⁶ The Bureau of Navigation had been established in 1842 as the scientific branch of the Navy Department.⁴⁷ As such, the Bureau chief exercised oversight of the Hydrographic Office, the Naval Observatory, the Nautical Almanac Office, and the Chief Signal Office. But Walker’s power within the Navy Department derived chiefly from his control of the Office of Detail, which was transferred to the Bureau of Navigation in April 1865 to remove

the burden of issuing orders to individual officers from the overworked Secretary of the Navy. Walker thereby had the power to assign naval officers to the duties for which he thought they were most qualified, and he did so, sometimes with little regard for the seniority system that was supposed to govern such assignments. "I do not believe in putting young men in positions that are set apart for men of higher rank," Walker informed a colleague in 1885, "but I do believe that where special duty requiring special knowledge, or special ability is to be done, that ... the men best fitted for that work" should "do it without regard to their age."⁴⁸ This prerogative would be particularly useful when it came time to staff the ONI and to select instructors for the NWC.

Shortly after beginning work Walker acquired another significant administrative prerogative, one he likely sought himself. Secretary Hunt directed on November 28, 1881 that all reports, letters, and telegrams relating to the movement of vessels be forwarded to the Bureau of Navigation. Walker was further directed to account for the movement of all naval vessels, and prepare orders and instructions to be issued on behalf of the Secretary. This new directive was issued to the commandants of navy yards, and commanders of squadrons and ships. As could be expected, it caused considerable discontent within the senior officer corps.⁴⁹ Walker, who as Bureau chief was granted the temporary rank of Commodore, now exercised the authority to assign Flag Officers and Captains senior to him to squadrons and ships while regulating the movement of the vessels under their command.

Walker did not hesitate to make use of the power Hunt had granted him. On one occasion in 1882, for example, he felt it necessary to remind a Flag Officer of the importance of practicing squadron evolutions, with an emphasis on steam tactics: "In battle everything would be done under steam, and prompt and exact handling of a single ship might win or lose a squadron action. In these days of rams and torpedo boats, an officer should know just what his ship will do and in order to learn, he must practice."⁵⁰ While his letter was phrased more as informal advice from a junior officer than a stern reminder from a Bureau chief, Walker nonetheless ensured that the recipient of his correspondence knew exactly what was expected of him and the squadron of vessels under his command: "I have no doubt of the great good coming from the present cruise, but I want to get *all possible* out of it."⁵¹

Even Porter suffered from the power shift among the Bureaus. Never before had departmental affairs been so dominated by a single Bureau

chief, whose influence extended to critical personnel decisions as well as the movements of the fleet in peacetime. Porter discovered this change in the internal dynamics of the department first-hand when he clashed with Walker over the movements of the Training Squadron, then under Luce's command. Walker was insistent that all vessels fell within his purview, including those of the Training Squadron, while Porter maintained that oversight of training vessels remained with him. That Porter was unsuccessful is clear from his numerous complaints to Luce, who remained neutral in the dispute between his allies. "It is impossible to find an opportunity to talk to him," Porter wrote Luce in November 1882.⁵² "When I go to his office he is so full of people to whom he gives precedence that I have no chance to open the subject of the apprentice squadron"⁵³ Conceding that "Capt. W. is stronger than I am" Porter subsequently requested to be relieved of any responsibility for the Training Squadron.⁵⁴

But there were limits to the power of the new Bureau chief. As in the British system of naval administration, the Secretary of the Navy was supreme over his professional advisors and administrators. Walker was thus subject to the orders of the civilian head of the department, who could alter administrative arrangements as he thought fit, including countermanning the actions of his predecessors. That is exactly what happened in April 1882, when Hunt was replaced in the wake of Garfield's assassination. In his place, President Chester Arthur appointed William E. Chandler, a Republican from New Hampshire, with little experience in naval affairs.⁵⁵ Like his predecessor, Chandler was interested in reform, and initially allowed the administrative scheme in place in the department to continue. Chandler even designated Walker Acting Secretary in his absence during the summer of 1882.

The professional relationship between the two men deteriorated in 1883, as Chandler began to doubt the benefits of Walker's sweeping power owing to complaints from senior officers whose feathers had been ruffled.⁵⁶ Acting on that discontent, in October 1883 Chandler sought to return the Office of Detail to his oversight. Walker viewed the move as an attempt to force his resignation, but before doing so he appealed to his powerful political connections. He informed Senator Allison that "I am just now undergoing the process of being frozen out. Chandler, who I think likes me personally well enough, has evidently made up his mind to take from me one duty after another until he forces me to resign as Chief of a Bureau."⁵⁷ Walker was prepared to submit his resignation to Chandler, but an accommodation between the two men was reached—apparently at

the suggestion of Allison—whereby Walker agreed to consult more closely with Chandler in the detailing process.⁵⁸

Chandler eventually succeeded in resuming control of the Office of Detail in October 1884, in spite of yet another appeal to Allison, Walker observing that “I don’t know as there is any way of stopping it unless some pressure can be brought to bear upon him.”⁵⁹ It was only a temporary setback, however. In the first months of the Cleveland administration in 1885, Walker drafted a lengthy memorandum that convinced incoming Secretary William C. Whitney to return the Office of Detail to the Bureau of Navigation.⁶⁰

In the meantime, Walker was obliged to consult with the other Bureau chiefs, some of whom were jealous of his and the Bureau of Navigation’s power, on personnel decisions. The antagonism between the Bureaus eventually boiled over in May 1884, when a concerted effort was made by the other Bureau chiefs to reallocate office space at the expense of the Bureau of Navigation. It was essentially a parochial dispute, but the overall tone of the memoranda exchanged between the two sides suggests that more was at stake than just office space.⁶¹

Notwithstanding the friction over the Office of Detail, Walker was able to accomplish much during Chandler’s term as Navy Secretary. While his role in the formation of the ONI in 1882 and of the NWC in 1884 has largely been relegated to the footnotes of American naval history, Walker’s timely support for both institutions in the 1880s was critical in a department consumed by turf wars and power struggles, and Hunt’s and Chandler’s acquiescence to Walker’s initiatives should not be ignored. The establishment of those institutions were the first two steps in the process of awakening naval officers, legislators, and other interested parties to the prospects for the US Navy, including its value as an instrument of power projection and deterrence.

* * *

Given the striking disparity in terms of strength and importance to national security between the Royal Navy and its American counterpart, it is surprising that the latter was the first to establish an intelligence office. This paradox is probably explained by the fact that the Admiralty had been for years accustomed to receiving intelligence from rivals’ fleet movements, published accounts, and above all the naval attachés’ reports, and was thus slow to recognize the added value of a more formal intelligence-gathering and sifting structure.

Although the US Navy lacked an intelligence-gathering system comparable to that available to the Admiralty by the 1860s, it was not without its own means. In the late 1870s, for instance, James Wilson King, Chief Engineer of service, compiled a series of reports on the navies of the world that were so comprehensive and accurate that the British Admiralty itself possessed at least one copy for reference.⁶² Nonetheless, intelligence collection in the US Navy was a more irregular and haphazard process than in Britain. American naval officers, particularly those attached to the Bureau of Navigation, were thus quick to embrace the concept of a formalized intelligence function, complete with a staff of talented young officers to procure information on foreign naval capabilities and other topics of interest to the Navy Department.

Of the naval officers associated with the formation of the ONI, historians generally give greatest credit to Theodorus Mason (Figure 6.3), who was appointed its first Chief Intelligence Officer (CIO).⁶³ Indeed, Mason's enthusiasm for intelligence can be traced to his duties on the USS *Franklin* in 1870 with the European squadron. The *Franklin's* Captain, Christopher R. P. Rodgers, assigned Mason and a few other junior officers to the task of collecting information on the naval organizations and capabilities of all the European countries visited during the course of a cruise. Following that exercise, Mason managed to obtain leave to remain in Europe in order to learn more about foreign naval establishments, but his investigation was halted by orders to report for duty in the Hydrographic Office in Washington.⁶⁴

Rather than diverting him from his interest in foreign navies, his new assignment afforded Mason with opportunities for further travel and study on hydrographic expeditions, some of which combined scientific exploration with economic and strategic analysis. This experience proved essential to his training and that of other future intelligence officers. "Indeed every important naval intelligence agent between 1882 and 1918 served at one time or other on these missions, while four Navy hydrographers became chief intelligence officers," writes Jeffrey Dorwart in his study of American naval intelligence during this period: "This intimate relationship between scientific endeavor and early naval intelligence accounted partly for the scholarly, research-oriented nature of the first generation of naval intelligence operatives."⁶⁵

Multilingual and scholarly, Mason was one of a group of reform-minded service intellectuals active in the USNI. He wrote prolifically on a variety of naval subjects and contributed lectures and critical essays for both the



Fig. 6.3 Theodor B. M. Mason (1848–1899) provided the impetus for the establishment of the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882 and served as the first Chief of Naval Intelligence (1882–85) (Image courtesy US *Naval Academy Museum*, *USNAM 1954_015*)

Proceedings and *The United Service*, the latter a professional journal that actually paid authors for articles. He was unquestionably the most distinguished of the generation of naval officers to graduate from Annapolis in the decade following the Civil War.⁶⁶ In a show of confidence in his abilities and commitment to the organization's aims, Mason was elected in 1877 to the USNI's executive committee, serving in that post concurrently with his appointment as an instructor of naval gunnery and infantry tactics at Annapolis. In the former capacity, Mason no doubt became acquainted with the perspectives of his fellow Institute members who were also Naval Academy faculty, among them William Sampson, James Russell Soley and, slightly later, Alfred Mahan. Likewise, Mason was afforded an opportunity to expand on his knowledge of intelligence matters.

Mason's first explicit reference to naval intelligence was made in an article published in *The United Service* in April 1879. In the absence of an "intelligence bureau" in the Navy Department, he suggested that the USNI should serve as "the bureau of information for the navy."⁶⁷ He encouraged fellow officers, especially those assigned to overseas stations, to study the latest advances in foreign naval technology, perform their own investigations of new designs, patents, and inventions, and submit their conclusions for consideration by the Institute and publication in *Proceedings*. He was also hopeful that the Institute would receive some sort of official recognition from the Navy Department, similar to the relationship existing between the Admiralty and the RUSI in London. "The English Admiralty offers every inducement and facility to [the RUSI]," argued Mason, "which is really semi-official in its nature; the facilities are sometimes substantial in their form, consisting of models, descriptions, official publications and data."⁶⁸ The USNI (to say nothing of the navy as a whole) would benefit from such an arrangement, as its members and the senior officer corps needed to be kept apprised of foreign naval developments. Until such an arrangement was embraced by the Department, however, Mason urged his fellow members to "constitute a sort of mutual learning company" and function as an ad hoc intelligence department. Mason argued that the USNI was an underutilized resource that, if afforded the opportunity, official recognition, and adequate supervision, could undertake the collection, analysis, and dissemination of foreign naval intelligence:

The intelligence department has been hampered by the fact that no one has the time or opportunity to take charge of it, and the bureaux and other officers do not furnish their information. It is hoped that soon the thing may

be presented to our honorable Secretary by our President [of the Institute] in such a light that he may authorize or even direct the Bureaux to furnish the necessary information. An officer might be detailed to direct this department, so necessary for the education of the officers of the service, or, at any rate, the society might make it an object to some retired officer to become its permanent Secretary, as is the case with the Royal United Services Institute.⁶⁹

With Secretary Richard W. Thompson and his Bureau chiefs then struggling to defend the Department against charges of corruption and gross negligence, some of which were warranted, Mason must have surmised that his overture for an intelligence bureau would fall on deaf ears.⁷⁰ Possibly his idea was rejected because Thompson was satisfied with existing intelligence collection capabilities.⁷¹ For the next three years, therefore, Mason reprised his role as a fleet intelligence officer. Christopher R. P. Rodgers, now a Rear Admiral, was appointed in 1879 to command the Pacific Squadron and requested Mason as his Flag Lieutenant.⁷² Mason collected naval intelligence on each country visited by the squadron. The highlight of the cruise for him was the opportunity to observe and report on the naval actions of the Pacific War of 1879–81, pitting Chile against Peru and Bolivia. On one occasion, Mason and an intelligence team that included Lieutenants John F. Meigs and Royal R. Ingersoll were permitted by Chilean officials to inspect the damage sustained by the *Huascar*, a Peruvian ironclad that was captured after a bitter fight with the Chilean ironclads *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Enclada*.⁷³ Their observations were promptly forwarded to the USNI, and shortly thereafter articles appeared in both the *Proceedings* and *The United Service*.⁷⁴ Yet despite his efforts to secure a formalized arrangement for intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination, Mason failed to interest officials within the Navy Department. Upon completion of his duties with the Pacific Squadron, he reluctantly returned to the Naval Academy as an instructor in late 1881, where he allegedly brooded over the matter.⁷⁵

After only six months, however, Mason was unexpectedly summoned to the Department to make his case, and within weeks was assigned to the Bureau of Navigation so that he could assist in the formation of what would become the ONI. Supporting him in this lobbying effort was Lieutenant Commander McCalla, Walker's assistant in the Bureau, who had independently developed an interest in naval intelligence after reading a May 1881 RUSI lecture on the subject by John Colomb.⁷⁶ "I had been

much impressed with his views and practical suggestions,” McCalla later recalled in his unpublished memoirs, “recognizing what an important part of an Admiralty, or of a Navy Department, such a branch might prove itself to be.”⁷⁷

Several months later, McCalla discussed the subject with Mason during a visit to the Naval Academy, after which he immediately recommended to Walker that Mason’s proposal for an intelligence department be adopted.⁷⁸ Walker was amenable: he realized that the Navy Department would benefit from a systematic method of collecting and filing information about foreign naval developments.⁷⁹ Hence, Walker promptly drafted the order establishing the new office within the Bureau of Navigation, which in turn was signed by Secretary Hunt on March 23, 1882.⁸⁰ The effort to organize and staff the newly established department stalled temporarily between April and June 1882, as President Arthur replaced Hunt on April 17, 1882 with William Chandler. It was therefore left to Chandler to reaffirm the directive of his predecessor. Following a meeting with Mason, he assented to the creation of the ONI.

Mason reported to the Bureau of Navigation on June 15, 1882, whereupon Walker appointed him CIO. Since formal funding of the new department depended on congressional action, Walker initially sustained the activities of the ONI through the expedient of reallocating resources earmarked for other activities within the Bureau.⁸¹ Three officers, all of them assigned to the Bureau, were appointed to assist Mason.⁸² Clerks were borrowed from other offices under Walker’s purview, and office space was found for the intelligence officers in the new State, War, and Navy Building.

In subsequent years, Walker sought congressional recognition of the ONI and with it a budgetary allocation to support and even increase the unit’s activities. His efforts in this regard were unsuccessful: the ONI would not secure congressional recognition and funding until 1900.⁸³ Walker and his successors were thus compelled to continue siphoning funds from other sources within the Department. In short, the Bureau chief displayed considerable enthusiasm for the new institution, as reflected both in his efforts to sustain it with existing resources as well as in his public championing of its work. “An Office of Naval Intelligence,” explained Walker in his annual report outlining his bureau’s activities in 1882, “now generally recognized as necessary to the effectiveness of an Army or Navy ... has been organized for the purpose of systematizing the collection and classification of information for the use of the Department, in relation to the strength and resources of foreign navies.”⁸⁴

Mason, meanwhile, sought to define the scope of activities to be undertaken by the officers under his direction. In a letter probably drafted by him, Secretary Chandler outlined fourteen categories of information to be collected by the ONI, including not only intelligence on foreign naval developments, but also information on American naval capabilities, coastal defense and fortifications, the mercantile marine, and other subjects that might be useful to naval officers.⁸⁵ In emulation of British practice, naval attachés were to be dispatched to foreign legations to assist in the all-important task of collecting information on naval developments abroad. The first of these attachés, Commander French Ensor Chadwick, received orders from Chandler in July 1882 to report to the US legation in London.⁸⁶ The Secretary, moreover, expected the ONI to publish monthly bulletins to inform the officer corps, the contents of which were to include original articles submitted by naval officers. “The younger officers of the service,” wrote Chandler on July 25, 1882, “will be encouraged in collecting and reporting intelligence and in writing articles on naval subjects.”⁸⁷ Finally, and most importantly, Chandler granted permission for Mason to avail himself of the facilities and resources of the USNI, precisely the arrangement that the latter had advocated since April 1879: “[t]he United States Naval Institute, a voluntary organization of the officers of the Navy for the purpose of facilitating study, will be encouraged by a contribution of such matter as may be thought proper from time to time.”⁸⁸

Anticipating the intelligence requirements of his consumers, Mason organized his office according to functional, rather than geographical areas of interest.⁸⁹ Intelligence collection in the 1880s focused largely on foreign technical information—in the form of warship and machinery designs, blueprints, and design specifications—so as to facilitate American naval and strategic modernization. This proved to be an imposing task, one that could not have been accomplished but for the complement of officers assigned to the ONI. From 1886 to 1897, it was staffed by an average of ten officers, a large number for an office in the Navy Department, and considerably larger than the British NID’s at the time.⁹⁰ As the self-appointed patron of the new institution, moreover, Walker ensured that staff were selected on the basis of ability. This policy was consistent with a departmental mandate, emanating from Mason, that “only such officers as have shown an aptitude for intelligence staff work or who by their intelligence and knowledge of foreign languages and drawing give promise of such aptitude, should be employed.”⁹¹ The ONI was staffed with the best

and brightest among the junior officer corps. The Bureau of Navigation generally and the ONI in particular constituted an intellectual sanctuary within the generally anti-intellectual atmosphere of the Navy Department.

In their official duties, intelligence officers such as Carlos Calkins, Washington I. Chambers, and Seaton Schroeder concerned themselves mainly with collecting foreign naval intelligence, translating foreign technical journals, and compiling reports and articles for internal publication and distribution. The most accomplished of the Bureau's officers were usually active members of the USNI and frequent contributors to the *Proceedings* in the 1880s as well. Among them were Mason and Raymond P. Rodgers, Richard Wainwright, William Bainbridge-Hoff, Charles C. Rogers, Sidney A. Staunton, William L. Rodgers, Schroeder, Chambers, and Calkins. In addition to their official duties, these officers also lectured and wrote critical essays that pressed the case for American naval and strategic modernization. Both Mason and his successor Rodgers strongly encouraged their staff to contribute articles to the *Proceedings*. Throughout this period, their names appeared repeatedly in the table of contents preceding each issue of the journal.

The most thought-provoking submissions were reserved for the USNI's annual essay contest, the topics for which were chosen by the executive committee. Between 1882 and 1900 no less than ten of the fifteen first-prize essayists were intelligence staff officers. Calkins, for example, received the coveted first prize on two occasions, first in 1883 for an essay that considered functional specialization within the officer corps.⁹² His second essay to garner top honors (1886) suggested improvements in naval organization and training in steam tactics.⁹³ Similarly, Chambers received the award in 1884 for an essay that put forward an agenda for naval modernization.⁹⁴ Other submissions from current and future intelligence officers were also recognized by the judges during the 1880s. Wainwright received an honorable mention in 1882 for his essay examining the revival of the American merchant marine. Schroeder also received an honorable mention in 1881 for his essay outlining the elements of a proposed shipbuilding policy.⁹⁵ Thus, as a result of these and other submissions from intelligence officers, the informal partnership between the ONI and the USNI during this period imparted "a tremendous spiritual and intellectual driving force to the growth of the Navy, not only by stimulating and encouraging thought and writing but also by furnishing the equally important means of publication, distribution and discussion."⁹⁶

There was also an element of historical awareness in the work of the ONI that was apparent in both its official and unofficial undertakings. This awareness no doubt was fostered by the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was created along with the ONI and attached to the office by the same general order issued by Hunt in March 1882.⁹⁷ Appointed to head this new office was James Russell Soley, the well-respected professor of mathematics at the Naval Academy, whose emerging passion for naval history rivalled his interest in his chosen discipline, and whose career in this regard was analogous to John Knox Laughton's. Soley, who maintained that history, like mathematics, "widens the scope of man's observation and interest," was a logical choice for the position.⁹⁸ His combination of talents amply qualified him to serve in the roles of archivist, librarian, and naval historian. He slowly compiled an impressive collection of naval prints, photographs, and a 7,000-volume library for use by officers in the Navy Department. Soley also attempted to collect, catalogue, and preserve American naval records to facilitate future historical research and analysis. To assist him in this endeavor, Congress authorized a small appropriation of \$5,000 in 1884 to ensure that the Office of Naval Records and Library was up to the enormous task of publishing documents related to the naval operations of the Civil War.⁹⁹ This task would occupy most of his time and energy until 1890, when Secretary Tracy revived the post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy and appointed Soley to occupy it throughout the remainder of his administration.

Soley's presence in the Navy Department during the 1880s has not attracted extensive historical attention, not because his accomplishments are considered unworthy of comment, but rather from the low-profile nature of his work. There is, however, little doubt that he shared common intellectual interests with his colleagues in the ONI. The linkages between Soley and the ONI's staff extended not only to their shared offices in the State, War, and Navy Building, but also their USNI membership. The latter's intellectual, as well as physical, proximity to Soley and his professional endeavors, moreover, gave a further boost to the relationship between historical analysis and strategic policy formulation in the Navy Department, which would later serve as the foundation for the core curriculum at the NWC. It is thus scarcely surprising to find that the adjunct faculty of the college during its formative years consisted chiefly of Soley and a stable of intelligence staff officers on temporary loan from the ONI to assist their institutional partner.

* * *

Although the NWC was the brainchild of Stephen Bleecker Luce, the institution most likely would have remained an unrealized concept, at least during the 1880s, but for the critical support of Walker and the Bureau of Navigation. Nevertheless, most accounts of the NWC's formative years either overlook or obscure Walker's role as a staunch advocate of and lobbyist for it.¹⁰⁰ As the most powerful Bureau chief, he was able to champion Luce's ideas despite the strenuous objections of the other Bureaus. When the college was finally created in 1884, Walker ensured its survival through affiliation with the Bureau of Navigation by, among other measures, seconding ONI staff to Newport as instructors. Finally, and most importantly, Walker ordered Alfred Mahan to Newport at Luce's suggestion, and even protected him to the best of his ability when the college was threatened first with closure and then consolidated with the Naval Torpedo School in January 1889. Moreover, although Walker was the most important facilitator, other figures in the service played important roles in the NWC's establishment, in particular Caspar Goodrich and William Sampson. In short, the founding of the NWC in 1884 was not the result of an individual crusade on the part of Stephen Luce, but of a concerted effort among a small group of service intellectuals who recognized the potential of such an institution and a curriculum to explore the topics of naval strategy, tactics, and history: the conceptual elements of a comprehensive policy framework. Luce was certainly at the forefront of these efforts, however, and any account of this sort must therefore begin with him.

The idea for a postgraduate course for officers originated within the mind of an officer who was both an accomplished educator of midshipmen and apprentices and a keen student of naval history and warfare. Throughout most of his career, Luce was in some capacity involved with education in the US Navy. He was first assigned to the Naval Academy as an instructor of gunnery and seamanship in March 1860, and remained there throughout most of the Civil War. Returning to the academy in 1865 after a brief absence due to the conflict, Luce was appointed Commandant of Midshipmen under Porter's superintendence. His departure from the academy in 1868 marked the beginning of a period in which he alternated between shore assignments and commanding vessels at sea. In both situations he spent much of the 1870s devising schemes to improve the education and training of naval apprentices and enlisted personnel. Eventually, his efforts expanded to include postgraduate education for

officers, and late in the decade he first conceived of a school devoted to that purpose.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to determine exactly when Luce first thought of a postgraduate course for naval officers. What is clear is that during the 1870s he became interested in the study of history as a means of instruction in the areas of naval strategy and tactics. In this regard he was greatly influenced by John Knox Laughton. Laughton was at the time developing his own views on the scientific study of naval history. The two men first met in September 1870 at the RUSI in London. Their initial discussions focused on the value of historical instruction in naval education.¹⁰² Luce subsequently returned to the US in July 1872, and immediately requested assignment to the Naval Torpedo Station at Newport, the closest approximation to a postgraduate course for naval officers. The request was peremptorily denied: “[t]he Department cannot conceive a proper discipline as likely to exist where a junior officer is the instructor, and therefore declines to order you as requested.”¹⁰³

Luce was instead assigned to the Boston Navy Yard as an equipment officer, where he would remain until 1875. This duty did not, however, distract his energies from naval education. Aside from renewing his interest in the system of training enlisted personnel, Luce embarked on his own exploration of naval history. In this endeavor he consulted Laughton, and the two men began to exchange letters and papers as early as 1875. Luce had much to learn from and admire about the British naval historian, especially his mastery of facts painstakingly documented through archival research. Their first exchange of letters, in fact, consisted of a request from Luce to verify certain facts before writing an article on “The Sovereignty of the Sea” that subsequently appeared in *Potter’s American Monthly* in November 1876.¹⁰⁴ Laughton was happy to guide Luce through the scientific study of naval history, at one point recommending that the latter consult some of his earlier essays. It was an unnecessary suggestion, for Luce had already read most of Laughton’s articles, even those dating back to the years when Laughton himself was an aspiring naval historian at the RNC, Portsmouth.¹⁰⁵

That Laughton deserved partial credit for shaping the NWC’s curriculum became evident years later, when Luce delivered two lectures to the officers beginning the course in September 1886. The first delved into core components of the curriculum—the study of naval warfare as a science—which, when compared against Laughton’s own work and views, was clearly an adaptation of ideas the latter developed in the

1870s. Luce's remarks on the usage of naval history were particularly revealing in this regard: "there is no question that the naval battles of the past furnish a mass of facts sufficient for the formulation of laws or principles which, once established, would raise maritime war to the level of a science."¹⁰⁶

While Luce did not refer to Laughton by name during the course of these remarks, the latter was credited in his subsequent lecture on the study of naval history. Here, again, Luce was consistent with the views expounded by Laughton. "It is by the knowledge derived from the history of naval battles," he stressed to his audience, "that we will be enabled to establish a number of facts on which to generalize and formulate those principles which are to constitute the groundwork of our new science."¹⁰⁷ More importantly, Luce for the first time publicly acknowledged Laughton's work, for which, in the words of his American protégé, "we are indebted for many valuable lessons."¹⁰⁸

The concept of a naval postgraduate school, complete with a faculty of military and naval officers to teach its curriculum, seems to have originated in the late 1870s. Naval historians generally point to Luce's visit in 1877 to the Artillery School at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, as the inspiration for his idea.¹⁰⁹ The Artillery School owed its existence to Brigadier General Emory Upton, who at the time of Luce's visit was the school's commanding officer. Upton certainly inspired Luce to forward a proposal for a similar scheme for naval officers, for shortly after his visit the latter touted the idea to Secretary Thompson. "The leading feature of the postgraduate course would be the carrying of the young officers through a course of instruction in the Art of War," Luce wrote to Thompson in August 1877. His initial overture was unsuccessful, despite his best efforts to convince the Secretary that such a school was a necessity in light of technology's impact on naval warfare:

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.¹¹⁰

Luce's next attempt to interest the Navy Department in a postgraduate school yielded similar results. In November 1882, he broached the subject with Chandler, who had been at the department less than seven months.

Luce urged the inexperienced Secretary to establish a school for “the higher branches of the naval profession: the science of war, naval tactics, military and naval history, international law, military and naval law, modern languages, and such elective branches as might be found desirable.”¹¹¹ This time Luce appears to have enlisted the support of Porter, who upon hearing of the idea immediately offered to “write as strong a letter as I can to deliver in person to the Secretary”¹¹² But even Porter doubted whether his overture would have any effect on the often-absent Chandler: “If I sent it in now, it would go into the pigeon hole and will probably go there anyhow!”¹¹³ Chandler’s response is unknown, but he certainly did not view the school as a priority. The proposal was therefore destined to languish for another year. After this failure it probably occurred to Luce that the war school lobbying effort required additional support, preferably an officer and departmental insider who could sell the idea to skeptical colleagues. The logical choice was Walker, the most powerful and influential naval officer in the Navy Department during the 1880s.

The historical record is murky as to when exactly Walker offered to support Luce’s war school project. Most likely he learned of it when Luce first broached the subject with Chandler in 1882. While he generally approved of the idea, Walker initially maintained that it should be located in Annapolis, where facilities were already available.¹¹⁴ Luce was adamant that the school should be located on Coasters Harbor Island in Newport, perhaps to avoid interference from then Naval Academy Superintendent Francis Ramsay, who sought to control all aspects of officer education. Whatever the reason for his insistence, Luce’s arguments were enough to convince Walker not only to support the institution itself but also its proposed location.¹¹⁵

Walker’s support became critical in March 1884, following Luce’s second attempt to persuade Secretary Chandler of the pressing need for a postgraduate course for naval officers. This time Walker intervened and convinced the Secretary to order Luce to Washington to explain his proposal further in person. Luce was subsequently afforded an audience at the Department, consisting of not only Chandler, but also Walker and the rest of the Bureau chiefs.¹¹⁶ The conference’s outcome cast ongoing doubt on the war school’s prospects, for the proposal failed to secure widespread Departmental support. According to Luce, the bureau chiefs reacted “not very favorably, and in particular Capt. [Montgomery] Sicard [Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, 1881–90] treated it in a manner bordering on derision.”¹¹⁷ Luce later named Commodore Winfield S. Schley, recently

appointed to head the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting, as another opponent of the war school project. Both Schley and Sicard were evidently opposed to the project out of concern for their parochial interests in the Department. “They seem to fear that that it will clash with their interests here,” Luce complained to Senator Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island:¹¹⁸ “They are mistaken, but still they refuse to be persuaded. At any rate their opposition is a serious obstacle for success, for they must have more or less influence with the Secretary.”¹¹⁹

But Walker’s support was enough to protect the proposal from its opponents in the Department. After consulting with the Secretary, on May 3, 1884 he ordered that a board of inquiry be convened fully to consider the concept of a naval postgraduate school, the best location for such a school, and the subjects to be included in its curriculum.¹²⁰ Aside from Luce, whose views were well known, Walker appointed Commanders Caspar Goodrich (Figure 6.4) and William Sampson (Figure 6.5) to conduct the inquiry, personally selecting the former himself.¹²¹ The conclusions of the board were thus essentially foreordained. All three officers were reform-minded, accomplished naval educators, active members and future presidents of the USNI, and deeply respected for their intellectual and technical faculties. Goodrich, in fact, was an original member of the USNI and a frequent contributor to the *Proceedings*, where his prize-winning essay on the general subject of naval education was published in 1879.¹²² Aside from his articles and service on the faculty at Annapolis, Goodrich was also highly regarded for his official report on the British military and naval campaign against Alexandria, Egypt in 1882.

Sampson’s credentials were equally impressive. Before achieving widespread acclaim at the Battle of Santiago (1898) during the Spanish–American War, Sampson was known more for intellectual acumen than sea service. Years later Goodrich recalled his friend as “the most brilliant officer of his time.”¹²³ It was a widely-held sentiment: Sampson was well regarded for his capacities as an instructor at Annapolis. Between 1868 and 1878, in fact, he spent eight years at the academy, first as a physics instructor and later a department head. “Characteristic of the man and his methods,” writes historian Allan Westcott, “were his academy lectures, delivered quietly but with great clearness, and with such painstaking attention to detail that in his illustrative experiments a former student could ‘not recall a single failure.’”¹²⁴ His commitment to naval education was ultimately recognized in 1886, when Walker appointed him Superintendent of his beloved institution, a post he held until 1890.



Fig. 6.4 Caspar F. Goodrich (1847–1925) was among the most influential US naval reformers of the late nineteenth century; a close associate of Stephen Bleeker Luce and William T. Sampson, he played a major role in the establishment of the Naval War College (Image courtesy US *Naval Historical and Heritage Command*, *NHHC 46082*)

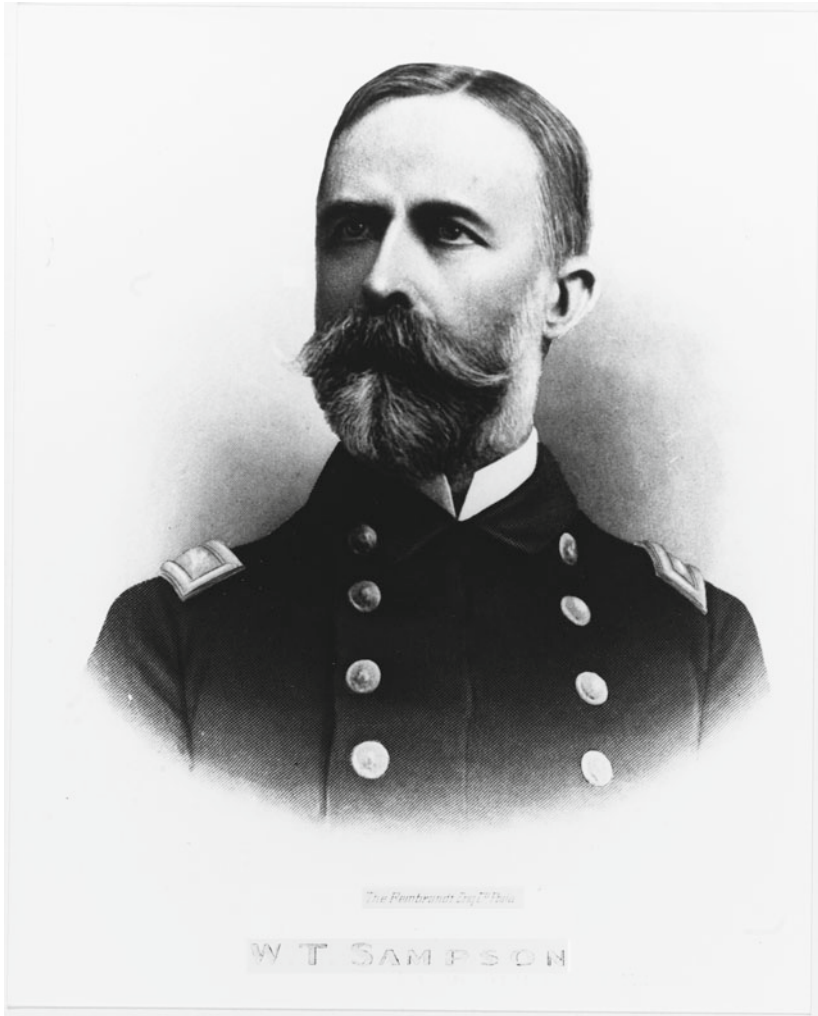


Fig. 6.5 Although remembered chiefly for his Spanish–American War service, William T. Sampson’s (1840–1902) work as a naval educator constitutes his most enduring legacy; in 1884 he, Stephen B. Luce, and Caspar Goodrich devised the Naval War College’s curriculum, and he served as Commandant of the Naval Academy 1886–90 (Image courtesy US *Naval Historical and Heritage Command*, *NHHC 46082*)

In short, the appointment of Goodrich, Sampson, and Luce to the board of inquiry was part of a carefully orchestrated effort by Walker to guarantee the outcome of its deliberations. But they went well beyond advocating the creation of the NWC. Thanks to the charge to examine and make recommendations on its curriculum, the board included among its suggestions the elements of a new strategic framework that would in time be refined and eventually implemented in the policy decisions of 1889.

The board of inquiry submitted its report to Chandler on June 13, 1884. It predictably concluded that a postgraduate school for naval officers, consistent in almost every detail with the proposal laid out by Luce months before, should be immediately established in Newport.¹²⁵ The three officers strongly urged that the practitioners of their profession be encouraged, even required, to study naval warfare through the analytical lens of the scientist. The war school was intended to stimulate intellectual development and foster increased knowledge among the officers selected to attend, so that they would be prepared if and when civilian policymakers authorized the construction of a modern battlefleet. Moreover, while it was the explicit prerogative of policymakers to brush the broad strokes of American naval policy, the overarching mandate of the war school to advance the naval profession and with it the professional development of an officer corps suitable for a *first-class* naval force did not preclude, as would quickly become apparent, attempts to influence civilians' policy-making role.

These aspirations could not be realized so long as naval officers failed to appreciate the full potential of naval power in warfare and Congressional leaders failed even to formulate a coherent policy to inform their actions with the limited resources available, much less fund the enlarged fleet that many reformers sought. The war school was intended to remedy the knowledge gap, in order not only to educate officers, but to persuade Congress to provide the battleships and cruisers to accompany strategic naval development:

The almost total absence of an adequate naval force adds to the burden of responsibility imposed upon our naval officers, and imperatively demands of them extraordinary exertion in the acquisition of professional knowledge in order to make such amends, as they best may, for the extreme paucity of the means furnished them. Here, then, is not simply a "reason," but an absolute necessity for the establishment of such a school as the order contemplates.¹²⁶

The desideratum that the college instruct officers in the art of war at sea despite the “almost total absence of an adequate naval force” can be read as an implicit admission that it was intended to educate not only officers, but also policymakers, especially given the offensive strategic orientation that emerged from the college curriculum during the 1880s, an orientation that manifested itself as official policy in 1889. Luce’s, Goodrich’s, and Sampson’s conception of the NWC as a policy-influencing entity was thus on display from the outset.

Further evidence of their agenda was not long in coming. While their report did not elaborate on what exactly was to be taught and who was qualified to teach it, the specific details of the course of studies were provided in a subsequent memorandum to the Secretary in July 1884. At the institution, now referred to as the NWC, a faculty composed mostly of naval officers was expected to develop and teach a host of courses in a number of subject areas. Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson listed these courses by name: Military Campaigns, Strategy and Tactics, International Law, Rules of Evidence, and Modern Political History. But their efforts were clearly focused on three courses that would constitute the core curriculum at the college and contained the basic ingredients of an *offensive* strategic orientation. Their collective ambition for American naval power in the future was reflected in their expectations for each course:

Naval Strategy—The disposition of a naval force for the protection of a coast or convoy—for the attack of an enemy’s coast or fleet—for the destruction of an enemy’s commerce—plans of naval campaigns—bases of operation—coaling stations and other supplying depots—analyses of naval campaigns—vulnerable points of an enemy’s defense—practicable landing places in the neighborhood of strategic points—naval transport—defense of landing points on our coast—a study of the time required for any nation or probable combination of nations to concentrate a given force upon our own coast—their means of subsistence and probable point or points of attack and the means of defense to be employed in each case—etc. etc.

Naval Tactics—The handling of a single vessel, squadron or fleet in the presence of an enemy—orders of battle—turning times—tactical circles—time and space required to change front or perform other evolutions of a fleet or vessel—disposition of the vessels of a fleet to secure most effective use of each class of weapon—relative value and limiting conditions of the gun, ram and torpedo—study of the best means of communicating orders and information in time of battle—analysis of principal naval battles and of joint or opposed naval and military operations, etc. etc.

General Naval History—Resumé of the naval history of the great maritime powers of ancient and medieval times—with fuller accounts of the naval conflicts of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, etc. ¹²⁷

Thus, what was proposed to be taught at the NWC were the roles and missions of a powerful and multifaceted naval force, most of which far exceeded the limited capabilities of the US Navy, to say nothing of legislative intentions. Again, the ambitions of Luce, Sampson, and Goodrich, especially in training future flag officers “for the attack of” a then non-existent “enemy’s coast or fleet” with an equally non-existent US battle-fleet contained within them the anticipation that the government would sooner or later be persuaded to authorize and fund the construction of a force capable of realizing them.

The orientation of these courses, in other words, represented the first explicit repudiation of the long-held policy—both in and outside of the service—that the navy’s posture should, first of all, be defensive and, second, built around the *guerre de course*. Rather than a navy of coastal defense monitors, torpedo boats, and the occasional commerce-destroyer, in their proposals regarding the teaching of naval strategy, Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson provided a blueprint from which naval officers could devise and advocate an offensive strategic framework for American naval power. What that framework was destined to be was still to be determined.

When the time came to order the college’s establishment, Chandler was again absent from the Navy Department, most likely due to his extended annual vacation in New Hampshire. In his absence Admiral Edward T. Nichols, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, was Acting Secretary. Like most of his fellow Bureau heads, Nichols was opposed to the establishment of the new institution. Concluding that Nichols was disinclined to issue the order himself, Walker informed him that he would draft and send it directly to Chandler for approval. This he promptly did, asking the Secretary, “If you approve of it, will you be so kind enough to sign and return it to me, to be dated as of yesterday?”¹²⁸ Chandler promptly acquiesced, signing Order No. 325 on October 6, 1884, authorizing the establishment of the NWC, to be located, as Luce had insisted, on Coaster’s Harbor Island in Newport.

Now that the college officially existed, it was left to Walker and the Bureau of Navigation to ensure that the venture received the essential prerequisites of any new educational institution: facilities, teachers, and students. The provision of the last was not a problem, for Walker possessed

the power to order who he wanted to attend the college. Nor were facilities an immediate concern, for Luce planned to use a building that already existed on the island. But, having formerly been the Newport poorhouse, that structure would require extensive renovation, and funds for that task should have come via Congress's approval of an annual budgetary allocation.

In December 1884 Walker duly submitted a request to Congress to provide \$13,000, with which Luce and his faculty could ready the facility before the first class of naval officers arrived in September 1885.¹²⁹ "Besides necessary repairs on the house," Luce wrote to Senator Aldrich on December 10, 1884, "we need furniture, books, and apparatus of various kinds for lecture rooms. We have not, now, even so much as a chair to sit on; and that portion of the building recently occupied by the paupers is uninhabitable in the present condition."¹³⁰ The appeals from Walker and Luce were unsuccessful, however. Congress refused to act, and the Bureau chief had to piece together a departmental appropriation of \$8,000.¹³¹

A further task was identifying and appointing the most qualified candidates to teach the courses envisioned by Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson. It was especially imperative to find the best man or men to develop and teach the courses on naval strategy, tactics, and history. Luce assumed most of the burden of searching for prospective candidates, although any selection required approval from Walker and the Board of Detail before he could be assigned to the college.

Almost immediately Walker and Luce clashed on whether to select an army officer to teach naval professionals in the "art of war." The latter regarded such an appointment as an absolute necessity, as he thought no one in the navy was qualified to address the subject. Walker, however, viewed such a step as tantamount to an admission of the Navy's inferiority. He argued that a naval officer must be found to instruct his brethren in the critical topics of naval strategy and tactics. "I have therefore to suggest," Walker wrote to Chandler on October 23, 1884, "that an officer to teach the art of war be selected from the line officers of the navy. As the NWC has been placed under this Bureau, I write this to you that you may know my feeling, and that you may give such direction as you deem best."¹³² Who Chandler sided with on this issue remains a mystery, but a compromise between Luce and Walker seems to have been brokered. For the sake of expediency, Luce was instructed to secure the appointment of an army officer to teach military history, strategy, and tactics. He eventually persuaded a reluctant Lieutenant Tasker H. Bliss, USA, to accept the post

(he would not vacate it until 1888).¹³³ In the meantime, Luce continued the search for a suitable naval officer to teach naval strategy and tactics.

His first choice was Goodrich, to whom he wrote in January 1884 to ascertain his interest in the post.¹³⁴ Goodrich politely declined the offer, not because of a lack of interest but for monetary reasons: he simply could not afford to move to Newport after settling in Washington for his recent assignment as an ordnance inspector at the Washington Navy Yard. Goodrich, moreover, doubted whether there was any naval officer qualified for such a position: “[o]f one thing I am certain; there is not a person in the navy competent today without much careful preparation to fill the place.”¹³⁵ Luce also considered Lieutenant Morris R. S. MacKenzie before eventually settling for Commander Alfred Mahan (Figure 6.6), to whom he wrote in July 1884.¹³⁶

Mahan, at the time in command of the USS *Wachusett* off the coast of Peru, enthusiastically accepted the offer on September 4 and immediately sought relief from his current duties so that he could prepare for the assignment.¹³⁷ Walker was unable to secure Mahan’s speedy return to the US, however, owing to Chandler’s reacquisition of the detailing process.¹³⁸ This fact was probably a blessing: the Board of Detail, which contained two Bureau chiefs—Sicard and Schley—opposed to the college, probably would not have approved such a request.

Mahan therefore only arrived in Newport for an initial meeting with Luce in October 1885, but not before antagonizing new Secretary of the Navy William C. Whitney with a direct and unsuccessful appeal for relief from command of the *Wachusett*.¹³⁹ As a consequence of this insubordination, there was at the head of the department an opponent of Mahan and his efforts at the college. For the short term, however, Walker did manage to ensure that the necessary orders were issued to Mahan. By the time the then obscure, but soon to be celebrated, American naval theorist arrived in Newport for his meeting with Luce, the NWC’s abbreviated first term had already concluded successfully, due in no small part to the efforts of Luce, Walker, Goodrich, and Sampson.

Five years later, Mahan would transform his NWC lectures on naval history into an epochal treatise on sea power that quickly became required reading for statesmen, historians, and, most especially, naval officers in the United States and elsewhere. Yet while the publication of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* elevated Mahan to unprecedented levels of fame, his analysis simply refined and extended upon a strategic framework outlined originally by Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson in July

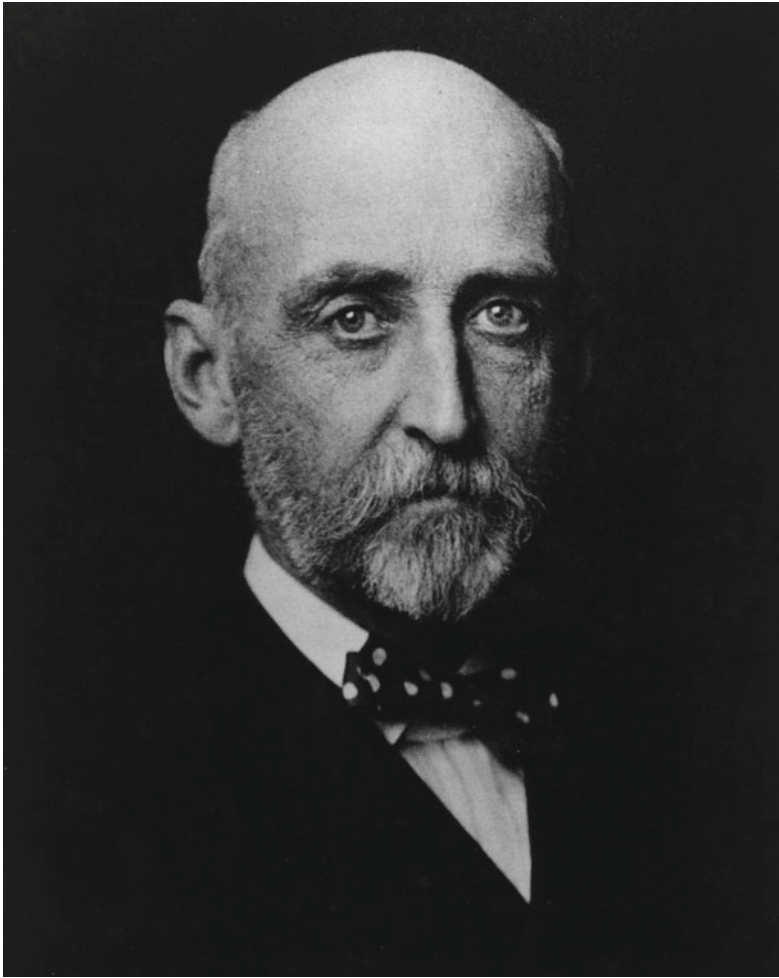


Fig. 6.6 Widely regarded as the most important naval theorist of the modern era, Alfred Thayer Mahan's (1840–1914) profoundly influential writings on sea power built on an historical foundation originating with John Knox Laughton and transmitted to him by Stephen B. Luce (Image courtesy US *Naval History and Heritage Command*, NHHC 48053)

1884. Foreshadowing Mahan, the three had developed a core curriculum intended to stimulate American naval thought and, equally critically, influence American policy-makers, in the areas of strategy, tactics, and history.

In this endeavor they received the unqualified assistance of Walker, whose timely lobbying for the activities of the ONI and the NWC were vital to both institutions' birth and early survival.

In turn, Walker's support suggests the degree to which naval education was regarded within the service as key to fostering the transformation of American naval policy in peacetime. This was a viewpoint held not only by him, but also by a supporting cast of service intellectuals and practitioners who, in their duties in the Bureau of Navigation and as active members of the USNI, sought to awaken their colleagues, politicians, and the public to the potential for American naval power. Inspired by their commitment to naval reform, to strategic innovation, and eager to draw upon the lessons of naval history in support of their agendas, this self-selected group of officers became the principal spokesmen for a service culture that surfaced between 1873 and 1885 through voluntary association in the USNI.

A study of this institution's early history furnishes the context behind the decisions of 1889, especially when the focus shifts to its "movers and shakers," their institutional benefactors within the Navy Department, and the results of their reformist efforts. When these interrelated factors are pieced together, it becomes clear that the ideas and actions of a small group of highly-motivated and well-connected naval officers were instrumental in shaping key developments during the 1880s: the formation of the ONI and the NWC, and the core curriculum of the latter. The overall result of these innovations manifested themselves less in the realm of officer education than in that of policymaking, for what they wrought was a fundamental transformation of service views as to what American naval policy and strategy *should be*, as articulated in Luce's, Goodrich's, and Sampson's subheads for their proposed course on naval strategy. And that transformation of service views ultimately shaped—one is tempted to say "skewed"—the subsequent course of American naval policy in profound ways that remain underappreciated today. They were the harbingers of a forward strategic policy which envisioned the acquisition of overseas territories and the ability to project American naval power on a hemispheric, if not a global, scale, although to this day many Americans refuse to acknowledge that theirs was and is an imperial power.

Strategic policy innovation, however, did not evolve without serious organizational resistance at the highest levels of the Navy Department. Indeed, political and departmental obstacles threatened for many years to overturn the efforts of the service intellectuals, as was manifested by the abrupt closure of the NWC in January 1889, Mahan's temporary exile to Puget Sound, and the forced retirement of Luce.

NOTES

1. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*
3. See, for example, Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776–1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 202–22; Margaret Tuttle Sprout, “Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power,” in Edward Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), pp. 415–45; W. D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1939); and Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997).
4. A classic account of this debate can be found in Sprout and Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power*, pp. 25–72.
5. Support for a navy and for naval expansion was strongest in the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions and weakest in the southern and interior states.
6. Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 271.
7. Lord Clarendon, British Foreign Secretary 1868–70 stated in May 1869: “There is not the slightest doubt that if we were engaged in a continental quarrel we should immediately find ourselves at war with the United States.” Quoted in John Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 12.
8. See Leonard F. Guttridge and Jay D. Smith, *The Commodores* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 184–86.
9. Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of Warfare: A History of United States Military Strategy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 42–46 and 167–68.
10. Roy C. Smith III, “The First Hundred Years Are...,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (hereafter *USNIP*) vol. 99 (October 1973), pp. 50–52.
11. Lawrence Carroll Allin, *United States Naval Institute: Intellectual Forum of the New Navy, 1873–1889* (Manhattan, KS: Military Affairs/Aerospace Historian Publications, 1978), p. 24.
12. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (eds.), *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 17, pp. 19–20. Entry by Benjamin F. Cooling.
13. Belknap served on the executive board of the Naval Institute 1880–88 and in 1880 received first prize in the annual essay contest sponsored by the Institute. See Charles Belknap, “The Naval Policy of the United States,” *USNIP* vol. 6 (1880), pp. 375–91.

14. Smith, "The First Hundred Years Are...," pp. 50–52.
15. Daniel Ammen to Edward Terry, October 21, 1873, printed in Allin, *United States Naval Institute*, p. 7.
16. Terry to Stephen Luce, October 28, 1873, Luce Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection [hereafter NHFC]/Library of Congress [hereafter LC], microfilm reel #5. The paper Luce delivered at that meeting was published in the first issue of *Proceedings*. See Stephen B. Luce, "The Manning of Our Navy and Merchant Marine," *USNIP*, vol. 1 (1874).
17. Caspar F. Goodrich, *In Memoriam: Stephen Bleecker Luce* (New York: Naval History Society, 1919), p. 3.
18. Smith, "The First Hundred Years Are...," p. 52.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 60. As the navy's senior officer, Admiral David Dixon Porter was selected as the Institute's first President, although he was replaced in 1874 after betraying little interest in its activities.
20. Foxhall Parker, "Our Fleet Maneuvers in the Bay of Florida, and the Navy of the Future," *USNIP* vol. 1 (1874), pp. 163–66; William N. Jeffers, "The Armament of Our Ships in War," *ibid.*, pp. 105–22; and T. B. M. Mason, "Two Lessons from the Future," *USNIP* vol. 2 (1876), pp. 57–74.
21. Jeffers, "The Armament of Our Ships in War," p. 118. Jeffers was referring to the five wooden cruisers of the Wampanoag class, which were renamed *Iowa*, *Tennessee*, *Arizona*, *Connecticut*, and *Florida* in 1869.
22. Mason, "Two Lessons from the Future," p. 58.
23. Benjamin L. Apt, "Mahan's Forebears: The Debate over Maritime Strategy, 1868–1883," *Naval War College Review* vol. 50 (Summer 1997), p. 93.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
25. See "Annual Report of the Secretary and Treasurer," *USNIP* vol. 15 (1889), p. 166.
26. William H. Hunt to F. M. Ramsay, December 1, 1881; and Charles Belknap to C. R. P. Rodgers, October 17, 1881, both printed in *USNIP*, vol. 8 (1882), pp. xxviii–xxix.
27. Daniel Ammen, the Naval Institute's initial benefactor, was also an intimate of Grant's.
28. David D. Porter to James Garfield, April 12, 1881, Porter Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #2.
29. John Grimes Walker to William H. Hunt, August 8, 1881, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/ Container #1.
30. Dumas Malone (ed.), *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), vol. 10, p. 349. Entry by Allan Westcott.
31. Walker to Charles Scribner and Sons, October 4, 1882, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
32. Alfred T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883).

33. Albert Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce* (New York: Putnam, 1925), pp. 172–73.
34. Ibid.
35. For more on the impact of the congressional committees upon naval policy formulation, see Robert G. Albion, “The Naval Affairs Committees, 1816–1947,” *USNIP* vol. 78 (November 1952).
36. Daniel Howard Wicks, “New Navy and Empire: The Life and Times of John Grimes Walker,” (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 1979), pp. 38–39.
37. Walker to Albert Kautz, February 8, 1881, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1. There is no indication in Walker’s letter of who constituted the “present clique,” but chances are he was referring to a number of Bureau chiefs appointed during Rutherford B. Hayes’ administration: Richard Law, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, 1878–81; William H. Shock, Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering, 1878–83; William D. Whiting, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1878–81; and Earl English, Chief of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting, 1878–84. In addition to Law and Whiting, both William Jeffers, Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance since 1873, and James Easby, chief of the Bureau of Construction and Repair since 1877, were replaced in 1881.
38. Ibid.
39. Walker to President and Board of Directors, Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, March 9, 1881, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
40. Walker to Dewey, March 11, 1881, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
41. Walker to Hunt, August 8, 1881, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
42. Porter to Luce, August 15, 1881, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/ Reel #6.
43. Ibid.
44. Correspondence between Walker and subordinates attests to his scrupulousness during his tenure at the Bureau of Navigation. See, in particular, Walker to J.H. Stevenson, December 27, 1883, and Walker to C.H. Lyman, January 2, 1886, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
45. See “Annual Report of the Secretary,” *USNIP* vol. 9 (1883), pp. xxi–xxii. Walker and McCalla were first listed as members of the Naval Institute on January 1, 1882. It appears that they joined shortly after their appointment to the Bureau of Navigation in October 1881. For more on McCalla, see Paolo E. Coletta, *Bowman Hendry McCalla: A Fighting Sailor* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979).
46. The other bureaus comprising the Navy Department were: Yards and Docks; Equipment and Recruiting; Ordnance; Construction and Repair; Steam Engineering; Provisions and Clothing; and Medicine and Surgery. Five of them dated to 1842; the remaining three were added in Gideon Welles’ 1862 departmental reorganization.

47. Henry P. Beers, "The Bureau of Navigation, 1862–1942," *The American Archivist* vol. 6, no. 4 (October 1943), p. 212.
48. Walker to Captain W.H. Kirkland, August 5, 1885, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
49. Beers, "The Bureau of Navigation, 1862–1942," p. 220.
50. Walker to G.H. Cooper, August 31, 1882, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
51. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.
52. Porter to Luce, November 6, 1882, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.* See also Porter to W. H. Chandler, June 1, 1883, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, National Archives [hereafter NA]: RG 45/38/Vol. 29.
55. Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican* (New York: Dodd, Meade, and Co., 1940), pp. 281–85.
56. Chandler was informed of this discontent as early as May 1882. See C.A. Boutelle to William Chandler, May 30, 1882, Chandler Papers, LC/Container #53.
57. Walker to Allison, October 27, 1883, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
58. On the preparation of his resignation, see Walker to Chandler, October 27, 1883, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1. Allison's intervention is suggested by Wicks, "New Navy and New Empire," pp. 82–83.
59. Walker to Allison, August 16, 1884, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
60. See Beers, "The Bureau of Navigation, 1862–1942," p. 21 and "Informal Memorandum to the Secretary," May 16, 1885, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1. Whitney issued an executive order returning the Office of Detail to the Bureau of Navigation on May 22, 1885.
61. Bureau Chiefs to Chandler, May 5, 1884; and Walker to Chandler, May 13, 1884, NA: RG 45/32/Reel #32. Chandler seems not to have acted in this dispute, although he appears to have sided with Walker. See Bureau Chiefs to Chandler, June 10, 1884, NA: RG 45/32/Reel #32.
62. James Wilson King, *Report of Chief Engineer J. W. King, United States Navy, on European ships of war and their armament, naval administration and economy, marine constructions and appliances, dockyards, etc.*, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1877); *The Warships and Navies of the World* (Boston: A Williams and Co., 1880). King's first report was produced for Congress in an attempt to spur an American naval revival. A second edition of this report appeared in 1878. His 1880 book was a revised and expanded version of the earlier reports. So valuable does it remain as a well-informed contemporary account that it was republished by the Naval Institute in 1982.

63. See, for example Jeffrey M. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979). A more recent account can be found in Wyman H. Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996).
64. J. M. Ellicott, "Theodorus Bailey Meyers Mason: Founder of the Office of Naval Intelligence," *USNIP* vol. 78 (March 1952), pp. 265–66.
65. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence*, p. 5.
66. Mason graduated from Annapolis in 1868.
67. T. B. M. Mason, "The United States Naval Institute," *The United Service* vol. 1 (1879), p. 295.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
70. For more on the naval scandals of the 1870s, see Charles Oscar Paullin, "A Half Century of Naval Administration in America, 1861–1911, Part V: 1869–1881," *USNIP* vol. 39 (March 1913), pp. 1217–46.
71. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence*, pp. 8–10.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. See J. F. Meigs, "The War in South America," *USNIP* vol. 6 (1879), pp. 461–79; T. B. M. Mason, "The War Between Chile, Peru and Bolivia," *The United Service*, vol. 2 (May 1880), pp. 553–74; and T. B. M. Mason and R. R. Ingersoll, "The Capture of Peruvian Monitor Ram 'Huascar' by the Chilean Squadron, October 8, 1879," *The United Service*, vol. 3 (October 1880), pp. 396–409.
75. Dorwart, *The Office of Naval Intelligence*, p. 13.
76. John C.R. Colomb, "Naval Intelligence and Protection of Commerce in War," *JRUSI* vol. 25 (1881).
77. Bowman H. McCalla, "Memoirs of a Naval Career" (Santa Barbara, CA: unpublished manuscript, 1910), pp. 17–18.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
79. Walker to Charles B. Sigby, June 19, 1902, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #2.
80. General Order No. 292, March 23, 1882, printed in Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, p. 2.
81. Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, pp. 2–3.
82. A. G. Berry, "The Beginning of the Office of Naval Intelligence," *USNIP* vol. 63 (January 1937), p. 102.
83. Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, p. 4.
84. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1882* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), pp. 107–8.
85. Chandler to Mason, July 25, 1882, NA: RG 45/17/12.

86. Chandler to Chadwick, July 12, 1882, *ibid.*
87. Chandler to Mason, July 25, 1882., *ibid.*
88. *Ibid.*
89. Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, p. 3.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
91. Chandler to Mason, July 25, 1882, NA: RG 45/17/12.
92. Carlos Calkins, "How May the Sphere of Usefulness of Naval Officers Be Extended in Time of Peace with Advantage to the Country and the Naval Service," *USNIP* vol. 9 (1883), pp. 155–94.
93. Carlos Calkins, "What Changes in Organization and Drill are Necessary to Sail and Fight Effectively Our War Ships of Latest Type?," *USNIP* vol. 12 (1886), pp. 269–360.
94. Washington I. Chambers, "The Reconstruction and Increase of the Navy," *USNIP* vol. 11 (1885), pp. 3–83.
95. Seaton Schroeder, "The Type of (I) Armored Vessel, (II) Cruiser Best Suited to the Present Needs of the United States," *USNIP* vol. 7 (1881), pp. 43–84. Calkins, Chambers, Schroeder, and Wainwright all reached flag rank and were recognized for their contributions to American naval thought in the 1890s and 1900s. Wainwright and Schroeder later headed the ONI, in 1897–98, and 1903–06, respectively.
96. Ellery H. Clark, "The Significance of the Prize Essay Contest, 1879–1950," *USNIP* vol. 77 (August 1951), p. 799.
97. General Order No. 292, March 23, 1882, printed in Packard, *A Century of Naval Intelligence*, p. 2.
98. See Soley's comments in "Discussion of Prize Essay of 1883," *USNIP*, vol. 10 (1884), p. 259.
99. John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson III, and John R. Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the US Naval War College* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1984), pp. 7–8.
100. Three notable exceptions are Wicks, "New Navy and New Empire;" Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce*; and Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1977).
101. Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, pp. 168–71.
102. Andrew D. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy, and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), p. 30.
103. Navy Department to Luce, July 16, 1872, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #5.
104. Laughton to Luce, July 9, 1875, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #5. See also John D. Hayes and John B. Hattendorf (eds.), *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1975) for an annotated bibliography of Luce's publications.

105. Laughton to Luce, August 10, 1875, Luce papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #5. Luce noted in his own hand which articles he had already read.
106. Stephen B. Luce, "On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science," *USNIP* vol. 12 (1886), p. 531.
107. Stephen B. Luce, "On the Study of Naval History," *USNIP* vol. 13 (1887), p. 178.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
109. Hattendorf, Simpson, and Wadleigh, *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the US Naval War College*, p. 16; and Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, pp. 17–18.
110. Luce to Thompson, August 8, 1877. Reprinted in Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, p. 169.
111. Luce to Chandler, November 8, 1882, NA: RG 45/38/Vol. 28.
112. Porter to Luce, November 6, 1882, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
113. *Ibid.*
114. Luce to Nelson Aldrich, December 7, 1883, Aldrich Papers, LC/MD/Reel #11.
115. For more on this point, see Anthony S. Nicolosi, "The Navy, Newport, and Stephen B. Luce," *Naval War College Review* vol. 37 (October 1984), pp. 117–31.
116. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, p. 23.
117. Luce to Chandler, February 21, 1905, quoted in Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican*, p. 307.
118. Luce to Aldrich, January 17, 1885, Aldrich Papers, LC/MD/Reel #13.
119. *Ibid.*
120. Walker to Luce, May 3, 1884, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel # 6.
121. Walker to Goodrich, August 29, 1882, NA: RG 45/17/12.
122. Caspar F. Goodrich, "Naval Education," *USNIP*, vol. 5 (1879), pp. 324–44.
123. Caspar F. Goodrich, *Rope Yarns from the Old Navy* (New York: Navy History Society, 1921), p. 23.
124. Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 8, pp. 321–23. Entry by Allan Westcott.
125. "Report of Board on a Postgraduate Course," June 13, 1884, NA: RG 45/38/30.
126. *Ibid.*
127. "Memoranda Relating to the Establishment of a Post Graduate Course," July 19, 1884, NA: RG 45/38/30.
128. Walker to Chandler, October 7, 1884, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
129. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1884*, p. 166.

130. Luce to Aldrich, December 10, 1884, Aldrich Papers, LC/MD/Reel #13.
131. Chandler to Samuel J. Randall, February 2, 1885, NA: RG 45/5/18. See also Hattendorf, Simpson, and Wadleigh. *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the US Naval War College*, p. 23. Randall was the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.
132. Walker to Chandler, October 23, 1884, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
133. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, pp. 28–29.
134. Goodrich to Luce, February 12, 1884, Naval War College Papers, LC/MD/Container #1.
135. Ibid.
136. Luce to Walker, August 29, 1884, cited in Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, p. 29.
137. Mahan to Luce, September 4, 1884, printed in Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire (eds.), *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 577.
138. See Chandler to Montgomery Sicard, October 1, 1884, Sicard Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
139. Mahan to Whitney, May 15, 1885, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 605.

The Navalist Triumph: Politicians, Professionals, and the Fight for the Direction of American Naval Policy, 1885–1889

The founding of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in 1882, and the Naval War College (NWC) in 1884, represented the progress made in the transferral of strategic ideas from a semi-official think-tank to policy circles within the Navy Department. This achievement was facilitated by a number of factors between 1873 and 1884, including the membership and activities of the US Naval Institute (USNI), the influx of service intellectuals to the Bureau of Navigation, and institutional sponsorship of new ideas and institutions to spur strategic reappraisal. The process benefited greatly from the patronage of Republican Secretary of the Navy William Chandler, whose conduct of departmental affairs encouraged an environment conducive to innovation. His departure from office in March 1885 commenced a new phase of modernization, under the aegis of his Democratic successor, William C. Whitney. Whitney was a narrowly focused technocrat who became increasingly hostile to the NWC and the officers most associated with it, including Luce, Mahan, Walker, and, to a lesser extent, Sampson and Goodrich. Although their strategic ideas continued to evolve, these naval professionals had to surmount a series of political and departmental obstacles that endangered the NWC, its research agenda, and the prospects for policy innovation.

Resistance to innovative policy decisions is common among military organizations, especially in periods of uncertainty when new technologies threaten the viability of existing strategies, force structures, and operational doctrines. Such was not the case during Chandler's stewardship. Secretary

of the Navy between 1882 and 1885, he presided over a modest renaissance in the service's fortunes. Not only were the ONI and NWC established on his watch; in 1883 the first vessels of the "new" steel navy—the protected cruisers *Atlanta*, *Boston*, and *Chicago*, and the dispatch vessel *Dolphin*—were authorized. Indeed, Chandler's receptivity to novel ideas facilitated naval modernization.

Nonetheless, his conception of naval strategy remained conventional and patterned according to traditional American defense priorities. Chandler envisioned in the future a combination of coastal defense armorclads and offensive, commerce-raiding, and protecting vessels. "If the nation is to regain its position as a maritime and naval power," he wrote to congressional authorities in December 1882, "reasonable provision should be made, not only for offensive cruising vessels but also for harbor defenses, by means of ironclads."¹ When his tenure in the Department concluded in March 1885, Chandler bequeathed to his successor two entities to provide technological and strategic inputs to help guide naval modernization. The ONI was responsible for the systematic acquisition and compilation of foreign technological information, while the NWC was to consider the science and art of naval warfare upon opening its doors in September 1885.

Until Luce and Walker could complete their arrangements to open the NWC, however, the new Secretary of the Navy dealt with strategic as well as technological aspects of naval modernization without any professional input. While Whitney was eager to foster development of maritime-related technologies and domestic shipbuilding facilities for the new steel warships authorized by Congress in 1883, he was less attentive to matters of strategy, which continued to remain on the periphery of American naval affairs. His first year in office, in fact, was devoted chiefly to the procurement of naval *matériel* and new construction, interrupted by his frequent allegations of corruption in the contract-awarding process of, and design defects in, the vessels laid down by his predecessor.² In his annual report to Congress for 1885, the contents of which reflected his focus, Whitney highlighted reforms he anticipated would overcome technical impediments to modernization, which included educating American naval constructors in foreign shipyards and industrial partnerships between American private-sector shipyards and manufacturers. "The problem of keeping pace with the march of improvement in these lines of industry is one of incalculable difficulty," he stated in his report, "and yet unless the Government is prepared to avail itself promptly of all the improvements that are made in the construction and equipment of its ships, its expenditures are largely useless."³

While naval strategy was clearly not a priority for Whitney during his first year in office, the deployment of naval forces was considered indirectly when Congress authorized the creation of a special investigative body to assess the nation's coastal defenses. The congressional mandate of March 1885 specified that the Fortifications Board (commonly known as the Endicott Board after its chairman), should consist of the Secretary of War, William C. Endicott, and a contingent of officers from both Army and Navy. Appointed to represent the latter were William Sampson and Caspar Goodrich. Their ordnance expertise probably determined their appointment: at the time Sampson was in charge of the Torpedo School in Newport and Goodrich was an ordnance inspector at the Washington Navy Yard—but their selection was fortuitous for other reasons. Both men were at the forefront of professional efforts to modernize the service, both had served on the 1884 Luce Board which recommended the NWC's establishment, and both had a grasp of strategic issues matched only by Luce within the officer corps.

The deliberations of the Endicott Board remained confidential until the final report was transmitted to Congress in January 1886.⁴ In the absence of any input from the Navy Department, Sampson and Goodrich were afforded an extraordinary opportunity to advocate a new strategy for the employment of naval forces in conjunction with coastal fortifications. Their main contribution to the final report, contained in a separate appendix authored by Sampson, proposed an expansion of traditional American naval strategy to include an offensive ancillary to the accompanying proposals for coastal defense. While accepting the majority's arguments for multiple coastal defense barriers, in the form of permanent fortifications and other harbor defenses (e.g. torpedoes and floating batteries), Sampson distinguished between these passive defenses and active offensive operations. "The duties" required of floating batteries, he argued,

may be performed by the regular naval force, *but the legitimate field of action of such a force is upon the high seas*, in protecting our commerce, in destroying the commerce of the enemy, *in making attacks upon undefended or important portions of his coast* (thus forcing him to maintain a fleet at home), *or in meeting and destroying his fleet.*⁵

Were the navy to be saddled with the task of coast defense, he added, "these other important duties must be largely neglected, and some of the most efficient means of bringing the enemy to terms be disregarded."

To reinforce the point, he maintained that not only would the navy's resources be squandered by assigning it to man stationary defenses, to do so would constitute an out-and-out misallocation of those resources: "[a] naval force which is adapted to the wide range of its duties is not adapted to the work of defending a coast."⁶

Sampson's arguments were noteworthy on several counts. First, he explicitly maintained that the best defense was in fact a good offense. In this regard his thinking was closely aligned with that of his contemporaries in Britain (John Knox Laughton, Philip and John Colomb, William Hall, and others), and would subsequently be adopted by Benjamin F. Tracy in his 1889 *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy*. Second, he posited the same arguments that had been urged by British strategists from John Colomb and Alexander Milne onward. Since the navy's role was offensive—the attack of enemy coasts and ports, and the destruction of enemy fleets, should the latter put to sea—the task of manning American coastal defenses should therefore be left to the army. To require the navy to defend its own bases would deprive it of much, if not most, of its capacity to act offensively. Furthermore, he maintained that the nature of the American Atlantic coastline was itself a potent defensive asset: "[g]reat [enemy] ironclads carrying the heaviest guns, and possessing sufficient endurance to be sent across the ocean, must necessarily draw so much water that they could either not enter many of our ports, or could only do so with the greatest caution" As a consequence, he argued that floating batteries were needed only to defend places where shore batteries alone would be incapable of repelling an attack: those places with deep water close to shore, or entrances so wide that they could not be covered by land-based batteries, or where the ground was unsuited for fortifications.⁷ The fewer the floating batteries, he implied, the more of the country's resources could be directed toward offensive naval operations.

Of course, in 1886 the US Navy did not possess a single vessel capable of offensive operations against an enemy port, much less a battlefleet capable of meeting even a tertiary European navy at sea, and Sampson was forced to adjust his arguments to conform with that reality. The most that the Endicott Committee as a whole would countenance was a remark in its main report that "floating batteries" did not refer to "the armored sea-going ships of the Navy," but followed this distinction with the admission that the US had none of the latter. Only "if hereafter built in sufficient number and power" would they "act offensively and not be confined to the defense of ports."⁸

The farthest the Board would go in terms of recommending the qualities to be possessed by “floating batteries” was to sketch out the “general features of a first-class coast-defense vessel designed for service in open bays or deep channels and to fight in any weather.”⁹ This ship was designed with eighteen-inch thick armor along the waterline, two sixteen-inch breech loading guns “in the complete protection of a turret suitably armored and mounted high enough above the water to be fought in very heavy weather,” a freeboard of ten feet, four inches, a top speed of fifteen-and-a-half knots, and coal enough to steam 1,500 miles at ten knots per hour.¹⁰ It was, as those specifications suggest, more a small (7,000 ton) battleship than a floating battery.

It was also a moot point. The Endicott Board recommended the expenditure of a whopping \$126,377,800 on land and sea-based defenses, a politically unpalatable sum, especially given the fact that no foreign country other than Britain had either the motive or the means to attempt a serious descent on the American coast, either in 1886 or within the foreseeable future, and that the US held a trump card when it came to the British threat.¹¹ Spain possessed the logistical infrastructure at Havana to have supported an attack on the Gulf of Mexico coastline, but the Spanish fleet was ill-equipped for any such operation, consisting of seven wooden-hulled, broadside ironclads of 1860s vintage, none armed with guns of more than ten inch caliber.¹² Neither France nor Germany had a suitable naval base in the Americas from which a coastal assault against any portion of America’s coast could be mounted, much less sustained. Nor did either have any reason to launch an attack, and Germany lacked the naval force to do so. Russia’s means and motives were even more remote. Japan lacked the naval capacity as of 1885, to say nothing of a *causus belli*.

Indeed, only Great Britain possessed the means seriously to threaten America by sea and, given lingering animosity from successive confrontations with the US, most recently the US Civil War, during which contention arose over the *Trent* Affair, American exercise of belligerent rights in seizing British blockade runners, and the *Alabama* claims, only Britain might have reason for doing so. Yet both Sampson’s report on floating batteries and the Board’s general report glossed over cogent factors that would have inhibited the British from making any such attempt. Indeed, the Board’s report verged on the lurid in describing the defenselessness of American ports and the British “menace:”

It is impossible to understand the supineness which has kept this nation quiet—allowing its floating and shore defenses to become obsolete and effete ... while other nations, besides constructing powerful navies, have not considered themselves secure without large expenditures for fortifications

Our nearest neighbour ... [who] should have no occasion to dread a naval attack from us, has nevertheless constructed armored forts at Halifax and Bermuda, both as refuge for her fleets *and as outposts for offensive operations*.

In the meantime we have acquired great riches and apparently dreamed that prosperity should inspire friendship and not envy in less favored peoples—forgetting that riches are a temptation, and that the plunder of one of our sea-ports might abundantly reimburse an enemy for the expenses of a war conducted against us.¹³

Missing from the report was any acknowledgment that a British attack on an American port would almost certainly provoke an American invasion of Canada, the outcome of which the British harbored no illusions. The failed American attacks of 1775 and 1812 had encouraged the British to regard that threat cavalierly prior to 1861 (and thus also to encourage the aggressive use of naval force, as the Chesapeake Bay campaigns of 1813 and 1814 demonstrated), but the American Civil War brought that cavalier attitude to a speedy and decisive end. The Federal Government's ability to raise a mass army and its determination to spend four years, hundreds of thousands of lives, and untold sums defeating the so-called Confederacy convinced British statesmen of every political stripe that Canada was a hostage to fortune in any future contretemps with the US. Henceforth, the British government would appease rather than antagonize its American counterpart, as was demonstrated by the former's willingness to settle the *Alabama* Claims as speedily as possible after the Civil War.¹⁴

Moreover, neither Sampson nor the Endicott Board as a whole appear to have followed the implications of their arguments to their logical conclusions. Despite the allusions to Britain in the main report, neither the board nor Sampson argued that the US should construct a fleet capable of "making attacks upon undefended or important portions" of the British Isles, nor even of Canada, nor that the US Navy should be capable of "meeting and destroying" the British battlefleet. Additionally, neither fully confronted the strategic dilemma which would face the US if it did construct a powerful battlefleet, for that force would either be divided between the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts, covering major commercial

ports, or else concentrated at one, thus leaving every other port not within quick steaming range vulnerable.¹⁵

This strategic conundrum was insoluble prior to the Navy Act of 1940, which was intended to and did make the US Navy numerically preponderant in both the Atlantic and Pacific, but for the fifty years prior to that date it hamstrung deployment, as was demonstrated during the Spanish–American War, when a “Flying Squadron” was created to protect the whole of the eastern seaboard, a deployment decision that not only failed in its immediate purpose—no single squadron could defend that extent of coastline (and to have stationed warships off every important port would have risked defeat in detail)—but also significantly reduced the strength of the naval force initially sent to Cuba under the command of none other than William Sampson.

The simple fact was that geography militated against any coherent deployment of American naval forces in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, other than the traditional strategy of commerce raiding. Here the Board’s observations were less muddled-headed than elsewhere: “[w]hen the country shall have been provided with a few fast cruisers, their employment should be in depredating [*sic*] upon the enemy’s property and commerce, instead of engaging in a futile attempt to protect the coasting trade over a line extending for 4,000 miles.”¹⁶ Unlike Britain, with its compact size and convenient proximity to both the English Channel, which most of its overseas trade traversed, and the French naval arsenals at Brest and Cherbourg, the sprawling expanse of America’s eastern and southern seaboard confounded naval planners when contemplating a war with Britain. Britain could and did evolve a coherent and effective operational strategy against France: a single powerful squadron stationed off the “western approaches” to the English Channel both protected commerce and blockaded the French battlefleet in port. There was no similar, vital strategic “chokepoint” in American waters. In theory, British forces might employ Halifax as a base for attacking northern ports, Bermuda for descents on the mid-Atlantic or southern Atlantic ports, or Port Royal, Jamaica, for attacks on ports on the Gulf of Mexico. Even had the US Navy achieved numerical parity with the Royal Navy, it would have been no closer to solving this strategic dilemma than it was with no navy to speak of, and assuming the offensive would bring it no closer to solution than remaining on the defensive. Concentration of force on one British base would leave the coast undefended from attacks emanating from the other two; division of force to mask all three risked defeat in detail if the British concentrated

their battlefleet. Carrying the fight to Britain itself in the absence of coaling stations in northwest European waters was logistically impossible.

Perhaps because of the insolubility of this strategic conundrum, coupled with the appreciation that Canada's vulnerability largely negated it, Congress did authorize funds for the modernization of coastal defenses in the 1880s and 1890s, but no ships were built as a result of the Endicott Board's suggestions. On the other hand, the Board's investigation prompted new public and political interest in the course of American naval policy, particularly from the House Naval Affairs Committee. Due to recent alterations in the budgeting process, this legislative committee now had jurisdiction over naval appropriations, power that had previously rested with the House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Samuel Randall (Democrat, Pennsylvania), a tireless opponent of government waste and extravagance.¹⁷ Appointed to chair the Naval Affairs Committee in December 1885, Hilary A. Herbert (Democrat, Alabama) quickly convened special hearings following publication of the Endicott Board report. These took place in February 1886 and included testimony from naval constructors, engineers, and several officers. The highlight of the hearings occurred on February 12 and 13, when Secretary Whitney appeared before the committee to share his views on a proposed appropriation to provide for increased naval construction. In the course of his testimony Whitney revealed his reluctance to abandon traditional American naval strategy, despite the recent publication of Sampson's new strategic prescription and its implicit call for a modern naval force to conduct offensive operations at points distant from the American coast.

When asked about future naval requirements, for instance, Whitney stated his preference for additional cruisers and outlined his views of their proper use as commerce destroyers. "If you break up the commerce of a nation now, you ... bring about financial disaster and distress to a country," he informed his sympathetic audience on the committee:¹⁸ "Take these fast cruisers that can run away from fighting ships and destroy merchant ships, and they play a very important part in time of war. A good many of these ships are pretty good fighting ships that they are building now."¹⁹

At the committee's request, Whitney also provided a written synopsis of foreign naval construction, with a particular emphasis on the most powerful ironclads built or under construction in Britain, France, and Italy. This drew attention to the *Nile* and *Renown*²⁰ (both British), the *Amiral Baudin* (French) and *Lepanto* (Italian), all approaching completion, and

evaluated them in terms of their size, armor, armament, speed, and cost. After reviewing the design qualities of each vessel, Whitney concluded that all were “unworthy of imitation:” their draught would prohibit all from conducting operations in the shallow waters off the American coast-line.²¹ He therefore recommended the immediate construction of six protected cruisers and two armored vessels of moderate dimensions to supplement the improvements to seacoast and harbor defenses suggested by the Endicott Board.²² As these vessels were expected to be comparable to those in foreign navies, Whitney also suggested that the most modern designs be purchased from naval constructors in Europe: “I think our true policy is to borrow the *ideas* of our neighbors so far as they are thought to be in advance of ours [and] give them to our shipbuilders in the shape of plans”²³

The committee also received contrary views, particularly from senior naval constructors who were familiar with the designs and capabilities of British warships. Theodore D. Wilson, Chief of the Bureau of Construction, maintained that the debate over the types of vessels to be built should be conducted by a board of naval officers, in a manner similar to the British Admiralty’s practice. While careful not to dispute Whitney’s authority, Wilson inferred that the civilian Secretary was simply not qualified to make decisions on naval architecture and technology without professional input from “the line or fighting officers of the Navy.”²⁴ Even more critical was Benjamin F. Isherwood, the outspoken former Steam Engineering Bureau chief and equally outspoken commentator on American shipbuilding priorities. Isherwood railed against Whitney’s narrow view of naval strategy, beginning with the proper wartime role of the US navy: “A navy is not built with superior speed as its principal excellence, for flight from an antagonist, nor is it equipped with a view to privateering against an enemy’s commerce”²⁵ Rather, it should be organized and equipped to fight at sea, which necessitated first-class battleships, not the commerce destroyers recommended by Whitney. “Smaller and unarmored vessels may be found useful as auxiliaries ... but they cannot be reckoned as fighting vessels, nor can there be any reason for their existence in the absence of ironclads,” Isherwood stated emphatically.²⁶ His harshest criticism, however, was directed at Whitney’s assertion that ironclads such as HMS *Nile* and *Renown* were “unworthy of imitation.” He reminded Herbert and his fellow committee members of what the British were able to do with these vessels, and what they meant to British national security:

This is the kind of vessel which the greatest naval power that exists, or ever existed, has arrived at after years of experimenting and millions of expenditure, as the only kind which can maintain her [as] Mistress of the Seas, and preserve her shores safe from injury and insult. She builds no more fortifications; and needs none as long as she remains supreme on the water, and when that supremacy is lost the fortifications will not avail.²⁷

Notwithstanding Isherwood's eloquence, Herbert's committee was more inclined to accept Whitney's strategic appraisal and shipbuilding priorities. Their appeal had less to do with strategy than with the moderate cost of the Secretary's shipbuilding program. Indeed, the final version of the resulting bill authorized only two of the six cruisers sought by Whitney. In July 1886 Congress approved the construction of the cruisers *Baltimore* and *Vesuvius*, the latter an experimental dynamite gun cruiser, in addition to the armored vessels *Texas* and *Maine*.²⁸ The last two ships were originally designated armored cruisers but were later reclassified as "second-class battleships."

More importantly, an informal arrangement between Whitney and the committee was established in the aftermath of the hearings, one which virtually assured that his policies would remain unchallenged throughout his term in office. The arrangement was acknowledged in a committee report written by Herbert and submitted to the House on March 10:

The general policy pursued in framing the bill reported by the committee has been to leave a large amount of discretionary power in the hands of the Secretary of the Navy, who will thus be held responsible for results. One leading consideration urging to this policy is that changes in the mode of constructing vessels, engines and ordnance are still occurring, and it is desirable not to embarrass the executive department of the Government by unwise restrictions. We think it better to leave it free to select what may seem at the moment to be the most desirable plan.²⁹

Herbert and Whitney quickly formed a working relationship later described by Herbert's biographer as "cooperative" and "harmonious."³⁰ In the remaining years of Whitney's tenure in the Navy Department, the Naval Affairs Committee drafted legislation authorizing the construction of additional protected cruisers and gunboats, the designs of which were consistent with the Secretary's defensive orientation and his preference for commerce destroyers and coastal defense vessels. As a consequence, between 1885 and 1889 the US Navy's traditional strategy was

perpetuated by the Secretary of the Navy, much to the frustration of service intellectuals like Goodrich, Sampson, Luce, and Mahan.

* * *

Thanks chiefly to Luce, however, those years also witnessed the establishment of the NWC, another forum in which to debate and formulate naval strategy, and with Mahan's appointment as lecturer in naval history the service acquired its most effective propagandist—the “evangelist of sea power,” as Margaret Tuttle Sprout memorably labeled him.³¹ At the NWC, naval history emerged as a medium by which to study the strategic and tactical problems of modern naval warfare. Mahan's arrival in October 1885 marked the beginning of collaborative effort between him and Luce to illuminate the strategic lessons of naval history. In less than a year, Mahan had accumulated enough evidence to challenge existing American naval strategic and force-structure preferences.

With few exceptions, historians have overlooked the collaborative professional relationship between Luce and Mahan, although numerous letters written by Mahan during the 1880s reveal the extent to which he was intellectually indebted to Luce.³² While Mahan deserves credit for carrying out the broad research agenda put forward by Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson, it was Luce, drawing on his own training at the hands of John Knox Laughton, who guided Mahan through the historical literature, encouraged him to adopt a rigorous, “scientific” methodology in researching and composing his lectures, challenged the boundaries of his intellect and worldview, and influenced his views of naval strategy and global power politics. That Mahan's accomplishments should be placed within their proper context is underscored by Donald M. Schurman:

[t]he idea that tactics, strategy, policy and “principles” could be set up in a “scientific relationship” to one another was not a concept outside the temper of the times; but the insistent strength of this synthesising thrust came from Mahan's mentor—the founder of the Naval War College—Stephen B. Luce.³³

To show just how much Mahan was influenced by Luce and the circle around him, not only in terms of his strategic conceptions, but his imperialist views, one need only look at a letter written to his Naval

Academy roommate, Samuel Ashe, in early 1885. Were war to come, he speculated,

[t]he surest deterrent will be a fleet of swift cruisers to prey on the enemy's commerce This threat will deter a possible enemy, particularly if coupled with an adequate defense of our principal ports. My theory however is based on the supposition that we don't have interests out of [i.e. beyond] our own borders.³⁴

Nevertheless, such is the shadow cast by Mahan's publications, above all *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, that he is routinely depicted as an atypical pioneer, when in fact his conception of naval strategy was borrowed from the British and came to him via Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson.³⁵ The strategic views enunciated by Goodrich, Sampson, and Isherwood are particularly noteworthy in this regard. Mahan was a relative latecomer. In fact, it is reasonable to conclude that the views for which he garnered acclaim were not originally his, but were predetermined in July 1884, when Luce, Sampson, and Goodrich developed the core curriculum to be taught at the NWC. Embedded within this curriculum were the elements of a new strategic framework for the US Navy, one which Mahan was expected to buttress and validate through historical analysis.³⁶

An extended discussion of Mahan and his writings would require more space than is available in this book, and is unnecessary since there is already a voluminous literature on the subject.³⁷ For purposes of this study, however, it is necessary to summarize Mahan's conception of naval strategy as it evolved between 1886 and 1889 as an alternative to the prevalent views in Whitney's Navy Department. In preparing for his first year of lectures at the college, Mahan "confirmed" through historical analysis what was previously alluded to in the Endicott Report and the testimony of Isherwood. "Naval Strategy," he observed, "has for its end to found, support, and increase, as well in peace as in war, the sea power of a country."³⁸ As a means to an end—sea power—a successful naval strategy could not be defensive. Only with an offensive orientation geared toward winning control of the seas via decisive engagements could sea power be attained and exploited. Mahan's analysis of British and French naval history supported the contention that control of the seas, through the adoption of an offensive naval strategy, was the only effective means to protect American cities from bombardment and merchant ships from

molestation.³⁹ “It is ... particularly in the field of naval strategy that the teachings of the past have a value which is no degree lessened. They are useful not only as illustrative of principles, but also as precedents, owing to the comparative permanence of conditions.”⁴⁰

When fleshing out these precedents, Mahan explicitly denigrated operations that he considered peripheral to the foremost function of navies in wartime: to seek out and destroy enemy squadrons immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities to obtain command of the sea. Thus there was a clear distinction between what was *peripheral* and what was *decisive*, which themselves were indicative of differing lines of policy: “it is most desirable that all persons responsible for the conduct of naval affairs should recognize that the two lines of policy, in direct contradiction to each other, do exist.”⁴¹ Mahan used an analogy to underscore this point, so that naval officers, not to mention US politicians and the American public, clearly understood the fundamental differences between them: “[i]n the one there is a strict analogy to a war of posts; while in the other the objective is that force whose destruction leaves the posts unsupported and therefore sure to fall in due time.”⁴²

Defensive naval operations were ineffectual, and thus peripheral, because they automatically surrendered command of the sea and hence freedom of action. He agreed with Sampson that coast defense, in the manner traditionally employed by the US, should be left to existing coastal and harbor fortifications. But the other traditional component of American naval strategy, commerce destruction by individual cruisers, was a fruitless, peripheral undertaking: it would not force the capitulation of an adversary. On this point Mahan was insistent. “It is doubtless a most secondary operation of naval war,” he warned his audience. Mahan also availed himself of an opportunity to take swipe at economy-minded politicians and voters: “[B]ut regarded as a primary and fundamental measure, sufficient in itself to crush an enemy, it is probably a delusion and a most dangerous delusion, when presented in the fascinating garb of cheapness to the representatives of the people.”⁴³ The views expressed in his 1885 letter to Ashe had been wholly upended.

By the time Mahan approached the podium for his first lecture in October 1886, he had already accumulated a 400-page manuscript, the bulk of which was later published in *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*.⁴⁴ Following the conclusion of his final lecture of the session, he received an enthusiastic endorsement from his mentor Luce, who had recently left the NWC to command the North Atlantic Squadron.

Reminding officers attending the NWC of his call for a naval Jomini in his opening address the prior month, Luce stated that the call had been answered: “[h]e is here and his name is Mahan.”⁴⁵

For his part, Mahan was thrilled that his lectures were received with so much enthusiasm. “[M]y own lectures of the last session met with a degree of success which surprised me and which still seems to me exaggerated,” he confided to Ashe.⁴⁶ Whether his arguments were to be entirely successful, however, depended to a large degree on the reception they received in the Navy Department—which should be regarded as just as much of a target audience as the NWC’s students—especially since Mahan’s (that is to say Luce’s, Sampson’s, and Goodrich’s) conception of naval strategy was contrary to the views espoused by Secretary of the Navy Whitney. To the surprise of Luce, Walker, and Mahan, Whitney initially endorsed the agenda conceived at the NWC, at least until strained relationships between him and the service professionals degenerated into a personal vendetta that threatened both the institution itself and the strategic reforms advocated by his perceived antagonists.

* * *

Exactly when Whitney took up cudgels against the NWC is unclear, although the seeds of opposition were clearly sown in the early months of his administration. Indeed, his first interaction with Mahan occurred in May 1885, when the latter submitted a tactless request for early relief from command of the USS *Wachusett*, so that he could prepare himself for his next assignment at the college.⁴⁷ In both his private and official correspondence, Mahan made little effort to conceal his distaste for the hardships of service on the distant Pacific Station. Mahan presumably thought that Whitney would sympathize with his situation and credit him for serving so long in such an undesirable billet. Whitney’s reaction to the request, however, was immediate, severe, and quite expected from a man later described by his biographer as “unflinchingly immovable” at times and possessing a “stronger will and sharper temper” than Mahan doubtless anticipated.⁴⁸ The Secretary denounced his request as “weak and unworthy,” and rebuked Mahan both for inappropriate language and for the insubordination manifested in complaining to a superior over an assignment.⁴⁹ The incident doubtless left a negative impression upon Whitney that probably figured into his future opposition to the NWC and strengthened his resolve to block Luce, Mahan, and others from securing

departmental support and congressional recognition for the fledgling institution.

For the first two years of his administration, however, Whitney was not openly hostile to the NWC or its principal advocates. At the close of 1885, in fact, he neither sought to reverse his predecessor's order for its establishment, nor attempted to undermine Walker's creative financing scheme to sustain the NWC with departmental funds in lieu of a Congressional appropriation.⁵⁰ His first annual report to President Cleveland in November 1885 contained a carefully worded endorsement of the NWC, obviously intended to justify both the existence and objectives of the course at Newport.⁵¹ Though written by Walker, Whitney did not qualify the judgment of the most powerful Bureau chief in the Navy Department.

Less than a year later, in August 1886, Whitney's attitude toward the NWC had moved from indifference to opposition, to the point that Walker felt compelled to warn Luce, now commanding the North Atlantic Squadron, of the impending danger. There was a palpable risk that the Secretary would side with their opponents in the Department, the most influential of whom remained Commodores Sicard and Schley. Before leaving the Department for his annual holiday, Walker complained to Luce that "I find it a little hard to carry the NWC as the Secretary himself is opposed to it, but perhaps we shall be able to tide the matter over and have better luck later."⁵² Walker was so concerned about the situation that before leaving for Europe he instructed Bowman McCalla to assist Luce if the latter sought support. "Anything that I can do for you while Captain Walker is away," McCalla wrote to Luce days later, "I shall be most happy to do, if you drop me a line."⁵³

Walker's fears were well-grounded. In August 1886, Whitney ordered the College moved, both administratively and physically. It would no longer have the protection of its benefactor, Walker; now its survival was dependent upon the whims of the Secretary of the Navy himself.⁵⁴ Equally ominously, Whitney ordered the college to move from its home on Coaster's Harbor Island to Goat Island, across Narragansett Bay, where he sought to attach it to the Torpedo Station housed there. He was prevented from doing so only by the entreaties of Caspar Goodrich, commandant of the Torpedo Station, who persuaded Whitney to provide funding for the college to maintain quasi-independent status. In complying, Whitney is reported to have said "I am doing this because Goodrich wants it ... but why he wants it, I'm blessed if I know."⁵⁵

Upon his return to the Department in November 1886, Walker must therefore have been surprised to discover that the NWC had secured tacit approval of the Secretary, due mainly to the success of the course of instruction. Even before the eight-week term officially concluded on November 20, Walker wrote to Luce to express his relief over this latest development: "The War College seems to have had quite a boom this season and I hope the result will be to put it out of all danger of being broken up. It was very near being discontinued at one time last spring."⁵⁶ Later that month, Walker wrote again to Luce, assuring him that Whitney's change of view seemed permanent: "I think the War College is now on pretty safe ground. I think the boom given it last summer has modified the Secretary's views very [considerably], although I have said nothing, or little to him. It came very near being broken up last summer."⁵⁷

Who or what accounted for Whitney's about-face is unknown, but the correspondence between Luce and the Bureau of Navigation points directly to Mahan's impact. "I am happy that Mahan's lectures have been such a success," McCalla wrote to Luce on October 23.⁵⁸ "He has sent us a very capital report on the College which will, with its enclosures, look very well in print and ought to gain us friends."⁵⁹ Whitney, in fact, appears to have been so won over by the faculty's work during the fall 1886 session that his annual report that year contained, for the first and last time during his administration, a ringing endorsement of the NWC:

The importance of the work to be done by the College can hardly be over-estimated. Additional courses of lectures are now in preparation for the coming year upon other subjects bearing directly upon the art of war, and embodying those results of recent investigation which are inaccessible to the Service in general [I]t is hoped that in time its scope may be gradually enlarged in the direction of practical training with modern ships and guns, as far as the resources of the service will permit.⁶⁰

He did not confine himself to praise, going one huge step further by attempting to secure congressional recognition and the modest appropriation of \$12,400 sought by Walker to fund the college. To do so he turned to Hilary Herbert, Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, who alas emerged as an influential opponent of the NWC, for reasons he attributed primarily to naval efficiency and reform. Just weeks before Whitney's request, Herbert had railed against supporting the NWC when more important naval matters required congressional authorization, particularly

shipbuilding, armament, and other technology-related appropriations. "It does not seem to me that at this time when our old fleet is passing away," Herbert cautioned his colleagues on the floor of the House of Representatives, "when it will soon live only in history, now when we need money so much for the building of warships and new guns, now is not the time for the establishment of another naval college."⁶¹ Whitney must have been aware of Herbert's view on the college, but attempted to change his mind. "The college fills a most important place in the training of naval officers, and supplies a want that has long been felt in the service," he wrote to Herbert on December 29, 1886. "Although it is comparatively a young institution, it has already done valuable work, and has given such proof of future usefulness that I deem it in the highest degree worthy of being encouraged and fostered."⁶² His appeal fell on deaf ears. Neither Herbert nor any other congressman secured the funding that would have ensured the college's survival.

Less than two years later, in July 1888, Whitney again appealed to congressional authorities regarding the future of the NWC, but this time against it. His opposition now intractable, the Secretary stunned the naval professionals at Newport with a plan to consolidate the NWC with the Naval Torpedo School, which would have subjugated the strategic education provided by the former to the technological emphasis of the latter and, by extension, the Navy Department itself. As to what prompted this course reversal, the archival evidence points to the strained relationships that developed between him and the most ardent advocates of the NWC—Mahan, Luce, and Walker—during 1887 and 1888. Alienated by their perceived insubordination via direct appeals to congressmen, Whitney succumbed to arguments against the NWC within the Navy Department, emanating chiefly from Schley. Within eight months of his appeal to Herbert to fund the college, Whitney was antagonized by a bitter public dispute over a command decision that, although not directly related to the NWC, undoubtedly caused the Secretary to alter his perceptions of Luce and his beloved institution.

In late June 1887, Whitney ordered Luce and the North Atlantic Squadron to patrol the waters in and around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where conflict frequently occurred between American fishermen and Canadian authorities over statutory fishing restrictions.⁶³ Precisely what the Secretary expected the squadron to accomplish is unclear, as Luce's orders simply instructed him to "protect and look after the interests of American fishermen."⁶⁴ Luce's own instructions to his subordinates were

more explicit, although perhaps not in the manner Whitney intended, for he told them “it will be your special aim to inculcate the necessity of a careful observance, on the part of our fishermen, of the terms of the treaty of 1818 relating to the three mile limit.”⁶⁵ In order that his officers understood the treaty’s terms, Luce attached a list of documents that, according to him, could “be read to advantage.”⁶⁶ Upon completion of target practice in July 1887, the USS *Galena*, *Yantic*, and *Ossipee* were dispatched to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, each vessel to sail separately so as not to attract undue attention from Canadian Fishery Protection Service cruisers.

Luce did not accompany his vessels on the mission, but instead sailed to Portland, Maine, where he consulted with a delegation of American fishermen. At their request, he compiled a list of questions addressed to Captain Peter A. Scott, R.N., the senior officer of the Fishery Protection Service, who promptly responded with answers that Luce hoped would shed official light on US treaty obligations.⁶⁷ Without conferring with the Department beforehand, he decided to release Scott’s reply in a circular that was subsequently distributed to American fishermen operating in Canadian waters. His motives were made clear in a letter sent to the Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries shortly after the circular was distributed: “It is believed that a few plain rules of action among our fishermen will go far towards obviating some, if not all, the difficulties which now prove to be a source of irritation between the United States and the Dominion of Canada.”⁶⁸ Luce even obtained an interview with the minister, the outcome of which seemed to confirm the wisdom of his initiative. “I very much appreciate the spirit with which you met me, and join you in the earnest hope that as few infractions of the law as possible may take place, and that all needless harshness in its execution may be avoided,” Marine and Fisheries Minister George Forster wrote Luce on August 10, 1887.⁶⁹

Luce clearly failed to anticipate the departmental backlash that resulted from his actions when Whitney learned of them. His inquiry to Captain Scott and the resulting circular were especially galling. Upon receiving Luce’s official report, the Secretary replied with a terse telegram that severely reprimanded Luce for exceeding the limits of his authority.⁷⁰ Luce assured Whitney that distribution of the offending circular would cease immediately, but to no avail.⁷¹ Whitney leaked his telegram to the press, for no apparent purpose other than to discredit Luce and force his resignation, which duly occurred.⁷² In his letter of resignation Luce complained,

“I am yet at a loss to understand the process of reasoning that could have led to my being publicly censured and my high office brought into disrepute before the whole world.”⁷³

Yet for reasons unknown, Whitney declined to accept Luce’s resignation. Perhaps the former realized that he had miscalculated in seeking to discredit a naval officer whose public standing matched or exceeded his own. Regardless of the reason, Whitney instead moved to disperse the North Atlantic Squadron. The flagship, USS *Richmond*, was transferred to the Asiatic Squadron. The *Atlanta* was also reassigned. USS *Pensacola* was condemned as unfit for service, and *Yantic* and *Dolphin* were assigned to inspection and special duty, respectively. This left Luce with two vessels. While in name he retained command of the North Atlantic Squadron, it had been reduced to a token force that trivialized, even mocked, his position.

Aside from the personal humiliation Luce must have suffered from Whitney’s actions, they had far graver consequences. The reduction in squadron strength rendered it impossible for Luce to carry out his “School of Application”—a practicum of fleet evolutions and tactical training—which he envisioned as a complement to the courses on naval tactics and strategy taught at the NWC. “The fundamental idea,” he explained to Whitney, “is to make theoretical instruction and practical exercise go hand in hand; or, in other words, to correlate the work of the Squadron and that of the College.”⁷⁴ With this aim in mind, Luce had received authorization from the Navy Department in 1886 and 1887 to assemble the North Atlantic Squadron at Newport so the naval officers enrolled in at the NWC could combine coursework with practical instruction.

Also jeopardized by the dispersal of the North Atlantic Squadron were joint amphibious exercises that Luce initiated in November 1887 with the enthusiastic cooperation of the US Army.⁷⁵ Luce planned to conduct the joint exercises scheduled for 1888 with the vessels remaining to him until he learned that Whitney had instructed the Department to withhold payment for the coal that would be expended in the course of the exercises. The latter demanded that the Army pay for the coal out of its own budget, probably in anticipation that his counterpart in the Department of War would balk at it.⁷⁶ Luce protested to Whitney in strong terms in July 1888, observing that this decision convinced him “that the views of the Navy Department had undergone a radical change, and were no longer in accord with the policy of making the North Atlantic Squadron a School of practical instruction.”⁷⁷ Though carefully worded, the language

Luce used in his protest to Whitney bordered on insubordination, most especially his scarcely veiled charge that the Department was deliberately obstructing his efforts to expand and extend the officers corps' professional competence: "I will not go so far as to say that the Department has purposely thrown obstacles in the way of these squadron evolutions, but its course with regard to the supply of coal is an unmistakable indication that it has no sympathy with them." The protest had no effect, and a few days prior to it Whitney moved forward with his scheme to consolidate the NWC with the Torpedo Station.

Apprised by Walker of growing hostility within the Navy Department, Luce was aware as early as December 1887 that Whitney had become an implacable foe of the NWC. Luce and Mahan therefore began an intense lobbying effort to secure congressional recognition of and appropriation for the institution, which would preserve it even over the opposition of the Secretary and his allies Schley and Sicard. His "squadron" preparing for an extended cruise to the West Indies, Luce confined himself to his strongest suit: writing letters to Congressmen to solicit support for a modest appropriation of \$14,400 to sustain the NWC for another year.⁷⁸ It was thus left to Mahan to plead their case in person. He first visited the Navy Department to confer with Whitney, who made no attempt to conceal his hostility to Luce's and Mahan's campaign. Mahan later recalled his interview with Whitney, especially his response to Mahan's request that he be allowed to appeal directly to Congressmen on behalf of the NWC: "Mr. Whitney showed me a frowning countenance ... and yielded only a reluctant, almost surly, 'I will not oppose you, but I do not authorize you to express any approval from me.'" ⁷⁹ Whitney probably figured that Mahan's initiative would fail to garner sufficient support to save the college. Congress, not Whitney and his allies in the Navy Department, would therefore be responsible for its demise.

One of Mahan's first visits to Capitol Hill was to Senator Nelson Aldrich, an intimate of Luce's and the most ardent supporter of the NWC in the US Senate. The object of their meeting was to determine which members of the House Naval Affairs Committee would be most supportive of Mahan and the institution he represented. Aldrich apprised Luce of the outcome of the strategy session:

Capt. Mahan is now here, and I had a talk with him upon the subject. I will see Mr. Hayden⁸⁰ and try to get him to take hold of the matter. I think he is the best man on the Committee if he is willing to do it. It is of the utmost

importance that we should reach Mr. [Hilary] Herbert and Mr. Thomas.⁸¹
Just how to do this puzzles me, as it must be done through new agencies.⁸²

In the end, Mahan and Luce decided not to appeal directly to Herbert, as both were fully aware of the hostile attitude of the “naturally obstinate” and “pig-headed” Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee toward the NWC. “[H]e refuses to listen even to the proposition to keep us alive until some better arrangement (if there be any) can be made to further the works,” Mahan complained to a colleague on February 28, 1888: “There is not the time, nor the force to reduce him within the limits of this year’s campaign.”⁸³

Mahan and Luce therefore concentrated on the other members of the Committee. By mid-January 1888, Luce had written three of the thirteen members, the most influential of whom was Charles A. Boutelle, the senior Republican, a former naval officer and a staunch supporter of the NWC.⁸⁴ Boutelle professed himself incapable of predicting the College’s fate in the hands of the committee, but suggested to Luce that recent personnel changes on it might work to his advantage.⁸⁵ While in Washington, Mahan actually spoke with Edward Hayden, one of the committee’s newest members, but missed an opportunity to lobby William Bourke Cockran (Democrat, New York), another recent addition to the committee. In lieu of an interview with the latter, Mahan sent him a letter enclosing a compilation of newspaper articles lauding the NWC.⁸⁶ Mahan also implored Cockran to consider the merits of the institution, and pointed out that there was no other institution in the world in which naval warfare was studied systematically and the classroom instruction augmented by practical exercises afloat. The subject, moreover, was of such importance that it should not be left to the voluntary initiative of naval officers. “It is only by setting aside for the necessary study,” wrote Mahan to Cockran on February 8, “and providing that the results of their labors be systematically imparted to others that this, the very highest knowledge of our profession, can be reached and disseminated.”⁸⁷ Finally, Mahan indicated for the first time that he was receptive to relocating the college from Newport to Annapolis, provided of course that the College curriculum would continue under Congress’ auspices, without interference from the Navy Department.⁸⁸ This last concession was obviously made in desperation. Luce would never have approved of it.

That Luce and Mahan might fail in their lobbying campaign must have worried Walker considerably. Thanks to his position in the Navy

Department, he was fully aware of the NWC's prospects in the absence of Congressional recognition. No doubt due to Whitney's open hostility to the institution, Walker was certain that his creative financing scheme would not be sanctioned for another year. "There is a good deal of doubt about our being able to obtain an appropriation to carry on the War College," he wrote Luce on May 2, 1888: "If an appropriation is not obtained of course the War College must be closed and that may put it back for some years to come. I am doing my best, however, to obtain an appropriation and do not yet despair of getting it."⁸⁹

In the past, Walker had supported and nurtured innovative concepts such as the ONI and the NWC, despite episodic clashes with Whitney's predecessor over the scope of his administrative prerogatives as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation. He was even successful in 1885 and 1886 in convincing an indifferent Whitney to continue the NWC in spite of the opposition of Sicard and Schley. After the latter date, however, the professional relationship between the two men soured. Whitney later referred to the Bureau chief as "prejudiced" and "unjust."⁹⁰ Indeed, only months after leaving the Department in March 1889, Whitney warned his successor of Walker's persuasive powers, admitting to Benjamin F. Tracy that "I was often (innocently) made by that officer to do injustice in ways I did not know of . . ."⁹¹

Even more disturbing to the College's supporters, Schley had apparently become a senior naval advisor to the Secretary. In January 1885 Luce had identified him as an implacable opponent of the institution, rivalled only by Montgomery Sicard.⁹² Chief of the Bureau of Equipment & Recruiting, Schley was determined to wrestle Coaster's Harbor Island and its infrastructure away from the Bureau of Navigation, for the avowed purpose of establishing a shore-based apprentice training station there. Consequently, Schley bedevilled the NWC's administration at every opportunity, at one point refusing to approve vouchers for coal and other maintenance-related expenses that he deemed excessive.⁹³ Now he was rumored to exercise influence over Whitney. What was "commonly believed in the Navy," Mahan wrote to his friend Samuel Ashe, was "that the Secy [*sic*] is largely influenced by a man named Schley—whom you may remember; who has never achieved more than a second-rate reputation, if that, among his brother officers."⁹⁴ Thus, when deciding the College's fate, Whitney may have been more inclined to accept the hostile views of Schley than those of Walker, Luce, and Mahan.

While Walker was struggling to preserve the NWC from within the Department, Mahan and Luce continued their lobbying campaign with

considerable success. In June 1888, Mahan boasted that they had secured the requisite number of votes on the House Naval Affairs Committee to fund the College. "The fight so far has been in [the] committee of the House in which we have been completely successful, having 10 votes out of 13," he wrote to Ashe on June 14:⁹⁵ "The position would be perfectly secure but for the sustained and strenuous opposition of the Chairman, Herbert of Alabama."⁹⁶ In the end, however, Herbert deferred to the majority on the Committee, and included in the naval appropriation bill introduced on June 19 for consideration by the entire House the modest sum sought by Luce, Mahan, and Walker. The bill was passed days later by an overwhelming majority.⁹⁷ Another hurdle was still to be overcome, though, as the Senate contained pockets of opposition. The most vocal opponent of the NWC in the upper chamber was Senator Eugene Hale (Republican) of Maine, a member of both the Senate Naval Affairs Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee, the latter of which was responsible for approving the Senate version of the House naval appropriation bill. Luce and Mahan probably left the task of trying to win over Hale to Senator Aldrich and former Secretary of the Navy William Chandler (Republican), now a Senator from New Hampshire. Both were ardent supporters of the College. "I am giving attention to these subjects and think we shall take good care of the war college," Chandler assured Luce on June 30.⁹⁸

Their strategy might have worked had Whitney not personally intervened in the Senate's deliberations. Seven months earlier he had grudgingly permitted Mahan to lobby the members of the House Naval Affairs Committee, apparently assuming that his initiative would end in failure. But the passage of the House appropriation bill virtually ensured the preservation of the institution for at least another year. To make matters worse, Whitney was informed that the Senate version of the bill also included a provision for the institution. "Aldrich was so much opposed to the removal of (so-called) War College that Allison⁹⁹ and Hale determined to say nothing about it and let you do as you liked," Senator James Beck (Democrat, Kentucky) warned Whitney on 21 July.¹⁰⁰ "I think it ought to go to the Torpedo Station, but it is [an] *election* year I think it is best to let it alone in the Senate."¹⁰¹ Unwilling to heed Beck's advice, Whitney visited the Senate on July 24 to confront Aldrich and demand an amendment to the appropriation bill stripping the NWC of Congressional funding. After a heated discussion with Aldrich, allegedly including threats of administrative retaliation if the proposed amendment was not agreed to, the Senator complied.¹⁰² The Senate version of the naval appropriation

bill was passed by a large majority on the next day. Whitney could now consolidate the NWC with the Torpedo Station.

In the wake of his successful appeal to the Senate, Whitney referred to the reasons that prompted his actions. "These officers [Luce, Mahan, and Walker] have been working behind my back all united," he complained to his wife on July 25, "and I recommended, but I didn't seem to get it as I recommended, and I finally awoke to the fact that the whole thing was being set up and worked in Congress behind me. I will wipe the whole thing out shortly."¹⁰³ On August 1, Whitney informed Mahan that the upcoming academic term would be shortened from four to three months.¹⁰⁴ A few days later the Secretary released a statement to the press. "I have favored the War College in each of my annual reports," he claimed, "but I do not deem the present arrangement wise or sensible, and I have not seen any other person understanding the matter who does."¹⁰⁵ The fate of the College now determined for the remaining months of his administration, Whitney fulfilled what had amounted to a personal vendetta to silence Luce, Mahan, and Walker. The strained relationship between Whitney and these reform-minded officers quickly overshadowed the actual accomplishments of the NWC. Moreover, it put in jeopardy the professionals' larger goal of inculcating the mode of strategic thinking championed by them in the Navy Department itself. Whether or not they would succeed in resurrecting the institution, much less carrying out their more ambitious objectives, would depend on their ability to sway Whitney's successor, Benjamin F. Tracy, who took up the position of Secretary of the Navy on March 5, 1889.

* * *

As of August 1888, the prospect that Whitney would be replaced in the Navy Department was far from certain, as the presidential election would not take place until November. Perhaps fearing that he would serve for another four years, Luce and Mahan launched a final effort to convince him to reverse course and maintain the NWC as a separate institution from the Torpedo Station which, although also located in Newport, fell under the jurisdiction of Commodore Sicard and the Bureau of Ordnance. Sicard had been an opponent of the College since it was first considered by the Bureau chiefs in March 1884. Now he would oversee the combined Torpedo Station and NWC, as it became known after the Department officially ordered the consolidation on January 11, 1889.

Fortunately for Luce and Mahan, the Torpedo Station's commandant was Caspar Goodrich, who had originally assisted Luce in shaping the institution and its curriculum in 1884, and who had frequently lectured there after its establishment. Goodrich clearly grasped the threat of consolidation to the College's future, and was determined to ensure its survival in the face of Sicard's hostility to it. "The evident purpose in this move was to kill the college," Goodrich later recalled.¹⁰⁶ "It happened, however, that ... [it] fell into friendly hands, and I made a point of honor of keeping it alive." Yet despite Goodrich's assurances and good will, Luce and Mahan concluded that the mission of the NWC—to inculcate strategic thinking amongst its students—was simply incompatible with that of the Torpedo Station, which had a strong technocentric focus.¹⁰⁷ The College would not, they were convinced, survive consolidation, especially once Goodrich's protection ceased.

To be sure, Luce and Mahan certainly did not oppose a solid technological foundation, officer education included, on which to superimpose their ambition of a modern American battlefleet. But, like Laughton and Philip Colomb, they wholly rejected the argument made by many technocratic officers, that the new conditions of naval warfare had rendered the study of history and strategy pointless. Now their worst fears seemed on the verge of coming to pass: the NWC had been subordinated to an institution dominated by technocrats, and technocratic views seemed to be in the ascendant at the Navy Department. Mahan decried this situation in his opening address when the new session of the College convened on August 6, 1888, days after Whitney notified him to condense the course from four to three months. His remarks were clearly aimed at audiences in both Newport and Washington. Without mentioning Whitney by name, Mahan railed against the tendency in American naval policy of the day to valorize technology to the exclusion of the tactical and strategic components of naval warfare. The NWC was, in his opinion, the only institution within the US naval establishment able to right the imbalance between technology and strategy. "Have not we, by too exclusive attention to mechanical advance," he challenged his audience, "and too scanty attention to the noble art of war, which is the chief business of those to whom the military movements of the Navy are entrusted, contributed to the reproach which has overtaken both us and it?"¹⁰⁸

Mahan also charged that the Navy Department's limited vision had affected, if not infected, the officer corps:

[t]here seems little doubt that the mental activity which exists so widely [within the officer corps] is not directed toward the management of ships in battle, to the planning of naval campaigns, to the study of strategic and tactical problems, nor even to the secondary matters connected with the maintenance of warlike operations at sea.¹⁰⁹

As a service professional, Mahan naturally maintained that these tasks should be left to naval officers, specifically NWC graduates, who possessed the training to apply what they had learned through the systematic study of naval strategy, tactics, and history. Before concluding his remarks, however, Mahan returned to his general theme on the dangerous imbalance between strategy and technology in American naval affairs, and warned against optimistic assessments of progress based solely on technological advance:

I will sound again the note of warning against the plausible cry of the day which finds *all* progress in material advance, disregarding that noblest sphere in which the mind and heart of man, in which all that is god-like, reign supreme; and against that temper which looks not to the man, but to his armor.¹¹⁰

Later that month, Luce invoked similar arguments in a petition endorsed by David Dixon Porter and six unnamed officers. Addressed to Whitney and sent to the Department on August 16, the officers officially protested the decision to consolidate the NWC and Torpedo Station, chiefly on the grounds that the aims of the institutions were simply incompatible with each other: “[T]he lines of research followed by the War College are so entirely different from those of the Torpedo Station, that the two do not lend themselves to combination.” They urged instead that the institutions be kept separate, because “the subjects treated by the War College, though of the highest importance, have been and are neglected by naval officers generally, in favor of the development of material.” Without remedial action, they warned Whitney, the consolidation scheme “will stifle at its birth a movement which gives the highest promise of future usefulness to the naval profession.”¹¹¹

That Whitney remained steadfast in his opposition to the NWC was evident over the coming months. Walker promised Luce on November 19, 1888 that he would “do what I can to prevent the War College being hurt, but I am not very sanguine.”¹¹² Luce was unconvinced. Indeed he

apparently suspected that Walker had not done his utmost to preserve the College's autonomy.¹¹³ Mahan disagreed. "I think Walker [is] both interested and angered about the College & that he will certainly work to undo the wrongs of this year," Mahan wrote Luce on November 14. "But even if your estimate of his action were correct—it cannot be overlooked that he is the first party whose concern the College is, and I next under him. I know him to have accomplished a good deal and he has backed me up well"¹¹⁴

Luce's frustration and anger, if not his animus toward Walker, was understandable. He was clearly exasperated over the events of the past year, and considered relinquishing command of the North Atlantic Squadron before his statutory retirement in March 1889. Luce, in fact, had tentatively arranged to be relieved on January 15 by his eventual successor, Rear Admiral Bancroft Gherardi, who had appealed directly to Whitney for the appointment. To sweeten the deal, the latter offered to appoint Luce to a commission charged with determining the site for a new navy yard. Upon hearing of this offer, Walker immediately urged Luce not to consent to it until the two had time to consult: "I don't want you to commit yourself to giving up your squadron or any change of duty, until I have given you a pointer or two in conversation when I see you."¹¹⁵ By the time Walker arrived in New York for their meeting, Luce had already met Gherardi and assented to the early transition. Following his conference with Walker, however, Luce reversed himself and informed a stunned Gherardi that he had no intention of relinquishing command of the Squadron until compelled to do so by statutory retirement. Gherardi brooded over Luce's behavior in a letter to Whitney on November 26, the content of which must have infuriated the Secretary.¹¹⁶ If Whitney could not lure Luce into premature retirement and exile on the proposed commission, however, he certainly could act against the NWC's other mouthpiece. On November 30, Mahan was ordered to head a commission studying possible base sites in the Pacific Northwest. He was effectively banished to the other side of the continent during the remaining months of Whitney's tenure. Luce urged Walker to intervene and reverse the orders given to Mahan, but they had come directly from Whitney himself and thus could not be overridden.¹¹⁷

Following a mission to Haiti with the North Atlantic Squadron, Luce was prematurely relieved of command and instructed by Whitney to return home and await orders.¹¹⁸ None were forthcoming, and Luce was removed from the active list a few weeks later upon reaching statutory

retirement age. Whitney's actions were probably tied to the outcome of the 1888 Presidential election. In November Grover Cleveland was defeated by Benjamin Harrison, thus guaranteeing Whitney's replacement. This knowledge may have prompted the latter to scatter his antagonists before departing office in March 1889. The NWC's fate thus rested on the attitude of Whitney's successor, whose opinions were unknown, if, indeed, he had any opinions on the subject at all. "The Republican administration may take advice if we can get a Secretary who wishes to run the Navy on true principles," wrote Porter to Luce in the final months of 1888: "In that case we may in the end have the War College, provided we obtain a man who will prevent its rehabilitation in connection with the Torpedo School"¹¹⁹

Tracy (Figure 7.1) entered the Navy Department with no prior experience of naval affairs, and no mandate from President Harrison, other than broad instructions to secure "the construction of a sufficient number of modern warships as rapidly [and] as consistent with care and perfection in plans and workmanship."¹²⁰ In this regard, Tracy benefited from the technological focus of his predecessor, especially his efforts to promote industrial partnerships for the domestic production of armor, armament, and warships, and he essentially carried on Whitney's contracting and procure-



Fig. 7.1 Secretary of the US Navy 1889–93, Benjamin F. Tracy (1830–1915) presided over the transformation of American naval policy from a defensive to an offensive orientation, thanks largely to the influence of Stephen B. Luce and Alfred T. Mahan (Image courtesy US *Library of Congress*, LC-USZ62-96846)

ment policies. Whether or not he would also carry on Whitney's policy regarding post-graduate officer education remained to be seen.

In Mahan's absence, it was left to Luce and his contacts in Washington to secure the new Secretary of the Navy's support for the NWC. Luce wasted no time asking Porter to act as an intermediary on his behalf. "The enemies of the War College so far succeeded under the late administration in destroying the institution, as to render the task of resuscitation somewhat difficult," he complained to Porter on March 9, only days after Tracy assumed control of the Department: "If, however, you will lend your powerful influence, I trust the triumph of the enemies of the change will be but temporary."¹²¹

Porter was happy to assist Luce and he sought a personal interview with Tracy within days of receiving the first of a series of letters from his former protégé. Porter's report of his first meeting must have gratified Luce: "Mr. Tracy is an 'old gentlemen' at sixty two, is a very accessible man, and will do nothing in a hurry. He is very wary [because] of having passed many years in the study of law. He listens quietly and doesn't commit himself."¹²² Nonetheless, Porter subsequently reported that, although "I have had only one special interview with the Secretary, I came away much impressed with the profound knowledge he possesses of naval affairs which I think must have been born in him!"¹²³ Aside from Porter, Tracy was also lobbied by Senator Aldrich, a fellow Republican who seems to have harbored resentment toward Whitney over his treatment of the NWC, probably owing to the latter's heavy-handed, threatening behavior the previous July. Aldrich invited Tracy to visit Newport the next month, presumably so that the Secretary could make his own assessment of the institution and its former location on Coaster's Harbor Island. The originally scheduled visit had to be postponed, but Tracy did make the trip a few months later.¹²⁴

Encouraged by Porter's favorable report of the new Secretary, Luce composed a nine-page letter that he sent to Porter for endorsement before forwarding it to Tracy. As suggested by its length, Luce gave a vigorous and detailed argument in favor of the College, addressing its *raison d'être* and its accomplishments in advancing the study of strategic and tactical problems in modern naval warfare. Not surprisingly, he contrasted the mission of the College with that of the Torpedo Station: "[o]ne had to do with *Materiel* and the other with *Personnel*. One had to do with the *manufacture* of a single implement of war; the other with the intelligent *uses* of all implements [of] war."¹²⁵ Aside from their divergent purposes, moreover, the Torpedo Station was intended for junior officers, in order

for them to study technical aspects of naval gunnery and torpedoes. The College's purpose was both more abstract and much more lofty. The "higher plane of research" conducted there was "intended, primarily, for Commanders, Captains, Admirals, and the General Staff which, it is hoped will one day form part of our naval administration." Luce also emphasized that the NWC had pioneered research and instruction in the science and art of modern war at sea, the basis of which was the study of history to reveal the fundamental principles of warfare at both the strategic and tactical levels. Modestly, Luce claimed no credit for himself, but instead highlighted Mahan's accomplishments (this was still a year prior to the publication of the *Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*): "[h]is labors, judged by the ordinary standards of brain workers, were all but Herculean; and the lectures he produced, challenge comparison with the best historical essays of the day." Of equal importance, Mahan's lectures "produced this additional merit—that they entered a new field of inquiry, with an original and exhaustive method of treatment."¹²⁶

At the same time, Luce was careful to point out that the research, analysis, and teaching carried out at the institution was performed not by a single individual but a group of naval officers with different areas of expertise. He referred to them as "collaborators," who studied and taught fellow officers on the proper roles of the ram, naval gun, and torpedo in naval warfare. Lectures were at times technical in content, but were ultimately intended to promote awareness of each weapon's strategic and tactical utility:

[i]t will be observed that these officers did not concern themselves with the manufacture of these weapons; that was left to others. But what they dwelt upon exclusively, was the best uses in war of the perfected arm under consideration.¹²⁷

It was left to Mahan to incorporate knowledge of the tactical qualities of each weapon into a practical system of naval tactics, a task that would already have been completed had his work not been interrupted by the opponents of the NWC and his reassignment to Puget Sound:

[i]t was in the midst of this great work that Captain Mahan found himself treated with contumely by those to whom he had every right to look for encouragement and support, the College broken up and his labors brought to an untimely end.¹²⁸

In an indirect swipe at Schley and the Bureau of Equipment, Luce complained that efforts to eliminate the College had nothing to do with the reasons put forward by opponents—naval efficiency and reform—but rather to the personal opposition and selfish motives of a Bureau chief.¹²⁹ For all of these reasons, Luce urged Tracy to undertake an independent assessment so that he could reach his own, informed judgment as to the utility of the NWC and its proposed re-establishment on Coaster's Harbor Island.

Tracy's response was prompt but guarded. It did, however, acknowledge prior discussions about the College and the force of Luce's arguments. "The subject has already been brought to my attention," Tracy wrote to Luce on March 30, "and I have had some conversation with Senator Aldrich in regard to it. I can assure you that I consider no matter of greater importance than the education of our officers on the subjects which have been introduced at the College."¹³⁰ In the following months, words were matched by actions that confirmed his support for Luce and the institution. First, at Porter's behest, Tracy ousted Schley from the Navy Department in April 1889, assigning him to the new cruiser USS *Baltimore* and replacing him with Captain George Dewey.¹³¹ Two months later he reorganized the functions and duties of the Bureaus, transferring oversight for the Navy's apprentice training system and Coaster's Harbor Island to Walker and the Bureau of Navigation. Porter applauded these changes, and others, including efforts to transform the officers of the Bureau of Navigation into a de facto general staff. "The fact of making the Navigation Bureau a Military Bureau," he wrote to Tracy on July 1, "acting directly under the orders of the Secretary of the Navy, has removed the great source of difficulty in the Navy Department"¹³²

Following his belated visit to Newport in August 1889, where he conferred with Luce and possibly Aldrich, Tracy announced the formation of a Squadron of Evolution. The tasks of this new squadron were exactly what Luce had hoped to accomplish with the North Atlantic Squadron between 1886 and 1888, mainly the practical application of naval tactics under steam, squadron movements, and other doctrinal concepts derived from the tacticians at the NWC. After eight years in the Navy Department, Walker was appointed to command the squadron.¹³³ Finally, in November 1889, Tracy included a definitive statement in support of the College in his annual report, presumably to remove any doubt about his plans to reverse the actions of his predecessor. To the collective relief of Luce, Mahan, Walker, and a supporting cast of naval officers, the Secretary

warmly endorsed the intellectual activities undertaken at the NWC which, in his estimation, “is unquestionably one of the most important institutions connected with the Navy,” despite the efforts of its opponents to hamstring its mission:¹³⁴ “Its work, even in the restricted sphere to which it has hitherto been confined, has been of immense benefit to the service, and it is of the highest importance that nothing should be done that will in any way interfere with its efficiency.”¹³⁵ With this ringing endorsement, Tracy embraced the College and its contributions to the process of strategic development, which began in earnest during the first year of his administration.

Yet other barriers dividing technology from strategy within the American naval establishment remained, and Tracy was “coached” in strategic thought by the principal spokesmen for a new strategic paradigm in high-level naval policy debates: Luce and Mahan. The latter quickly became the Secretary’s senior naval advisor. Mahan met with Tracy in July 1889, when the latter arrived in Newport for the first of two visits to the NWC. The meeting was arranged by Walker, apparently at Tracy’s behest, and Mahan was subsequently ordered to Newport from his summer residence in Bar Harbor, Maine.¹³⁶ Walter Herrick observes that

[o]n a number of occasions during the summer of 1889, Tracy consulted ... Mahan, from which contact a consequential friendship arose. At the time, Mahan was preparing for publication the manuscript ... [of] *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. After reading the manuscript, the General [Tracy] became convinced of the validity of Mahan’s capital-ship theory and decided to incorporate it into his own program of naval expansion which he planned to announce in November.¹³⁷

Following his meeting with Mahan, Tracy was also provided with a summary of the strategic thought advanced by the College. This summary was contained in an article by Luce, written in May 1889, and published in the *North American Review* two months later as “Our Future Navy.” In it Luce described the strategic framework that evolved from his and Mahan’s collaboration since the latter’s arrival at the NWC in October 1885. The central tenets of this framework were three concepts that, when viewed in the aggregate, formed the basis of their prescription for American naval strategy in the future. What they advocated, in short, was a naval force with an *offensive* orientation, outfitted with *battleships* to defeat an opposing force in a *decisive* engagement. At the heart of this

strategic framework, from which, according to Luce, future shipbuilding options should be assessed, selected, and implemented, was recognition by politicians and policymakers of the proper wartime function of naval forces: "The role of a navy is essentially offensive, as contrasted with sea-coast fortifications, which are defensive. This broad distinction must be borne in mind, if the persistent but unavailing efforts of our highest naval authorities, in time past, to organize a navy, are to be understood."¹³⁸

Luce argued that an offensive naval force should be organized and equipped so as to concentrate the fighting power of individual units into fleets in order to win decisive battles against its adversaries. In his estimation, fighting power was the most important desideratum for modern navies. Future naval campaigns would be short and fierce, decided in months, not years. What was required, therefore, were battleships of unsurpassed fighting power, rather than the cruisers, coastal defense monitors and unarmored vessels around which US policy had traditionally revolved: "those ships were designed expressly to run away from battleships That is the fundamental idea which is guiding the development of the new navy: to run away."¹³⁹ He was equally critical of commerce destruction as the focus of American naval operations. It was therefore imperative first to correct strategic misconceptions, then to cease building monitors and commerce-destroyers, and finally to allocate funding to construct a modern, offensively-oriented fleet. "A solitary American steel cruiser," Luce ominously warned in conclusion, "represents the latent possibilities of a great country placidly awaiting some national disaster to generate its mighty forces."¹⁴⁰

Luce obviously aimed at a much wider audience than subscribers to the *North American Review*. As President of the USNI, a post he had held since October 1887, he suggested that it reprint the article for inclusion in the next volume of the *Proceedings*, along with comments from Institute members.¹⁴¹ Mahan offered unqualified assent to Luce's arguments: "I have only to express my entire concurrence in the general tenor of this admirable paper, and in the principles of naval policy adopted in it."¹⁴² Mahan also furnished a brief critique of the Navy's traditional strategy and the pressing need for strategic innovation within the Navy Department. "If I am right in my opinion," he asserted, "a war against an enemy's commerce is an utterly insufficient instrument," which if continued would commit the country to "an erroneous and disastrous policy." A more complete volte face from the views he had expressed to Samuel Ashe scarcely four years earlier could not be imagined. Steel cruisers might serve useful

purposes, especially in terms of incorporating novel technology and stimulating domestic shipbuilding, but the “real strength of a navy” was the fighting power of battleships.¹⁴³

* * *

By the time Luce’s article appeared, he and Mahan had already succeeded in persuading Tracy to conduct a department-level strategic review. On July 16, 1889, following his initial meeting with Mahan, the Secretary appointed a board of officers under the direction of Captain William P. McCann, Commandant of the Boston Navy Yard, to consider the appropriate posture for American naval development. Tracy also appointed Captains Robert L. Phythian and William T. Sampson, Commander William Mayhew Folger, and Lieutenant-Commander Willard H. Brownson to what became known thereafter as the Policy Board. He subsequently added Naval Constructor Richard Gatewood to augment the technical expertise of the group, which was composed mainly of naval practitioners with the exception of Sampson, the career naval educator and current Superintendent of the Naval Academy. The Board’s brief was expansive, as Tracy expected it to produce a well-conceived shipbuilding program, based on a sound strategic rationale, for consideration by Congress.

Sampson soon emerged as the dominant figure, providing arguments in favor of an unprecedented shipbuilding program. That he deserves credit for linking strategy to force structure in the final report is clear when comparing it with similar arguments made in a USNI lecture in April 1889 titled “The Naval Defense of the Coast,” a barely-revised version of his Endicott Board report which subsequently appeared in *Proceedings*. As he had in 1885–86, he argued for a multifaceted offensive navy to augment existing coastal fortifications. “To the efficient defense of a coast,” Sampson observed,

it is important to act offensively when opportunity offers A blow struck at such a moment may be decisive, while to be powerless to follow up the effect of a repulse by the fortifications would permit the enemy to recuperate and renew the attack, or at least to withdraw when they might have been destroyed.¹⁴⁴

Discounting the threat of a seaborne invasion, Sampson posited an offensive seagoing force as an outer layer of coastal defense, designed to

destroy an adversary before it posed a threat to American coastal cities. But the destruction of enemy naval squadrons was only one task for the multifaceted force he envisioned:

the legitimate field of action of such a force is upon the high seas, in protecting our commerce, in destroying the commerce of the enemy, in making attacks upon undefended portions of the coast (thus forcing him to maintain a fleet at home), or in meeting and destroying a fleet.¹⁴⁵

A strategy that failed to encompass these roles would restrict the functions of the navy in wartime to passive defense, and rob it of much of its potential utility. "If the navy is held for coastal defense," Sampson cautioned, "these other important duties must be largely neglected, and some of the most efficient means of bringing the enemy to terms be disregarded."¹⁴⁶ His words were identical to those used in the Endicott Board report.

In a similar vein, the Policy Board highlighted the deterrent qualities of overwhelming naval force equipped and organized for offensive operations, the duties of which were threefold: (1) the protection of commerce; (2) the protection of American cities and naval ports from bombardment and blockade; and (3) the preservation of American rights and interests abroad. To guarantee these conditions required the complete destruction of enemy naval forces at the outbreak of hostilities, to be accomplished by battleships and cruisers guided by the strategic doctrines of decisive battle, blockade, and coastal bombardment. "We should be prepared with a naval force adequate to such work," the Board concluded, "and only the most powerful armor-clads would suffice. Whatever force our enemy could fairly be expected to assign to such duty, we should be able to destroy, beyond a doubt."¹⁴⁷ Accordingly, the Board recommended a multi-year shipbuilding program of thirty-five battleships and twenty-four armored and protected cruisers of greater than 4,000 tons displacement.

The Board, moreover, attached particular importance to longer-range battleships with extended coal endurance, of which it recommended that ten be constructed—especially as "a policy of protection without the power to act offensively, even to carrying a war to the very doors of an enemy, would, at the present time, double the force with which we would have to contend."¹⁴⁸ The program's estimated cost was a staggering \$281.5 million, inclusive of torpedo boats and other coastal defense vessels.¹⁴⁹ It was an amount that Congress would never have approved but, at the same

time, the huge figure should not obscure the fact that it resulted from a deliberative process whereby an offensive, *guerre d'escadre* strategic policy was employed for the first time to arrive at force requirements.

The final report was originally intended as a confidential planning document on which to base future strategic and force structure choices over the course of several years. When portions were leaked in January 1890, Tracy was essentially compelled to disavow it. The historical record is unclear as to who was responsible for its disclosure, but the ramifications quickly became apparent. "No report of the Policy Board was to be published," a departmental insider informed Luce.¹⁵⁰ "The general feeling here is that it was unwise to make any portion of it public, and it has unquestionably hurt the service as far as this year's appropriations are concerned. Senator Hale has been pretty positive on this point."¹⁵¹

As to the leak's effect on the course of naval policy, Walter Herrick states that it "provoked a storm of controversy throughout the country," that Tracy publicly disavowed its recommendations despite having appointed the committee and furnished its brief, and that "news of its unauthorized, and untimely publication dismayed him."¹⁵² By contrast, Mark Shulman argues that the report's "leak could not have been better timed. Initially, the department and Tracy received an intense political haranguing, but it soon died down, leaving the nation desensitized to the relatively modest proposals of the politically astute Tracy."¹⁵³

Those modest proposals had been put forward in his annual report of November 1889, but in that document Tracy also proposed eventually to amass a battlefleet of twenty ships, the same number suggested by Luce in his *North American Review* article, later republished in *Proceedings*.¹⁵⁴ The Secretary of the Navy even employed the same arguments as Luce to justify the acquisition of an offensive battlefleet capable of defeating enemy forces in decisive engagements:

Naval wars in the future will be short and sharp. It is morally certain that they will be fought out to the end with the force available at the beginning. The nation that is ready to strike the first blow will gain an advantage which its antagonist can never offset, and inflict injury from which he can never recover.¹⁵⁵

In sum, both the program and the strategic rationale that accompanied it were essentially those advocated by Mahan and Luce throughout the first year of Tracy's administration. And the fact that he and his successors

carried it out with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm ensured that American naval modernization proceeded according to the strategic framework advocated by Luce and Mahan, the roots of which can be traced to the emergence in the early 1880s of an organizational culture shaped by a select group of service intellectuals who stressed strategic naval development.

On the basis of the short-term recommendations outlined in Tracy's 1889 annual report, Senator Hale had, before the storm broke over the Policy Board's report, introduced legislation for the immediate construction of eight medium-range battleships, three cruisers, five torpedo boats and two coastal defense monitors. The disclosure of the report threatened Hale's proposed program. With support for it dwindling in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, Tracy sought to contain the damage caused by the leak. The program's prospects hinged upon the success of his repeated overtures to congressional authorities. "I very much regret," Tracy wrote to a friend on January 21, "that for the coming four weeks my time is to be continuously occupied before the Senate and House Committees that it will be utterly impossible for me to be away from Washington."¹⁵⁶

Tracy's lobbying campaign to secure congressional support for his shipbuilding program was interrupted by tragedy on February 3, when his wife and daughter perished in a fire that consumed their residence and injured him. The interruption was brief, for Tracy quickly returned to work and appeared before the House Naval Affairs Committee in late March 1890. With the Republicans now in control of both chambers of Congress, chairmanship of the committee had reverted to Boutelle, whose frequent correspondence with Luce between 1889 and 1890 ensured that the Congressman was fully aware of Luce's views on naval strategy and the proposed shipbuilding program. At one point, in fact, Boutelle asked Luce to send him a copy of his *North American Review/Proceedings* article, presumably to refer to when the Naval Affairs Committee deliberated the 1890 Navy budget.¹⁵⁷

As a former naval officer himself, Boutelle was predisposed to accept the arguments offered by Luce, but as an experienced politician he also knew that the proposal to build an offensive battlefleet was politically untenable in the short term, especially with the report of the Policy Board now public. The exigencies of the situation eventually compelled Boutelle to broker a compromise. In what appeared to be a setback for Tracy, Luce, and Mahan, he recommended that the number of battleships proposed to

be built be reduced from eight to three. Boutelle also employed creative nomenclature intended to reduce opposition from the strong isolationist component in Congress, describing these vessels as “seagoing coastline battleships.” “By building such ships,” he wrote to Luce on March 6, “we should avoid the popular apprehension of jingoism in naval matters, while we can develop the full offensive and defensive powers of construction as completely as in foreign cruising battleships in all but speed and fuel capacity.”¹⁵⁸

The revised shipbuilding program attracted enough support for passage in both the House and the Senate. The final version of the bill, which became law on June 30, 1890, authorized the construction of the three battleships, in addition to one protected cruiser, one torpedo cruiser, and one torpedo boat. Compared to the British Naval Defence Act of 1889, the American legislation did not include affirmation of an offensive naval strategy, nor were the resulting battleships of the *Indiana* class (Figure 7.2) functionally equivalent to the pre-dreadnought standard established by the British Royal Sovereigns. The first American battleships suffered from serious design flaws that ranged from inadequate armor distribution, excessive armament, and blast interference, to a low freeboard which limited their seaworthiness, a defect that was aggravated when coal bunkers were filled to capacity.¹⁵⁹ In time the disparity in design and performance between British and American capital ships would narrow, as American designers studied foreign naval construction and improved existing designs as Congress authorized construction of a dozen more battleships during the 1890s.

Moreover, the concept of the “coastline” battleship was dropped in 1896, when a board headed by John Grimes Walker was convened to consider the direction of future battleship design. The Walker Board’s report (June 10, 1896) was an indicator of American naval aspirations to become a modern sea power in the image of the Royal Navy: “Our battleships, even if strictly ‘coastline’ in their sphere of operations, have greater need to be ‘seagoing’ than vessels of their class operating in the Mediterranean, or in the narrow seas in northern Europe.”¹⁶⁰

The prerequisites for modern sea power, however, included a strategic rationale to underwrite the shipbuilding programs authorized in Britain and in the United States. In both countries, the strategic and force structure choices made were similar in origin, in that both ultimately stemmed from John Knox Laughton’s argument that naval history should be the guide for future naval policy. This argument was subsequently taken up and extended by Philip H. Colomb, William Hall, and others in Britain,



Fig. 7.2 One of three Indiana class battleships authorized by the US Navy Act of 1890, USS *Massachusetts* and its sisters marked the turn of American naval policy away from an operational strategy of commerce-raiding towards one centered on a battlefleet (Image courtesy *US Naval History and Heritage Command, NHHC 63512*)

and by Stephen Luce, William Sampson, Alfred Mahan, and others in the United States. In both cases the prime movers were service professionals or men like Laughton and James Russell Soley who were intimately connected to the service. The organizational culture that emerged in the US during the 1870s and 1880s, centered on the Naval Institute and the ONI, was as responsible for shaping American naval policy from 1889 onward as were the RUSI and NID to shaping Britain's. The former guided American strategic naval development, culminating in November 1889 in the adoption, at least within the Navy Department, if not in the halls of Congress, of an offensive strategy.

The transition did not occur without resistance and controversy, as evidenced by the intense struggle between the technocrats and the historical strategists in the Navy Department. The conflict was precipitated by opponents of the NWC, the priorities of which were deemed inimical to

the technological focus prioritized by William Whitney between 1885 and 1889. When a personal vendetta encouraged Whitney to move against the College and the naval officers associated with it, the task of preserving the institution and the strategic concepts associated with it was left to its most vocal advocates. Luce, Mahan, and Walker worked together not only to save the NWC, but also its research agenda and curriculum offering a novel vision of American naval strategy. Although the College was consolidated with the Torpedo Station, the setback was only temporary, as the appointment of Benjamin Tracy to the Navy's Secretaryship brought a renewed appreciation for the institution and its research agenda within the Navy Department, paving the way for adoption of an offensive strategy built around the *guerre d'escadre*. Luce, Mahan, and Walker were again instrumental in shaping Tracy's strategic vision, but ultimately the adoption of an offensive orientation in American naval policy must be understood as having emanated from ideas inspired, institutionalized, and finally implemented by a larger group of naval officers between the mid-1870s and 1889.

NOTES

1. Chandler to Davis, December 30, 1882, NA: RG 45/5/17.
2. For more on the transition between Chandler and Whitney, and the technological focus of the latter, see Leon Burr Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican* (New York: Dodd, Meade and Co., 1940), pp. 367–87; Mark D. Hirsch, *William C. Whitney, Modern Warwick* (New York: Dodd, Meade and Co., 1948), pp. 297–336; and Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Gray Steel and Blue Water Navy: The Formative Years of America's Military-Industrial Complex, 1881–1917* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979), pp. 57–84. The contracts for all four of the “ABCD” vessels (*Atlanta*, *Boston*, *Chicago* and *Dolphin*) were awarded to Philadelphia shipbuilder John Roach, a prominent Republican backer and friend of Chandler's. For the circumstances surrounding the ships' authorization and construction, see Nathan Miller, *The US Navy: An Illustrated History* (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1977), p. 197.
3. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1885* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), p. xxxiv.
4. Sampson to Walker, December 7, 1885, NA: RG 38/68/2.
5. *Report of the Board on Fortification or Other Defenses appointed by the President of the United States under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved March 3 1885* (hereafter referred to as the Endicott Board Report), 49th Cong., 1st Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 49, p. 307. Emphasis added.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., pp. 307–08.
8. Ibid., p. 9
9. Ibid., p. 319.
10. Ibid., pp. 319, 20, 25, 27.
11. Edward Ranson, “The Endicott Board of 1885–86 and the Coast Defenses,” *Military Review* vol. 31, (Summer 1967), pp. 74–84. As a basis for comparison, the expenditure recommended by the Endicott Board amounted to £26,003,663, or more than £4 million *more* than was authorized by the Naval Defence Act.
12. Roger Chesneau and Eugene Kolesnik (eds.), *Conway’s all the World’s Fighting Ships, 1860–1905* (London, Conway Maritime Press, 1979), pp. 380–81. *Conway’s* classifies the Spanish Navy as a coast defense force, suggesting its want of offensive capability.
13. Endicott Board Report, p. 6. Emphasis added.
14. Indicative of the uniformity of opinion in London regarding Canada’s defenselessness, negotiations to resolve the *Alabama* Claims were initiated by Lord Derby’s Conservative government in 1867, carried to a successful conclusion by Gladstone’s Liberal one in 1871, and submitted to international arbitration the following year, thus tacitly surrendering British sovereignty on the issue.
15. A curious, conditionally phrased paragraph in the main report alludes to this scenario: “some of the ports named for defense [i.e. recommended to receive defenses] will be strategic rendezvous for fighting ships of war, when these shall have been built in adequate numbers for operating in force against the enemy.” Endicott Board report, p. 8.
16. Endicott Board Report, p. 7. Again, the unacknowledged foe could only have been Britain, for that country dominated the world’s maritime commerce.
17. Charles Stewart III, “Does Structure Matter? The Effects of Structural Change on Spending Decisions in the House, 1871–1922,” *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 31 (August 1987), p. 588. For more on Randall’s congressional career, see Albert V. House, Jr., “The Contributions of Samuel J. Randall to the Rules of the National House of Representatives,” *The American Political Science Review* vol. 29 (October 1935), pp. 837–41.
18. *Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs on Bill for Increase in the Naval Establishment*. 49th Cong., 1st Sess. Committee Papers, NA: RG 233/75.
19. Ibid.
20. Subsequently renamed *Victoria*.
21. Whitney to Herbert, February 28, 1886, NA: RG 45/5/18.
22. Whitney to Herbert, February 12, 1886, NA: RG 45/5/18.

23. Whitney to Herbert, February 27, 1886, NA: RG 45/5/18. Emphasis in original.
24. Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs on Bill for Increase in the Naval Establishment. 49th Cong., 1st Sess. Committee Papers, NA: RG 233/75.
25. Ibid.
26. Ironically, the French *Jeune Ecole* was at the same time putting forward the opposite argument.
27. Isherwood to Herbert, April 2, 1886, NA: RG 233/75.
28. For further discussion of congressional deliberations over naval construction in 1886, see Mark Russell Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882–1893* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), pp. 119–24.
29. *House of Representatives Reports*, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 993 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), p. 743.
30. Hugh B. Hammett, *Hilary Abner Herbert: A Southerner Returns to the Union* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), pp. 115–16.
31. Margaret Tuttle Sprout, “Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power,” in Edward Meade Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), pp. 415–45.
32. Mahan’s letters to Luce are catalogued in Robert Seager II and Doris Maguire (eds.), *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975). See also John B. Hattendorf, “Luce’s Idea of the Naval War College,” *Naval War College Review* vol. 37 (October 1984).
33. Donald M. Schurman, “Mahan Revisited,” in John B. Hattendorf and Robert S. Jordan (eds.), *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1989).
34. Mahan to Ashe, quoted in Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: The Free Press, 1972), p. 334.
35. Exceptions to this depiction include Barry D. Hunt, “The Outstanding Naval Strategic Writers of the Century,” *Naval War College Review* vol. 37 (October 1984); Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1977); and Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy*.
36. Editor’s note: given this sequence of events, it is difficult not to conclude that Luce, Sampson, and Goodrich first constructed a theoretical framework to justify an offensively oriented, blue-water fleet of capital ships, and then employed Mahan to “find” the “facts” to support it. While it has long been realized that Mahan himself was engaged in writing navalist propaganda rather than dispassionate history, the circumstances surrounding the NWC’s

creation and his selection as a faculty member make clear that he was not acting alone.

37. See, for example, Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997); John B. Hattendorf, "Alfred Thayer Mahan and American Naval Theory," in Keith Neilson and Elizabeth J. Errington (eds.), *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995); idem., (ed.), *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991); idem., "Alfred Thayer Mahan and his Strategic Thought," in idem. and Robert Jordan, *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power*; Philip Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (eds.), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 444–77; and William E. Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power* (revised ed., Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).
38. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1890), p. 89.
39. Julian S. Corbett, an altogether more subtle strategic thinker, as well as a better historian than Mahan, debunked such specious arguments in his *Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911; reprinted., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004). See especially Corbett's discussion of a fleet in being, pp. 211–28, and defense against invasion, pp. 235–63.
40. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*, p. 9.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 339.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, p. 481.
44. Mahan to Luce, May 6, 1886, Printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 632.
45. Quoted in William D. Puleston, *The Life and Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1939), p. 95.
46. Mahan to Ashe, September 8, 1887, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 641.
47. Mahan to Whitney, May 15, 1885, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 605.
48. Hirsch, *William C. Whitney, Modern Warwick*, pp. 266–67.
49. *Ibid.*
50. This point is also made in Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and his Letters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977), p. 179.
51. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1885* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), p. 86.

52. Walker to Luce, August 17, 1886, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
53. McCalla to Luce, August 28, 1886, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
54. Herrick, *The American Naval Revolution*, p. 38.
55. Goodrich to C. S. Sperry, quoting Whitney, March 5, 1906, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 38.
56. Walker to Luce, November 11, 1886, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
57. Walker to Luce, November 28, 1886, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
58. McCalla to Luce, October 23, 1886, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
59. *Ibid.* The report McCalla referred to was transmitted in a letter to the Bureau of Navigation. See Mahan to Walker, October 19, 1886, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, p. 636.
60. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1886* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 26.
61. Congressional Record, 49th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 5830–39, quoted in Hammett, *Hilary Abner Herbert: A Southerner Returns to the Union*, p. 138.
62. Whitney to Herbert, December 29, 1886, NA: RG 233/77.
63. For more on the fisheries disputes that in the late 1880s complicated relations between Britain, Canada, and the United States, see Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783–1900* (New York: Wiley, 1974), pp. 149–63.
64. Quoted in Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Stephen B. Luce*, p. 200.
65. Luce to C.M. Chester, July 1, 1887, Hayes Transcripts. Courtesy of Professor John Hattendorf.
66. *Ibid.*
67. For the interaction between Luce and the American fishermen, see A. M. Smith et. al. to Luce, July 13, 1887 and the reply in Luce to Smith et al., July 30, 1887, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6. Luce's questions are printed in Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Stephen B. Luce*, pp. 367–68 (Appendix A).
68. Luce to G. E. Forster, August 2, 1887, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
69. Forster to Luce, August 10, 1887, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
70. Luce to Whitney, August 8, 1887, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
71. *Ibid.*
72. That Whitney intended to discredit Luce publicly is underscored by a newspaper clipping that the former preserved among his personal papers. See "Admiral Luce: Rumor that He Will Be Relieved of his Command," *The Herald*, August 12, 1887. Whitney Papers, LC/MD/Volume 47.
73. Luce to Whitney, 26 August, 1887, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #6.
74. Luce to Whitney, July 28, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
75. For more on these joint exercises, see Stephen B. Luce, *Squadron evolutions as illustrated by the combined military and naval operations at Newport R.I.*,

November, 1887 (New York: np., 1887). Reprinted as idem., "Applied Tactics, November 1887," *Naval War College Review* (October 1984), pp. 21–25.

76. Gleaves, *Life and Letters of Stephen B. Luce*, p. 218.
 77. Quoted in *ibid*.
 78. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, p. 55.
 79. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1907), p. 298.
 80. Edward Daniel Hayden, Republican, Massachusetts, who was a Navy veteran of the Civil War.
 81. Probably John Robert Thomas, Republican, Illinois.
 82. Nelson Aldrich to Luce, January 20, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 83. Mahan to John C. Ropes, February 28, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 650.
 84. C.A. Boutelle to Luce, January 10, 1888; Luce to W.C. Whitthorne, January 12, 1887; and William Ellicott to Luce, January 13, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 85. Boutelle to Luce, January 10, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 86. A copy of this pamphlet can be found in Mahan to R. P. Rodgers, February 22, 1888, NA: RG 38/69/5.
 87. Mahan to William Bourke Cockran, February 8, 1888, NA: RG 233/104.
 88. This stipulation was probably made with reference to Rear Admiral Francis Ramsay, who succeeded John Walker as head of the Bureau of Navigation in 1889 and who was Superintendent of the US Naval Academy when the War College was established. According to Walter Herrick:

[a]s Superintendent of the Naval Academy in 1884 when Luce founded the College, Ramsay condemned it on the premise that any postgraduate naval school should be designated an extension of the Academy and be placed under the authority of the superintendent. Thereafter, he attempted to thwart Luce's endeavors by dissuading officers from enrolling in the College.
- Herrick, *American Naval Revolution*, p. 52.
89. Walker to Luce, May 2, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 90. Whitney to Tracy, August 16, 1889, Tracy Papers, LC/MD/Box #3.
 91. *Ibid*. Whitney's and Walker's continual clashes over administrative matters are underscored in Bowman H. McCalla, "Memoirs of a Naval Career" (Santa Barbara, CA: unpublished manuscript), p. 5.
 92. For a more flattering assessment of Schley and his career, see Richard S. West, Jr., *Admirals of American Empire* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948).

93. Seager, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters*, p. 184.
94. Mahan to Ashe, August 10, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 653.
95. Mahan to Ashe, June 14, 1888. Printed in *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 652.
96. *Ibid.*
97. Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, p. 299.
98. Chandler to Luce, June 30, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
99. William Boyd Allison, Republican, Iowa; and John Grimes Walker's brother-in-law.
100. J.B. Beck to Whitney, July 21, 1888, Whitney Papers, LC/MD/Container #54.
101. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.
102. Hirsch, *William C. Whitney, Modern Warwick*, p. 339; and Mahan to Ashe, August 10, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, pp. 653–55.
103. Whitney to Flora Whitney, July 25, 1888, Whitney Papers, LC/MD/Container #54.
104. Mahan to Whitney, August 5, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 653.
105. Reprinted in Austin K. Knight and William D. Puleston, "History of the United States Naval War College," (Newport, RI: unpublished manuscript, 1916), Chapter 4, p. 4. Courtesy of the US Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington, DC.
106. Goodrich to Sperry, March 5, 1906, Quoted in *ibid.*, Chapter 5, p. 2.
107. Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession*, pp. 57–58.
108. Alfred T. Mahan, "Address—At the Opening of the Fourth Annual Session of the War College," *USNIP* vol. 14 (1888), p. 627.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 629.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 634. Emphasis in original.
111. Porter to Whitney, August 13, 1888, Naval War College Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
112. Walker to Luce, November 19, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
113. Goodrich also blamed Walker for not protecting the War College. Goodrich to Mahan, February 23, 1893, Mahan Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel # 2.
114. Mahan to Luce, November 14, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, pp. 664–65.
115. Walker to Mahan, November 22, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
116. The encounter between Luce, Walker, and Gherardi was described by the last-named officer in a letter to Whitney. See Gherardi to Whitney, November 26, 1888, Whitney Papers, LC/MD/Container #56.
117. John A. S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, *Politics, Strategy and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy, 1873–1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 25.

118. Whitney to Luce, January 28, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
119. Porter to Luce, November 29, 1888, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
120. Quoted in Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy*, p. 46. See also pp. 39–48 of Herrick's *American Naval Revolution* for an account of Tracy's background and character.
121. Luce to Porter, March 9, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
122. Porter to Luce, March 14, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
123. Porter to Luce, March 21, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7. Walker was equally impressed with Tracy. See Walker to H. M. Dyer, May 2, 1889, Walker Papers, NHFC/LC/Container #1.
124. Tracy to Aldrich, April 27, 1889 [Telegram], Tracy Papers, LC/MD/Container #24.
125. Luce to Tracy, March 14, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7. Emphasis in original.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Mahan also believed that Schley was behind the consolidation scheme. See Mahan to Luce, November 14, 1888, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 664.
130. Tracy to Luce, March 30, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
131. Oliver Selfridge to Chandler, January 28, 1890, cited in Herrick, *American Naval Revolution*, p. 45, fn. 18.
132. Porter to Tracy, July 1, 1889, Tracy Papers, LC/MD/Container #2.
133. Daniel H. Wicks, "The First Cruise of the Squadron of Evolution," *Military Affairs* vol. 44 (April 1980), p. 64.
134. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889* (Washington: Government Printing Office, p. 37.
135. Ibid.
136. Mahan to Walker, July 2, 1889; and Mahan to Chester, July 3, 1889, printed in Seager and Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*, vol. 1, p. 692.
137. Herrick, *American Naval Revolution*, p. 43. Evidence that Tracy saw *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* prior to its publication rests on a retrospective claim to that effect by Mahan in a letter to Luce dated September 3, 1901. No contemporary evidence corroborates that claim owing to a significant gap in the Navy Department's correspondence between 18 and 85, 1890, but given Tracy's subsequent actions it seems plausible to conclude that he was influenced by the arguments Mahan put forward in his book manuscript. Certainly, portions of the manuscript were in the possession of the Bureau of Navigation as early as April 1889. See Mahan to R. P. Rodgers, April 9, 1889 and Rodgers to Walker, March 11, 1889, printed in

- Frances P. Thomas, *Career of John Grimes Walker* (Boston: privately published, 1959), pp. 131–32. Rodgers was at the time detailed to the Bureau of Navigation and assigned by the Office of Naval Intelligence. Walker often delegated to Rodgers, who was CIO.
138. Stephen B. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” *USNIP* vol. 15 (1889), p. 545. Originally published in the *North American Review* vol. 149 (1889).
 139. *Ibid.*, pp. 544–45.
 140. *Ibid.*, p. 552.
 141. Wainwright to Luce, September 20, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 142. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” p. 554.
 143. *Ibid.*
 144. W.T. Sampson, “The Naval Defense of the Coast,” *USNIP* vol. 15 (1889), p. 185.
 145. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
 146. *Ibid.*
 147. *Report of the Policy Board*, January 20, 1890, reprinted in *USNIP*, vol. 16 (1890), p. 207.
 148. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
 149. Or £57 million, more than twice the amount authorized by the British Naval Defence Act of the previous year.
 150. C. M. Chester to Luce, February 18, 1890, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7. At the time, Chester was assigned to the Navy Department as a member of the Board of Organization.
 151. *Ibid.*
 152. Herrick, *American Naval Revolution*, p. 63. See also Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy*, p. 80.
 153. Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882–1893*, p. 129.
 154. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” p. 552.
 155. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1889*, pp. 41–42.
 156. Tracy to William C. Sanger, January 21, 1890, Tracy Papers, LC/MD/Container #24.
 157. Boutelle to Luce, December 30, 1889, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 158. Boutelle to Luce, March 6, 1890, Luce Papers, NHFC/LC/Reel #7.
 159. Norman Friedman, *US Battleships: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), p. 27.
 160. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 37.

PART IV

Conclusion

Conclusion

Three main themes have anchored this study: the interrelationship between ideas, culture and strategy; the internal shaping influences of naval policy formulation; and the explanatory value of both to a deeper understanding of the decisions of 1889 in Britain and the United States. This final chapter considers what can be gleaned from both cases, not just about the decisions in and of themselves but also the implications for naval policy formulation in London and Washington, and the role of the methodology employed for future studies in the fields of naval history, strategic studies, and political science.

From the outset, this study has sought to correct a misinterpretation of the Naval Defence Act left unexamined since the publication of Arthur Marder's *The Anatomy of British Sea Power* in 1940.¹ Stemming from his work, conventional wisdom holds that the 1880s were relatively inconsequential in terms of the development of British naval strategy, and what transpired during the decade was more of a series of unplanned reactions to external provocations—such as the threat of a potential Franco-Russian naval combination—than the articulation and implementation of a strategic framework based on history, namely Britain's traditional application of sea power. This general view of a reactionary bent in British naval policy in the 1880s ultimately extends to the Naval Defence Act itself. That this interpretation is alive and well in current historical scholarship is evident in recent biographies of Lord Salisbury and in Roger Parkinson's *The Late Victorian Navy*.² Both of Salisbury's biographers credit Marder's

research for informing their shared conclusion that Salisbury furnished the impetus for the Naval Defence Act: his personal intervention compelled both the Cabinet and Admiralty to respond to a naval arms race that loomed between Britain, France, and Russia.³ Parkinson characterizes the Act as a considerable overreaction to the actual balance of naval power, but nonetheless accepts Marder's contention that the Franco-Russian threat "seemed real enough" to well-informed observers in London.⁴ These works therefore perpetuate a deeply unflattering image of British naval administration, which was apparently guilty of a critical lapse in intelligence-gathering and assessment in the late 1880s. The threat from France and Russia was evidently serious enough to warrant Salisbury's concern, but not that of the naval professionals on the Board of Admiralty whose job it was to discern and respond to such threats, thereby necessitating the remedial action taken by the Salisbury government to shore up British naval supremacy.

The archival-based research that undergirds this study, however, reveals that Marder's account of British naval policy and the Naval Defence Act is misleading. It seriously exaggerates the threats posed by hypothetical adversaries, mischaracterizes how naval policy was formulated and implemented within the context of civil-military relations, and wrongly credits politicians for "solving" a strategic problem—the requisite force strength and structure needed in the (purely hypothetical) event of an expansive naval war against a Franco-Russian alliance—that had already been thoroughly canvassed by the Admiralty's NID in 1887–88. Instead, the research presented here points to a different source for the impetus behind the Naval Defence Act, premised on an appreciation that the Royal Navy's organizational culture, defined broadly as the strategic ideas shared by officers, shaped the strategic and force structure choices embodied in the Naval Defence Act.

To appreciate this linkage, it is important briefly to summarize the Naval Defence Act's implications for the course of British naval policy generally, before focusing on specifics. Above all, the Act represented a fundamental reassessment of the bases of British naval policy, which had been in flux during the 1870s and 1880s due to several factors: technological uncertainty, domestic political agendas, and especially the ongoing struggle between professionals and politicians for primacy in the policy-making process. During most of those two decades, politicians were in the ascendant, and thus "economy" was prioritized above "efficiency." This prioritization was reinforced by a general lack of public and press interest

in the state of the navy. Therefore, whether under Gladstone, Disraeli, or Salisbury, naval policy usually received scant attention in the 1870s and 1880s, except in those few instances when public opinion was roused, such as in 1884, when the *Pall Mall Gazette's* "Truth About the Navy" series stoked a furor about the alleged inadequacy of the fleet in the event of a wholly illusory cross-channel threat from France. The result was a supplementary Navy Estimate of more than £3 million for shipbuilding and several hundred thousand more for coaling station defenses.

This oscillating pattern of seeming ministerial indifference, interrupted by the occasional public outcry, characterized the course of British naval policy during those decades. When Salisbury resumed the premiership in late 1886, on the heels of the "Truth About the Navy" scare and an April 1885 crisis with Russia over Afghanistan which generated further domestic alarm and government expenditure, he returned to the policy of indifference. His appointees to the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton and Sir Arthur Bower Forwood, moved quickly to prioritize administrative restraint and fiscal parsimony in naval policy formulation. In the process, they alienated their naval advisors on the Admiralty Board, eventually prompting the resignation of two Naval Lords in 1888. The first to relinquish his post was Captain Lord Charles Beresford, the Junior Naval Lord, who resigned in protest over plans to reduce the NID's funding. He viewed the intelligence unit's work as indispensable to naval efficiency since it prepared mobilization and war plans in addition to more routine intelligence-gathering and analyzing activities. Three months later, in April 1888, Vice-Admiral William Graham resigned his post as Third Naval Lord and Controller of the Admiralty after a confrontation with Forwood over the Parliamentary Secretary's repeated criticism of the naval professionals on the Board.⁵

From 1886 to 1888, British naval policy was guided more by the "compass of finance" than the professional arguments of senior naval officers in the Admiralty. Indeed, force planning exercises and papers generated by the NID were disregarded by Hamilton as late as early 1888. Yet within a year, the First Lord himself introduced the Naval Defence Act in Parliament. By doing so he gave formal expression of a strategic and operational doctrine that would shape British naval policy through World War I and beyond.⁶ This sudden reversal in policy, from economy to efficiency, clearly owed little to Hamilton and even less to Salisbury. Instead, it can be traced to the pervasive influence of a set of strategic ideas that originated with and were championed by naval officers.

Fundamental to British naval thought in this period were the lessons of naval history, which were retained in the institutional memory of the Royal Navy but infrequently applied in the nineteenth century until their study was formalized at the RNC, Greenwich, in the 1870s at the insistence of John Knox Laughton. During his tenure at the Naval College, Laughton imparted his brand of strategic thinking, based on the service's operational history in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, to the mid-career officers who constituted the student body, and to flag officers such as Astley Cooper Key and Geoffrey Phipps Hornby who were exposed to his lectures while directing the college. By so doing, Laughton insured that a strong intellectual component, grounded in history, was brought to bear on the policy formulation process at the Admiralty, as his former students and associates from the college, HMS *Excellent*, the RUSI, and later the NRS, were posted there.

In this regard, he was assisted by the creation of an ad hoc FIC in 1882, later formalized as the NID in 1887, charged with assessing foreign naval capabilities and their implications to the traditional wartime functions of the Royal Navy. Under the direction of Captain William H. Hall, the NID quickly applied naval history to strategic analysis to the benefit of policy articulation by the Board. That the Board itself understood the value of this combination is confirmed by the succession of service intellectuals appointed as DNI between 1890 and 1907: Cyprian Bridge, Lewis Beaumont, Reginald Custance, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Charles Ottley, and Edmond Slade. These appointments, in the aggregate, ensured that British naval policy was firmly set on the path of approaching problems by drawing on naval history as a foundation for strategic and force structure choices.

The Naval Defence Act was based on a blueprint for the composition of British naval forces that was intended to solve a strategic problem: the force required to carry out the navy's traditional forward posture of blockade supplemented by coastal assault in a war with both France and Russia. This problem was examined by Hall in 1887 and his answer was embodied in a lengthy memorandum submitted to First Naval Lord Arthur Hood in December 1887. While Hood and Hamilton initially paid little attention to Hall's force planning memorandum, it was subsequently rehabilitated by the former and became the basis of the Act itself.

In drafting his memorandum, Hall devised a worst-case scenario of an extremely unlikely threat to undergird his contention that the Royal Navy would be hard pressed to fulfill its traditional wartime functions:

the blockade of enemy ports and the conduct of offensive coastal operations, while maintaining an adequate reserve to shield the Home Isles from the threat of invasion. That his report avoided detailed consideration of the forces that France and Russia could actually bring to bear at that time or in the foreseeable future and, as Director of Naval Construction William White protested, denigrated the Royal Navy's *matériel* advantage while simultaneously exaggerating that of France and Russia, probably had much to do with Hamilton's and Hood's initial dismissal of it. The cost of funding such a costly shipbuilding program was a bitter enough pill to ensure its rejection. Soon afterward, Hamilton approved the Treasury's decision to reduce the salaries of the NID's staff, prompting Beresford's resignation from the Board.

What occurred next transformed the dynamics of civil–military relations in British naval policy formulation for the next twenty-five years, as “Hamilton and Forwood were forced out of the vital but narrow groove of administrative improvement into the broad atmosphere of national defence policy.”⁷⁷ Following Beresford's departure from the Admiralty, a group of prominent naval officers led by him undertook an extraordinary public campaign to pressure Salisbury's government to alter the manner in which naval policy was determined and to accept an unprecedented shipbuilding program to modernize the fleet. Their victory was not complete, as is detailed in Chapter 0, but they accomplished enough—not least of all formal articulation of the Two-Power Standard—to guarantee that naval professionals would set the terms of future debates over the adequacy of the fleet to carry out the offensive strategy they favored. Efficiency had decisively trumped economy, and would generally continue to do so for the next two-and-a-half decades.

Equally important, if less obviously, the Naval Defence Act also revolutionized how British naval constructors translated the strategic preferences of senior naval officers into capital ship design. In the three decades prior to 1889, the technological means did not exist to design and build battleships and cruisers that completely satisfied the expectations of the officers who trained for blockade and coastal assault. By the late 1880s, however, technology was beginning to catch up to the operations envisioned in the war plans formulated by Hall and the NID, especially with regard to propulsion, specifically the introduction of triple expansion engines and, slightly later, water tube boilers. Moreover, naval officers were invited to critique the proposed designs stemming from the Naval Defence Act, to ensure that the intended roles of the vessels were given due weight when drawing them up.

Such was especially the case with the design of the Royal Sovereign class battleships, which reflected the connection between battlefleet strength and British naval supremacy, and which became prototypes for pre-dreadnought battleship design both in Britain and abroad for the following fifteen years.⁸ In November 1888 White attended a special meeting of the Board, which approved the design he proposed for the Royal Sovereigns and, more importantly, affirmed the strategic rationale behind their construction. The new design White envisioned would possess superior firepower and an extended radius of action to deter potential adversaries from coming out, and to destroy any enemy fleet that dared to challenge the blockade. It was a strategy based upon decades, indeed more than a century, of British naval experience and tradition, one which Admiralty war planners were poised to continue, thanks in no small part to the NID and its intellectual forebears, stretching back to John Knox Laughton.

* * *

While it is impossible to discuss the Naval Defence Act without taking note of Marder's interpretation, it is equally difficult to avoid an historiography that privileges Alfred Thayer Mahan in explaining the unprecedented shift in American naval policy embodied in Benjamin Tracy's 1889 *Annual Report*. It is, after all, widely held in the historical community that Mahan and his literary efforts provided American policymakers with a conceptual blueprint to construct a modern battlefleet in the image of the Royal Navy. This perception is not entirely inaccurate, but his contributions to this strategic transformation should not be considered separately from the activities of the naval officers with whom he collaborated to push this process forward in the late 1880s. He was not an atypical pioneer as is often depicted in biographies. Indeed, instead of originating the strategic ideas popularized in his writings, these came chiefly from a supporting cast of naval reformers who were inspired by ideals of service professionalism, strategic innovation and, like their British counterparts, the lessons of naval history.

The interactions between these officers, particularly those between Mahan, Stephen B. Luce, Caspar F. Goodrich, and William T. Sampson, remain on the periphery of contemporary historical scholarship. That Mahan benefited from their professional views, for example, is not even acknowledged in a reconsideration of his work by Jon Sumida.⁹ Luce is

mentioned sparingly, while Goodrich and Sampson both fail to warrant a single reference. This oversight seems both ironic and misleading, for it appears clear that Luce, Goodrich, and Sampson determined not only the NWC's curriculum, but sketched out the contents of the courses on which they placed the greatest emphasis—naval strategy, tactics, and history—in a manner resembling a course syllabus. Mahan furnished no input in this process, which nonetheless formed the blueprint from which he would construct his course in naval history and *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*. Together these officers heralded a new brand of strategic thinking in the Navy Department and effected a profound cultural and ideational shift in the content of American naval policy, both in terms of the strategic preferences advocated and the battlefleet constructed to fulfill them.

On the surface, it would also appear that the strategic transformation that took place in American naval policy, as reflected in Benjamin Tracy's 1889 *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy* and in the shipbuilding programs that followed from it over the next two-plus decades, were intended to bring the United States closer to the British model of modern sea power, especially when it came to the use of overwhelming naval force as an instrument of deterrence and power projection. This perception, again, is not entirely inaccurate, as Mahan and his colleagues at the NWC perceived British naval history as the critical example from which to tease out fundamental “laws” of naval warfare and apply them to modern strategic and tactical problems. “[T]he practical object of this inquiry,” explained Mahan in prefacing the historical narrative chapters of his first *Influence of Sea Power* volume, “is to draw from the lessons of history inferences applicable to one's own country and service . . .”¹⁰

Similarly, American naval constructors were equally fascinated with British ship designs in the 1880s, having obtained first-hand knowledge of them when the designs for the second-class battleship/armored cruiser USS *Texas* were purchased from the Barrow Shipbuilding Company in 1887.¹¹ Also preserved in the Bureau of Construction is a volume of newspaper clippings, supplied by the American naval attaché in London, filled with technical descriptions of the latest achievements in British naval construction, including the launch of HMS *Royal Sovereign* in February 1891.¹² Yet, while American naval officers were enthusiastic in their borrowing of strategic ideas and technology from the Royal Navy, the fact remains that American naval policy was not a mirror image of its British counterpart in 1889. Rather, the naval policies of both countries were

distinguished by marked variations in naval strategy, in the policy formulation process, and in legislative intrusion in naval procurement.

Insofar as it could be said to have had a conceptual level, American naval policy after 1889 and prior to 1898 was broadly oriented toward hemispheric defense. As the leading spokesman for this new strategic posture, Mahan equated hemispheric defense with the struggle for command of the sea, the attainment of which linked operational performance and the outcome of decisive naval battles to the successful application of sea power in the defense of the American coastline. Hence, for planning purposes, “command of the sea” quickly emerged as the overriding policy desideratum on which to build an American battlefleet. Whether that battlefleet was to be capable of exercising *absolute* command of the sea, by achieving superiority over the Royal Navy, or *relative* command of the sea through superiority to the small-to-medium-sized fleets of its most likely adversaries in Europe and South America (i.e. Spain and Chile), was not clearly articulated.

Moreover, in presenting the strategic concept to American audiences, Mahan was largely silent on the offensive potential that followed from command of the sea, examples of which could easily be found in Britain’s exercise of it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By comparison, in his 1891 book *Naval Warfare*, Philip Colomb also employed historical methodology for a similar research agenda, from which he demonstrated that exploiting command of the sea, in the form of offensive coastal operations, was a vital aspect of British naval supremacy.¹³ And, as Andrew Lambert remarks, “[t]here are striking parallels between the ambition of Colomb’s work and the almost exactly contemporaneous work of Mahan.”¹⁴ This is one of them.

It is possible, even plausible, that Mahan avoided a similar emphasis in recognition of the US public’s general indifference to imperialism and the strong isolationist current in American culture. More likely, he was fully alive to the opposition his views on expansionism and the use of naval force for power projection would arouse in Congress, where preference for a defensive naval force, composed of coastal and harbor defense monitors, remained strong in 1889 and into the 1890s. Not for nothing were the first American steel battleships oxymoronically described as “sea-going, coastline” vessels, after all. Well before the appearance of the first of the *Influence of Sea Power* volumes, Mahan and his mentor Luce had acquired first-hand experience of politicians’ attitudes toward the navy from their interactions with Congressional naval committees over

the fate of the NWC. Both men were acutely aware that the strategic ideas advanced by naval officers might influence the content but not the process by which naval policy was formulated in Washington. As reflected in the political furor that followed Tracy's *Annual Report* in November 1889 and the subsequent leak of the Policy Board's report, the direction of naval policy was firmly in the hands of civilians, not professionals.

Yet while American naval officers were powerless to influence the direction of naval policy beyond lobbying the Navy Department and Congress, the odds of the lobbying effort's success in 1889 were enhanced considerably by the personal relationships forged by Luce and Mahan with Secretary of the Navy Tracy and with members of Congressional naval and appropriations committees. Contemporaries regarded these committees as the most influential actors in determining the country's naval policy. Their decisions upon the numbers and types of vessels to be authorized each year were final. Their approval was essential for any measure proposed by the Navy Department, for their opposition would prevent its being brought before the whole of the House of Representatives or the Senate.¹⁵ Catering to Congress was far more productive than opposing it, and Luce and Mahan quickly learned the art of gentle persuasion and the equally valuable art of winning allies during the lobbying effort to preserve the NWC's institutional autonomy, if not its very existence.

Of those Congressional allies, the most important in 1889–90 was probably Charles Boutelle, Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee from 1889 to 1891 and again from 1895 to 1901. Boutelle had served in the navy during the Civil War and may thus have been predisposed to look with favor upon the suggestions emanating from Luce and Mahan. Whether or not he did initially, it is apparent that Luce quickly became his unofficial naval advisor. Thus it was Boutelle who proposed the modest shipbuilding program that eventually received congressional approval in June 1890. The three resulting "coastline" battleships of the Indiana class were deliberately designed with less coal capacity than the Royal Sovereigns, in deference to opponents of American territorial and naval expansion.¹⁶ Yet, ironically, the controversy that surrounded their authorization and construction did not extend to the strategic vision that inspired them in the first place. Thus, while Congressional debates over force structure remained deeply politicized (and would for many years afterward) and often ran contrary to professional opinion (at least that of naval and imperial expansionists), the Navy Law of 1890 nonetheless constituted a

restrained political endorsement of the ideas put forward by naval officers which had resulted in Tracy's advocacy of an offensive naval strategy built around a fleet of battleships.

* * *

So far the decisions of 1889 have been assessed in terms of their overall impact on the naval policies of Britain and the United States, with particular emphasis upon the policymaking process and the efforts of naval officers to shape strategic and force structure choices through lobbying civilian naval administrators, politicians, and, in the British case, courting public support. How successful these efforts were becomes immediately apparent when distinguishing between the *content* and *process* of naval policy formulation. The Naval Defence Act did not constitute a fundamental shift in the content of British naval policy, yet the circumstances surrounding its passage transformed the process by which naval policy was formulated and articulated in Britain. Henceforth, professional judgments as to the adequacy (or want thereof) of the Royal Navy to meet the tasks required of it in wartime—tasks that they themselves had devised—would be accorded equal or greater weight than fiscal calculations fueled by political expediency. The American case resulted in a much different outcome. There naval officers managed to shape the content, but not the process, of naval policy formulation. In spite of this difference, the factors leading to these outcomes were of similar origin.

The efforts of naval officers to link policy decisions with strategic ideas were in both instances tied to service culture and *mentalité*, and to the belief that history provided a valuable guide for both policy and strategy going forward. This professional mindset and its consequences, in turn, reveal how organizational culture shaped institutional perspectives of the wartime tasks of their respective navies, and in the process influenced the conduct of decision-making in both Britain and the United States so that the outcome matched, as closely as possible, the strategic preferences of the officer corps. That said, to leave the decisions of 1889 at the doorstep of strategic ideas and organizational cultures would be insufficient for purposes of this study, as it would fail to show how ideas in both services stemmed from a common source—naval history—which subsequently became institutionalized through intelligence and force planning analysis, and were finally implemented through policy decisions with the assistance of service patrons when bureaucratic opposition threatened their survival.

Undoubtedly the most prominent and important linkage between the two cases is the extent to which naval history, or more precisely the work of John Knox Laughton, inspired strategic preferences within the officer corps of both countries. While Laughton was never an active participant in policymaking, his imprint upon the strategic discourse that preceded the policy deliberations in both countries is unmistakable. That his innovative view of naval history as the servant of strategic thought in time became a widely shared perspective among British naval officers was virtually assured by his tenure as a lecturer at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, between 1873 and 1885. As Andrew Lambert observes, Laughton “pioneered the modernisation of naval thought, developing naval history as the basis for a thorough study of tactics, strategy, leadership and service doctrine.”¹⁷ At his insistence the Admiralty expanded the curriculum at the College in 1876 to include a series of lectures on naval history, an undertaking which Laughton used to educate the officers in attendance of the value of history in addressing the strategic and tactical problems associated with modern naval warfare.

Equally important to Laughton and his work was the impressive list of personal contacts he amassed over the course of his career. Many were junior and mid-career officers who later played critical roles in shaping British naval policy in the pre-dreadnought era. In the 1880s, for example, his correspondents included prominent members of the Board of Admiralty, including two Senior Naval Lords, as well as countless naval practitioners and service intellectuals. In the former category was no less a figure than Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, perhaps the most respected naval officer of the era, who became a close personal friend of Laughton during his brief tenure as President of the Royal Naval College in 1881–82. While at Greenwich, Hornby attended many of Laughton’s lectures on naval history and agreed with him on issues of naval strategy, tactics, and command.¹⁸ Fully versed in the range of strategic problems that confronted Admiralty war planners in the 1880s, Hornby eventually lent his name and support to Lord Charles Beresford’s public campaign for naval and strategic modernization.

Laughton also benefited from his personal contacts with naval officers assigned to the Admiralty, especially those in the intelligence unit. Laughton first became acquainted with William H. Hall, the first head of the FIC/NID, when both were assigned to the Gunnery Training Ship HMS *Excellent* in the late 1860s. While the extent of the relationship between Laughton and Hall remains unknown—it appears that the latter

had little time for anything else than his work—there is little doubt that Laughton was kept readily informed of his activities by his two assistants, Reginald N. Custance and Sydney M. Eardley-Wilmot. Both officers frequently encountered Laughton at the RUSI, and all three men served on its executive council in 1887–88. Hall probably employed Custance and Eardley-Wilmot to listen, observe, and consult with the strategic thinkers who attended the Institute’s lectures, among them Laughton and brothers John and Philip Colomb. Indeed, the Institute functioned as a semi-official think-tank on naval (and army) matters, with Laughton as its leading authority on naval history and strategy. Laughton’s links with the NID became closer still in January 1889, when Hall was succeeded by Cyprian A. G. Bridge, Laughton’s lifelong friend. The two were among a group of service intellectuals who in 1893 founded the NRS, strengthening the link between naval history and strategic thinking further still.¹⁹ Even prior to Bridge’s appointment as DNI, Hall drew upon naval history when articulating strategic preferences in hypothetical war plans against France in 1884, Russia in 1885, and a Franco-Russian naval combination in 1887–88.

Similarly, the lessons of British naval history were being used in the United States during the late 1880s to justify an unprecedented shift in American naval policy, complete with an offensive orientation and a fleet of battleships to carry it out. Mahan is generally credited for providing the justification for the transformation of American sea power, yet the ideas that were eternalized in *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* were far from original. As was true in Britain, credit ultimately belonged to Laughton who, via Stephen Luce, furnished Mahan with the historical fodder from which he assembled his famous treatise. Laughton’s influence on Luce, and later on Mahan, has scarcely been recognized in Anglo-American naval historiography, although Andrew Lambert’s biography of Laughton has redressed the void in the scholarly literature.²⁰ Luce in turn ensured that naval history was at the curricular center of the NWC. From this chain of transmission emerged the post-1889 strategic framework for the US Navy, for which Mahan furnished an “historical” justification. That he did so is a testament both to his literary talents and, more importantly, to the strategic ideas he “borrowed” from Laughton to arouse American governmental and congressional interest in enlarging the US Navy. That his approach was less historical than Laughton’s is clear from the latter’s October 1890 review of the first *Influence of Sea Power* book, which was, Laughton wrote, “not so much ... a contribution to history as an exposition of the principles

of naval strategy and tactics, and of the aims and methods of the science of naval war.”²¹

A second feature common to both cases is the manner in which strategic ideas became embedded within professional discourse and service institutions. For the US Navy this process first manifested itself in a voluntary association of naval officers, the USNI, whose professional membership and intellectual contributions were modeled upon the RUSI. Like that of its British counterpart, the research agenda of the USNI was evident in the topics addressed in the lectures presented there and subsequently published in the organization’s *Proceedings*. Many of these lectures dealt with the same issues that confronted British naval officers in the 1870s and 1880s: the relationship between strategy, tactics, and technology in the *mare incognita* of modern naval warfare. As one might also expect, the officers most intellectually and professionally engaged with both organizations had similar characteristics. They were typically associated with a broad reformist agenda encompassing personnel, *matériel*, and doctrine. Both institutions also numbered among their members the foremost strategic thinkers in their respective countries—among them Laughton, the Colomb brothers, Bridge, Custance, and others in Britain; and Luce, Goodrich, Sampson, Soley, Mason, and Mahan in the United States. All exerted influence in shaping the naval policy of their respective countries in the 1880s. In America this influence resulted in the establishment of the ONI in 1882 and the NWC in 1884.

The creation of these two research institutions was critical to the subsequent course of American naval policy, due to their roles in transforming the nation’s strategy despite opposition within the Navy Department between 1885 and 1889. While the ONI and NWC were conceived and established for different purposes, the origins of both institutions can be traced to the USNI, specifically to the aspirations of Theodorus Mason and Luce, respectively. More generally, upon their establishment both, not surprisingly, were largely staffed by fellow members of the voluntary organization. Upon being appointed Chief of Naval Intelligence, Mason received permission to formalize the relationship between the Institute and the ONI, an arrangement similar to that between the RUSI and the NID. When the NWC was founded two years later, it and the ONI immediately became mutually supportive of each other, a relationship fostered at first out of financial necessity, as the Navy Department failed to secure Congressional funding to support the new postgraduate course. To assemble faculty for the college, the Bureau of Navigation, the institutional sponsor/protector

of both the ONI and the NWC, turned to the intellectual talent within the former, and the exchange of personnel and other resources between Washington and Newport became commonplace. Finally, and most importantly, via the ONI and the NWC, the use of naval history in policy analysis became institutionalized, a linkage no doubt further strengthened by the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was created along with the ONI in 1882 and attached to it under the supervision of future Assistant Secretary of the Navy James Russell Soley. Professor Soley's multifarious roles in both Washington and Newport—as archivist, historian, and lecturer—furthered historical awareness and the strategic ideas that derived from it. It was Soley, after all, who assisted Mahan in locating a publisher for the naval history lectures he composed for his NWC course, lectures that formed the core of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*.

Aside from Laughton's intellectual influence and social network, no analogous relationship existed between the RNC at Greenwich and the FIC/NID in the Admiralty, although the officers who staffed the latter in the 1880s soon established themselves as the strategic nexus of the Royal Navy. British naval officers in the post-Napoleonic era were rarely challenged to think strategically and typically did so only when prompted by the occasional invasion scare arising from (usually exaggerated) naval developments in Europe. With the formation of the ad hoc FIC in December 1882, strategic thinking became a full time enterprise in the Admiralty, and the FIC's analytical output, particularly its war plans, reflected the extent to which naval history informed strategic choices, which were themselves derived from the operational preferences favored by the senior officer corps and rooted in the organizational culture of the Royal Navy. When war with France seemed to threaten in 1884, Hall invoked naval history to assess the operational options available to the Royal Navy, concluding that a forward strategy was, because of its greater and more certain results, preferable to a defensive posture. The latter, moreover, would depart from the service's traditional way of warfare. Hall again plumped for that choice when asked to formulate the broad outlines of a campaign for a war with Russia following the Panjdeh incident the following year.

When, in 1887 the FIC was transformed into an official department within the Admiralty, Hall sought to ensure that the strategic thinking he advocated so strenuously informed the most essential aspects of British naval administration, in particular the process employed to determine the force requirements of the Royal Navy. His efforts in this regard, especially the force planning memorandum he authored in late 1887, appears to

have aroused opposition to the NID from within the Admiralty, to such an extent that the First Lord approved a reduction of department salaries, thus jeopardizing its efforts to introduce strategic thinking to peacetime policy deliberations. In time, Hall would be recognized by his colleagues for “having done six years of most valuable work under circumstances of great difficulty and discouragement.”²² By that point, however, he had left the Admiralty, just as the strategic preferences he articulated as DNI emerged as the underlying principles behind the Naval Defence Act and ushered in a new era of warship construction in Britain. While Hall was powerless to overcome the institutional jealousies he encountered in 1887–88, his plight attracted the support of more senior naval officers who supported the NID’s work. What ensued was a six-month campaign to plead the case for greater strategic awareness in the formulation of British naval policy.

* * *

Aside from commonalities in strategic ideas and their institutionalization, the cases presented here are further linked by the role of patronage and its contribution to the policy formulation process within the context of civil–military relations. Both also highlight the importance of patronage in establishing critical routes by which innovative ideas and their supporters could navigate the hazards of organizational resistance. Patronage transformed a minor controversy over reducing the NID staff’s salaries into a national debate over the direction of British naval administration. Claiming that the path for policy innovation within the Admiralty was blocked by a political commitment to economy at the expense of efficiency, Charles Beresford resigned his seat on the Board to protest not only the NID’s salary reductions, but the larger consequences of what he regarded as the government’s apathy toward the state of the navy. Finance, not strategy, appeared to serve as the critical determinant of British naval policy. In public speeches, letters to newspapers, and addresses in Parliament, Beresford challenged the Salisbury ministry to respond to his charges, eventually pressuring First Lord Lord George Hamilton to defend his naval administration. In the process, Beresford stirred considerable Parliamentary interest in naval affairs, manifested in frequent debates in the House of Commons and, eventually, the appointment of a Select Committee to consider the manner in which the Navy Estimates were drawn up. The committee heard the testimony of every member of the Board of Admiralty and produced four reports detailing its evidence and

findings, the last submitted in August 1888. Although proffering few substantive conclusions, it constituted another source of aggravation to Lord Salisbury's government as it struggled to parry the attacks of Beresford and other hawkish Tories in Parliament.

Moreover, what appeared at first to be an individual crusade quickly became a public campaign to attract support for greater consideration of strategic factors in the formulation of British naval policy. Other prominent naval practitioners and service intellectuals rallied to Beresford's support, many charging that British naval supremacy was endangered more by ministerial apathy than by France and Russia. At the head of list was Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, whose advice and support were frequently sought by Beresford and others throughout the campaign. Hornby also became involved in the campaign as a participant and spokesman at public events. Less prominent but equally active was Captain Charles C. P. Fitzgerald, whose frequent letters to *The Times* in support of Beresford's campaign matched the latter's own output. Fitzgerald was also instrumental in organizing the June 1888 City National Defence Meeting, at which much of the senior officer corps was present.

Finally, there was Philip H. Colomb, a frequent lecturer at the RUSI, who in 1887 had succeeded Laughton as lecturer in naval history at the RNC, Greenwich. Less influential in the publicity campaign than Hornby, Beresford, and Fitzgerald, Colomb lent his intellectual gravitas to their agitation by drawing on history to enlighten *Times* readers to the strategic principles that had guided British naval policy in the past and which, he maintained, should continue do so in the future. Colomb focused less upon the maladies of British naval administration than the remedies needed to fix it, arguing that ship design and construction policy should reflect strategic requirements, not only in the number of ships to be built but also in the desiderata that informed their designs. All of these officers' patronage and participation were critical to the success of Beresford's campaign and, by extension, the work of the NID.

The role of patronage (not to mention the consequences of failing to obtain it) is also evident when charting the transmission and implementation of new strategic concepts in the United States Navy during the 1880s. Here too, senior naval officers provided internal support for innovative institutions and the strategic ideas that emanated from them. The patronage of Commodore John Grimes Walker, head of the Bureau of Navigation 1881–89, was critical. It was he who provided institutional support for both the ONI and the NWC. Although Walker was not a

member of the USNI until his appointment as Bureau chief, he nevertheless shared its commitment to naval reform in general, and in particular reforming the manner in which American naval policy was formulated and implemented. Under his auspices the Bureau of Navigation became a sanctuary for service intellectuals in the Department, as he assigned the most talented junior officers to staff the ONI and, at the request of Luce or Mahan, to teach at the NWC. Perhaps most critically, since both institutions were attached to the Bureau of Navigation, Walker was able to allocate some of the funds at his disposal to sustain them in the absence of Congressional support.

Yet there were limits to how far Walker could shield them from opponents in Congress and in the Department. While the ONI's existence was never jeopardized in the way that the NWC was in the late 1880s, neither did it receive Congressional recognition until 1900. As for the NWC and its principal spokesmen, Luce and Mahan, Walker was unsuccessful in persuading Secretary of the Navy William C. Whitney to provide unequivocal support. Eventually Whitney sided against them, due more to personal animosity than to substantive objections to the NWC, and quashed the campaign Luce and Mahan undertook in 1888 to secure Congressional funding. Months before Whitney left office in March 1889, he carried out plans to merge the NWC with the Naval Torpedo School, a consolidation that deprived the former of its institutional autonomy and threatened its very existence. It was fortunate for Mahan and Luce, to say nothing of the NWC, that the Democrats lost the 1888 presidential election and that Whitney's Republican successor, Benjamin F. Tracy, took a less hostile view of the institution and its champions.

Of even greater significance for the future course of American naval policy, by the end of his first year in office, Tracy had adopted the strategic ideas taught at the college, and endorsed by a board headed by Commodore William P. McCann and including William Sampson, which ultimately proposed the creation of an offensive, blue-water battlefleet. These ideas were enunciated in the Secretary of the Navy's 1889 *Annual Report*. The following month he sought Congressional approval for the strategic and force structure choices that would lend substance to his call for an unprecedented shift in American naval policy. Congress was at first disinclined to lend wholehearted support to Tracy's proposals, as proponents of both America's traditional naval policy and American isolationism still wielded considerable influence. Instead, political compromises were reflected in the Navy Law of 1890: authorization and funding were approved for only

three “seagoing coastline” battleships of the Indiana class. This was only a temporary setback, however, as the Navy Department would subsequently win Congressional approval for twenty-six additional seagoing battleships between 1890 and 1910.²³ By the latter date the United States possessed the world’s second largest battlefleet. Although British naval supremacy remained undisputed, the transformation of strategy that took place in 1889–90 and the force built to carry it out prepared the United States for the ascent to parity with the Royal Navy between 1916 and 1922 and, eventually, to assume the mantle of naval supremacy.

* * *

While this study has been more about the decisions of 1889 than the cultural approach used to explain them, it is worth briefly considering its value in explaining the behavior of military and naval organizations more generally, and its potential to enhance future inquiries of naval policy formulation. While many critics, historians among them, regard culture as a “vague and indeterminate concept,” this study has been precise in defining organizational culture without overstating its importance relative to other factors that can and do shape the strategic and force structure choices of military organizations.²⁴ “Culture” constitutes a set of attitudes, beliefs, and other common habits of thought that are shared among officers and serve as the intellectual basis for their conceptions of the roles and missions of the service. Moreover, this inquiry has adhered to a basic premise, accepted by critics as well as proponents of the cultural approach, that “military organizations—indeed all organizations—acquire an ethos and develop an environment in which they work, one that shapes their assumptions and outlook.”²⁵

Many social scientists reject the cultural approach because of the emphasis placed on the uniqueness of each and every organization: no two are alike. Since they are *sui generis*, case studies cannot be the basis on which to develop “scientific” generalizations that in turn can be applied to other cases. What is an anathema to social scientists, however, constitutes business as usual for historians, whose methodology proceeds from the specific to the general rather than vice versa, and who typically eschew positivist or predictive research outcomes. Moreover, the cultural approach employed here is not designed to produce “repeatable results” *à la* natural science (or the aspiration of social science), but simply to borrow the concept of organizational culture and combine it with an archival-based research methodology to produce an analytically robust interpretation of the decisions of 1889.

That historians should borrow from the social sciences in this fashion is far from novel, as the discipline has been for years embracing innovative analyses and multidisciplinary approaches to broaden the scope of historical research. While this study is the first directly to link the service cultures of navies to the policymaking process, cultural arguments have appeared in other studies of naval policy formulation. In his 1999 book on the Fisher era, Nicholas Lambert hinted at culture when concluding that “naval policy was not a function of Cabinet policy or strategic principles, but the product of individuals belonging to a bureaucratized institution and operating within a dynamic environment.”²⁶ Andrew Gordon’s work on the Battle of Jutland (1996) includes a more explicit cultural argument, although his goal is to link service culture with the Grand Fleet’s operational performance in that encounter, rather to explore its impact at the grand strategic level.²⁷ Yet both of them and this inquiry suggest three conceptual prerequisites for future applications of the cultural approach by naval historians. These prerequisites, not coincidentally, are largely consistent with current trends in naval historiography.

The first is a departure from the policy-and-operations perspective of policy formulation, which oversimplifies the process as a parochial response to external factors such as foreign navies and civilian perceptions thereof. While the cultural approach does not dismiss such variables, it also takes into account the internal dimensions of policy formulation, which include organizational cultures, domestic political agendas, financial constraints, and other forces shaping naval administration. Of them, organizational culture does not possess causal autonomy and should be regarded as an intervening variable between the content of inputs (intelligence) and outputs (policy recommendations) that characterize organizational decision-making.

Equally important is the recognition and treatment of navies as complex organizations, consisting of strategic, political, economic, technical, and administrative components. Critical to understanding how these components influence the decision-making process are the ideas and actions of naval officers in important administrative positions, whose roles in determining policy are influenced by the wider context of civil–military relations. As the cultural approach also presumes that naval officers have clear preferences as to how to organize and prepare for war, the relationship between professionals and civilians needs to be comprehensively considered, for the interactions that occur between them are often indicators of the extent to which organizational cultures shape key policy decisions.

The third and final prerequisite is the application of an extensive archival research methodology that examines a broader array of primary source evidence than employed in the policy-and-operations approach. This is an important corollary to the organizational perspective of naval policy formulation, which makes use of archival and other contemporary sources to connect individuals, institutions, and events that might on the surface appear unrelated. As the cultural approach is ultimately directed at explaining organizational outcomes through the ideas and actions of individuals, these connections represent vital historical linkages to show, in this instance, how professional arguments were inspired, institutionalized, and finally implemented. Evidence of these linkages can be found in departmental records, official and private communications, journal articles, newspaper submissions, and personal memoirs, as well as the private papers of senior naval officers.

When viewed in this way, the cultural approach thus represents a new analytical lens to help scholars understand more fully how policy is formulated. It appears to be particularly useful in circumstances analogous to the peacetime milieu of the late 1880s, when more visible determinants of naval policy—external provocations, threat perceptions, and civilian intervention—were absent and thus could not account for what spurred Britain to enact the Naval Defence Act or, even more cogently, what prompted the United States to renounce its traditional naval strategy and embark in a wholly new direction. It should not be concluded, however, that the cultural approach is inherently revisionist, in the sense that naval histories without cultural arguments are automatically suspect and in need of revisiting. Rather, it is offered here as an example of how modern historical techniques can be used to complement, even strengthen, as well as challenge, existing naval histories.

NOTES

1. Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (New York: A.A. Knopf 1940).
2. Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999); David Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008).

3. See especially Steele, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, pp. 243–44 and 252–53; and Roberts, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 540.
4. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, p. 112.
5. Paul Smith, “Ruling the Waves: Government, the Service, and the Cost of Naval Supremacy, 1885–99,” in idem. (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856–1990* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), pp. 26–35.
6. That British strategic doctrine remained consistent from 1889 to 1914 is evidenced in Paul M. Hayes, “Britain, Germany and the Admiralty’s Plans for Attacking Enemy Territory,” in Lawrence Freedman, Paul Hayes, and Robert O’Neill (eds.), *War, Strategy and International Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 95–116; David French, *British Economic and Strategic Planning, 1905–1915* (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 27–31; Paul Haggie, “The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 8 (1973), pp. 113–32; and Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 367–72.
7. Smith, “Ruling the Waves,” p. 35.
8. It should be noted that First Naval Lord Arthur Hood disliked the Royal Sovereigns’ design, especially their lack of protection for the main guns and their crews, which he considered a grave liability when conducting coastal assaults. At his insistence, therefore, one of the eight battleships authorized by the Naval Defence Act was a heavily armored, low-freeboard turret ship designed for that role: HMS *Hood*.
9. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997).
10. Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1890), p. 83.
11. Norman Friedman, *US Battleships: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), p. 21.
12. Bureau of Construction & Repair, “Newspaper Clippings from the London *Times*, 1886–1893.” NA: RG 19/432.
13. Philip H. Colomb, *Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practices Historically Treated* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1891).
14. Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), p. 106.
15. Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin’s History of Naval Administration, 1775–1911: A Collection of Articles from the US Naval Institute Proceedings* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1968), p. 375–76.
16. For more on the political dimension to this strategic transformation, see Peter Trubowitz, “Geography and Strategy: The Politics of American Naval

Expansion,” in Peter Trubowitz, Emily O. Goldman and Edward Rhodes (eds.), *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions and Interests* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 105–38.

17. Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History*, p. 11.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
21. [John Knox Laughton], ‘Captain Mahan on Maritime Power,’ *Edinburgh Review*, (October 1890), p. 420.
22. William James, *The Eyes of the Navy: A Biographical Study of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall* (London: Methuen & Co. 1955), pp. 3–4.
23. Friedman, *US Battleships: An Illustrated Design History*, pp. 418–19.
24. Douglas Porch, ‘Military “Culture” and the Fall of France in 1940,’ *International Security*, (Spring 2000), p. 162.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
26. Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), p. 7.
27. Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996).

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