The war at sea in the age of Napoleon and the development of maritime strategy[1]

Dr Ian Speller
National University of Ireland Maynooth & the Military History Society of Ireland

The aim of this paper is to examine the conduct of war at sea at the time of Napoleon and to explore how subsequent interpretations of this war have influenced the development of maritime strategy and, by extension, of naval policy from the late nineteenth century through to the present day. The title identifies the area of enquiry as war at sea in the age of Napoleon, an unusual choice given the Corsican's very limited understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by the use of naval forces. Maritime historians, and particularly those from Britain, are more likely to write about the war at sea during the age of Nelson, the greatest admiral of his time, described by one recent British biographer as '*a national secular deity, the god of war for troubled times, the last resort against overwhelming odds, guardian against tyranny*'.[2] The title was, however, chosen for a reason. It was chosen to emphasize that war at sea is about more than just war at sea. Events at sea matter only insofar as they have an impact on the land as it is there that people live and where great issues between nations are decided. One cannot understand war at sea unless one understands the role played by fleets, squadrons and ships, but this on its own is not enough. A mature understanding of the role of maritime power in these wars requires one to look at more than the clash of great fleets and to question the extent to which events at sea had an impact on the outcome of the war.

The work of authors such as C.S. Forrester and Patrick O'Brien and the dramatisation of their books for film and television mean that a great many people have some acquaintance with the dynamics of naval warfare in this period, although Disney's Captain Jack Sparrow probably figures more prominently in the public imagination that either Hornblower or Aubrey. Those with a particular interest in naval history can visit the few remaining vessels of this period, including HMS *Victory* at Portsmouth and USS *Constitution* at Boston in addition to a number of replica ships. For the more scholarly inclined there is a great deal of academic literature devoted to this subject, covering all aspects of naval warfare from matters of grand strategy down to the lives and loves of the common sailor.[3] Despite this, it is hard to truly understand what life was like in one of the great warships of this era, still less what it was like to participate in battle at sea. To develop an understanding of the battle on land one can often still walk on the battlefield, and even carry the same load as a common soldier if one is minded to. This is less easy for naval operations, except where they touched the shore in bombardments or amphibious operations. Battlefield tours at sea are rather pointless, one piece of sea

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[1] This paper is based on a presentation given at the XXXV International Congress of Military History, *Warfare in the Age of Napoleon*' at Porto, Portugal in September 2009. My participation in the conference was made possible by funding provided by the Military History Society of Ireland.
[2] LAMBERT, 2005
[3] For example, see BLACK, 2004; BLACK, 2007; HARDING, 1999; LAMBERT, 2000; LAVERY, 1999; RODGER, 1996; RODGER, 2004, WOODMAN, 1998.

looking much like another. It is difficult for someone who has never stood on the deck of a wooden sailing ship in the midst of a fleet engagement (and no-one alive today has) to understand how large fleets dependent on sail and capable only of rudimentary signals in battle could operate without falling into hopeless confusion.

Nevertheless, despite this difficulty the key features of war at sea at the tactical level are well documented in a variety of scholarly works. Wooden ships, powered by sail and armed with varying numbers of smooth bore cannon would operate individually, in small squadrons or large fleets and either fight or flee when facing an enemy – the latter being an option generally more available to ships than to armies by virtue of the medium within which they operated.

The most powerful vessels of the age were those fit to fight in line-of-battle, known as ships-of-the-line or, to use modern terminology, battleships. These were categorised as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd rates depending on their size and the number of cannon employed. There were also numerous smaller vessels such as single-decked frigates designed for trade warfare and scouting, and even more diminutive craft such as sloops, brigs and corvettes and specialist craft such as bomb ketches and mortar vessels designed for the vast array of tasks needed to support the battlefleet, to exploit sea control or to conduct commerce raiding.

HMS *Victory*, preserved at Portsmouth, provides a good example of a 1st rate. Launched in 1765 *Victory* displaces around 3,500 tonnes and with a crew of around 850 men it was equipped with 105 guns arrayed over three decks along the broadside of the vessel. Powered by square sails on a three masted rig the ship was capable of up to 8 or 9 knots, depending on the wind. Built stoutly of seasoned timber and with an oak hull 0.6m thick at the water line *Victory*, like its contemporaries, was very hard to sink with the solid shot employed at that time. The range and accuracy of the 12 pound, 24 pound and 32 pound shot fired by its cannons dictated that battle would occur at very short range, usually less than 180m. Boarding actions, where the crew of one ship would grapple another and then engage in hand to hand combat, were common. Famously, at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent in 1797, Commodore Nelson distinguished himself by leading a boarding party from his ship, HMS *Captain*, that captured a Spanish 1st rate (*San Josef*) and an 84-gun 3rd rate (*San Nicolas*).

The standards of warship design and construction did vary between different countries, with the French frequently being credited with building better ships than the British. The United States Navy achieved some notable successes in frigate to frigate engagements against the Royal Navy in the War of 1812 largely due to the superior size and armament of their vessels. The rapid victory of HMS *Shannon* against USS *Chesapeke* in June 1813 showed what was liable to occur in a more even contest. Nevertheless, by and large, and not withstanding anomalies like the massive Spanish four decked *Santisima Trinidad,* the vessels employed by the major navies were of a very similar type. When captured they were impressed into the service of their new masters, Nelson's prizes at Cape St. Vincent becoming HMS *San Josef* and HMS *San Nicolas*. Indeed, one of the reasons why it was so vital for the Royal Navy to win all of its battles in the 1790s and 1800s was that it

needed the ships captured in order to match the construction of vessels by its French, Dutch and Spanish enemies. As Nicholas Rodger has identified, there were never less than a quarter of the British fleet made up of prizes.[4]

Napoleonic battles at sea were not won because of the superior technology of one side or another. This being the case, how does one explain the British Royal Navy's remarkable series of victories. They did not lose a single fleet engagement during the entire Revolutionary or Napoleonic Wars, a record of success unmatched by any army of the period. This was not due to superior numbers. The healthy margin of superiority that the British held over the French in 1793 was wiped out by Dutch and then Spanish declarations of war, leaving the British in a perilous strategic position. British strategy revolved around the need to stop enemy fleets from uniting and, in the worst case, on concentrating forces in the English Channel so as to block any possibility of invasion. If the enemy fleets could be blockaded or destroyed at sea then British ships could be used to support overseas expeditions, conduct raids, bombard coastal towns, transport troops and supplies and support trade while simultaneously denying the enemy the capability to do the same.

At the tactical level the Royal Navy was able to achieve a string of impressive victories despite engaging enemy fleets of equivalent size, as at the Glorious First of June (1794), Camperdown (1797) and the Nile (1799) or, more spectacularly, when significantly outnumbered as at Cape St. Vincent (1797), Cape Finisterre (1805) and Trafalgar (1805). Prior to Trafalgar the British were always outnumbered strategically, and often also tactically. They survived because of their superior support networks, that allowed them to deploy naval power on a global scale and to keep their fleets at sea despite wearing ships out by constant patrols and cruises.[5] Most critically they could call upon a much larger pool of trained seamen than their opponents, men who were led by officers who were usually very competent and, in some cases, were exceptionally talented.

Sailing a three-masted warship was a hugely complex and difficult task requiring skills that could not be learnt quickly. The French navy was hit particularly badly by the revolution, losing some of its most skilled personnel. The levee-en-masse could fill the ranks of French armies but could not provide their navy with experienced seamen. Even the British, with a strong maritime tradition and large merchant marine, found it difficult to find sufficient seamen and all navies relied on unskilled landsmen to supplement their trained personnel. The paucity of experienced sailors available to the French and Spanish was exacerbated by the fugitive nature of their main fleets. Skills and morale declined as blockaded fleets rotted in harbour while their tormentors honed their skills offshore. British battleships simply spent more time at sea than did their enemies. This did mean that the Royal Navy wore out its ships at an alarming rate. At the time of Trafalgar two-fifths of the navy's ships-of-the-line were out of commission and a further 18 (of 83) were fit only for home service.[6] This was another factor that made the capture of enemy vessels so important.

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[4] RODGER, 2004: 482.
[5] For an interesting discussion of this see HARDING, 1999.
[6] RODGER, 2004: 482

By the 1670s the leading naval powers had developed the '*line of battle*' as the standard fighting formation. This end to end line of ships, approaching a similar enemy line on a parallel course, was designed to maximise the impact of heavy guns and to impose discipline on the fleet at a time when effective command and control was almost impossible once the firing started. Unfortunately, given that the ships' guns fired through the broadside, it was not possible to sail directly at an opponent and also to bring ones guns to bear. In addition, the same wind that was needed to propel the attacking fleet towards the enemy would also allow that foe to retreat particularly if, in anticipation of this, they had focused their fire on their adversary's spars and rigging. It required great skill, luck or superior numbers to inflict a decisive defeat on a competent opponent. Rigid adherence to the line of battle could produce inconclusive results, at at Chesapeake in 1781. Failure to adhere to its discipline could, however, result in fleets going into action in disorder and thus at a disadvantage, as did Admiral Keppel at Ushant in 1778. Despite this many successful British admirals in the eighteenth century, including Anson, Hawke, Rodney and Howe were willing to abandon the line of battle once their enemy showed a weakness. Most famously Admiral Nelson devastated his Franco-Spanish opponents at Trafalgar in 1805 by eschewing traditional tactics, sailing his fleet in two columns at the enemy line, breaking through the centre in two places and then prevailing in the close quarters melee that followed.[7]

Nelson could adopt such bold tactics because of the supreme confidence in his own force and a sound appreciation of his enemy's limitations. Superior seamen and more experienced officers meant that British ships were liable to be handled better in battle. The British also had another advantage. British cannons were better made than their French counterparts and less likely to explode when hot. This facilitated the higher rate of fire made possible by a superior level of training. The Royal Navy favoured an approach that focused on rapid fire at close range, perhaps around 20m, firing low into the enemy hull in order to kill personnel and disable the ship. French gunners, in particular, tended to have a slower rate of fire and aim high, in order to damage spars and rigging. Given the choice they tended to fire from longer range. The French approach had the advantage of reducing the manoeuvrability of any oncoming vessels, enhancing the prospect of ships standing to leeward being able to escape should the need arise. The British approach proved devastating in close quarters fights where they could inflict crippling losses. HMS *Victory*'s first broadside at Trafalgar killed 200 men in the French flagship. In encouraging his captains to '*engage the enemy more closely*' Nelson was playing to a British strength and setting the conditions for the annihilation of the enemy. The result at Trafalgar was 17 ships captured and another blown up, over half of the Franco-Spanish fleet taken or destroyed.

The willingness of officers such as Admirals Jervis and Nelson to run serious risks in pursuit of decisive victory has been described as a naval 'revolution in military affairs', equivalent to that effected on the land by French armies.[8] It must be noted, of course, that not all British admirals displayed such ambition, Admiral Hyde-Parker at Copenhagen

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[7] See CORBETT, 2005 & GARDINER, 2006.
[8] LAMBERT, 2006: 176-177

(1801), Admiral Calder at Cape Finisterre (1805) and Admiral Gambier at the Aix Roads (1809) demonstrated a caution that was distinctly eighteenth century in approach. In an era when signals in battle were haphazard at best, innovative manoeuvres could be undone by subordinates who lacked the understanding, or the courage, to risk all to win all. Decisive victory required subordinates who understood their commanders intent, who had the ability to recognise opportunities when they arose and who had the moral courage to seize the initiative without waiting for instruction. It also required commanders who fostered such qualities amongst their subordinates. The decisive manoeuvre at the Battle of the Nile (1799) occurred when Captain Foley in HMS *Goliath* observed that he could pass his ship between the shore and the French line, sandwiching them between two British lines. He did this on his own initiative, and other ships followed, as they understood that they acted in accordance with what Nelson would want, without requiring him to actually tell them.[9] Nelson's crowning glory, at Trafalgar is a perfect example of the value of what we would now call 'mission command'. His famous '*band of brothers*' was tied together not by personal acquaintance, many of his Captains were new to his command, they were tied together by a shared understanding of what the Admiral wanted.[10]

By 1805 the British were adept at fighting outnumbered and winning, leading credence to claims that the Royal Navy of 1805 was one of the finest fighting instruments that the world has ever seen, more successful at sea than Napoleon's Grand Army was on land. This was recognised by its enemies. Admiral Villeneuve showed a timidity prior to Trafalgar that provides ample testimony to his understanding that the larger Franco-Spanish force under his command was no match for Nelson's fleet. This gave the Royal Navy a moral ascendancy over its opponents, a fact illustrated in startling fashion off modern day Singapore in February 1804 when Rear-Admiral Linois, with a powerful squadron of one ship of the line and three frigates, ran from an unprotected convoy of Indiamen who, in the absence of escorting warships, sought to bluff their way out of danger by forming a line of battle and tacking as if to attack his force. It is hard to see how Linois could have been fooled by the manouevre, and his officers appear not to have been, but he ran anyway, just in case they were warships, and in doing so missed a prize worth at least £8 million.[11]

In short, in the absence of any technological lead or numerical superiority, the British achieved an unbroken series of victories in major battles through the adoption of an appropriate strategy, through more experienced personnel who honed their skills with extensive time at sea and through a superior tactical doctrine suited to the defeat of the enemy in close quarters battle and enabled by an appropriate command philosophy. Tactical prowess was made relevant by an extensive supporting infrastructure and advanced bureaucracy that was able to keep enough ships at sea to counter the Royal Navy's numerous opponents and to solve the many logistical and administrative problems associated with the deployment of naval power on a global scale. Unfortunately, of course, tactical brilliance does not always translate into strategic

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[9] See LAVERY, 2003.
[10] LAMBERT, 2005.
[11] RODGER, 2004.: 546-7

success. Napoleon's own career provides a reminder of that.[12] Victory at Trafalgar made the remote possibility of a French invasion of Britain even more unlikely and gave the Royal Navy great freedom to operate unhindered in the Mediterranean. That it could do little to hinder the advance of French armies in mainland Europe was soon illustrated by the Austerlitz campaign.

The most heated debates about war at sea during this period tend not to be about tactical issues although, of course, new research continues to develop our understanding in this area. Greatest controversy has surrounded the role of navies in the strategic sense. It has been commonplace to argue that strength at sea served a vital *defensive* function, in protecting the British Isles, British trade and British colonies from French attack. It would be hard to argue otherwise. It has been difficult to achieve a consensus on what seapower contributed to the defeat of France rather than merely the survival of Britain. Trafalgar did not, and could not, stop Austerlitz. The British blockade hurt, but did not unassisted cause the collapse of the French economy. There were no ships at Borodino, Leipzig or Waterloo.

A traditional answer to this would be to suggest that, by denying Napoleon the ability to defeat Britain, maritime power prolonged the war, forced Napoleon seek other means of undermining British strength and ultimately led to his over-extension in the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812. There may have been no ships at Borodino but the RN's '*far-distant, storm-beaten ships, upon which the Grand Army never looked*' helped to create the strategic context within which the battle took place. That, at least, was the case made by the great American maritime strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914). Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Mahan, sought to use a examination of the history of war at sea in the age of sail in order to derive enduring principles about naval warfare and maritime strategy. This led him to place particular attention on the value of concentrating forces into a superior battlefleet capable of defeating the enemy fleet and securing command of the sea. Such command was the primary objective of naval strategy as it was this that enabled ulterior objectives such as blockade, transport, amphibious operations and shore bombardment. Mahan criticised the French for focusing on secondary objectives, particularly the war on trade, rather than on the defeat of the enemy's battleships. French privateers could inflict some loss on British trade, but this was far outweighed by the disruption to French trade by a British blockade founded upon its battlefleet.[13]

A rather more nuanced approach was offered by Mahan's British contemporary, Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922). Corbett accepted the importance of command of the sea, but was more explicit in emphasising that such command was only a means to an end, it meant little if one could not do something with it. His work placed a greater emphasis than did Mahan on the requirement for naval forces to operate in conjunction with land forces in, to use a modern term, a joint campaign. For Corbett, navies could be most effective when they cooperated with land forces in a joint maritime strategy and he used the wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to explain how. For Corbett

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[12] For a provocative examination of napoleon's shortcomings as a strategist see Esdale: 2008: 515-552.
[13] In particular, see MAHAN, 1890 & MAHAN, 1892.

strength at sea allowed the British to blockade their enemies, cut off their trade, seize their colonies, conduct expeditions away from the main enemy forces and, by fighting war in a cost effective fashion, to subsidise continental allies upon whom would fall the main burden of the land war.[14]

An examination of the course of the war in Spain and Portugal from 1808 until 1814 provides an example of what Corbett meant. Prior to this time strength at sea could be used as a defensive bulwark, protecting Britain from invasion, in addition to facilitating a blockade designed to disrupt French trade, expeditions to seize French, Spanish and Dutch overseas colonies, and support for allies such as Bourbon Naples. The weakness of the British army, allied to inevitable difficulties conducting amphibious operations, meant that attempts to use strength at sea as a platform to project military power within the continent of Europe tended to result in failure. The events of 1808 changed this. Spain and Portugal provided a theatre where maritime power could make a decisive contribution to French defeat. The geography and topography of the peninsula made it amenable to the exploitation of maritime power while simultaneously posing difficulties for an army dependent on land communications amidst a hostile population. Maritime power brought the British Army to Portugal (and rescued it from Corunna in 1809). Maritime power fed and equipped the British and their allies, it brought supplies to the Spanish partisans and harassed French communications to land and sea within the littoral, and maritime power supported the subsequent allied advance through Spain and into France.

The armies of Britain, Portugal and Spain could receive supplies by sea, those of France had to forage through sparse terrain or fight convoys through hostile territory, critically undermining their ability to concentrate against the allies. With a quarter of a million men in the Peninsula the French were denied the ability to crush their enemies as two-thirds of their strength was tied down in garrison duties, foraging and protecting their lines of communication. Their opponents, on the other hand, received consistent succour from the sea.[15] For example, in September 1809 Admiral Collingwood destroyed a French convoy trying to run supplies to the besieged garrison at Barcelona. The supplies then had to go by land and required 8,000 French troops to protect them from Spanish partisans. In contrast, in a single month in 1812 one ship, HMS *Blake*, landed over 8,000 muskets and 60,000 cartridges on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. It has been estimated that between 1808 and 1811 the British sent 336,000 muskets, 100,000 pistols, 60 million cartridges and 248 artillery pieces, by sea, to Spain and Portugal. In the right environment maritime power could provide critical support to land forces. It was not for nothing that Wellington conceded that '*if anyone wishes to know the history of this war, I will tell him that it is our maritime superiority gives me the power of maintaining my army while the enemy are unable to do so.*'[16]

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[14] CORBETT, 1988.
[15] ESDAILE, 2002.
[16] RODGER, 2004: Chapters 35 & 36.

Of course, in many respects the Peninsula was a theatre tailor made to suit British needs, where a small but efficient army could take on the might of France in a theatre at the periphery of French interest where circumstance and partisans denied the French the ability to concentrate overwhelming numbers against their adversary. It is not clear whether the campaign can be used to draw lessons with wider relevance. The contribution made that maritime power made to victory in the Napoleonic Wars has thus prompted a very lively debate, linked to the associated debate within British strategic history over whether maritime power fostered a uniquely successful '*British way in warfare.*'

The debate on the '*British way in warfare'* was fuelled by Basil Liddell-Hart after the First World War and endured until the end of the Cold War.[17] The debate was argued through reference to historical events, often focusing on the period from the Seven Years War until 1815 but, in truth, this was less a debate about historical accuracy and more an argument over current defence priorities and whether they should be devoted to continental or maritime contingencies. History was used and abused to support very modern concerns.[18] This should not surprise us. Mahan and Corbett had, after all, used the history of war in the age of sail to develop principles that they believed would be relevant, and thus should drive policy, in the era of the steam driven ironclad battleship. Mahan, in particular, was quite willing to use and abuse history in order to make a point.[19]

It is difficult to be certain of the extent to which the ideas of Mahan, Corbett and their contemporaries changed actual naval policy during their lifetimes, and subsequently. The least that one can say is that they helped to set the terms within which the debates about naval strategy and policy were conducted and one can make a strong case that the Royal Navy and later the US Navy adopted policies that were, at heart, Mahanian. In the 1940s the former US Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, was moved to complain that the Navy Department frequently '*seemed to retire from the realm of logic into a dim religious world in which Neptune was God, Mahan his prophet and the United states Navy the only true Church*'.[20] The first word in the main body of the text in Geoffrey Till's 2004 publication, *Seapower: A guide for the Twenty-first Century* is 'Mahan'.[21] The principles established by Mahan and Corbett underpin modern approaches to maritime strategy. They lie at the heart of much contemporary western naval doctrine, both are quoted in recent US and UK doctrine publications.[22] With the current emphasis placed on expeditionary operations and joint warfare, British and American doctrine is particularly evocative of Corbett's work.[23]

Through Mahan and Corbett, and those that followed them, the events of the Napoleonic wars have had an enduring impact on the development of maritime strategy, particularly

[17] LIDDELL-HART, 1932.
[18] See STRACHAN, 1983: 447-461; HOWARD, 1985: 169-187; FRENCH, 1990; SPELLER, 2008a: 227-239.
[19] For an examination of Mahan's use of history see SUMIDA, 1997.
[20] CROWL, 1996: 444.
[21] TILL, 2004: 1
[22] US NAVY, 1994 & ROYAL NAVY, 2004.
[23] US NAVY, 2003: US NAVY, 2007. ROYAL NAVY, 2008.

within Anglo-American literature. Furthermore, as Richard Harding has argued, the impact and enduring popularity of their work has meant that their conclusions have skewed subsequent historical analysis of the period by setting the parameters within which war at sea has tended to be been studied. This tends to result in a particular focus on the success of the British approach, built around the importance of the battlefleet and the fight for command of the sea, and the neglect of alternatives such as commerce raiding. Harding stresses that, while naval strategy may indeed have become dominated by battlefleet operations by the nineteenth century and the dominance of the British battlefleet may have laid the basis for their success in the war at sea, this does not mean that this was the only possible route to success for other nations nor that the success of the British model was as obvious in foresight as it has appeared in hindsight to many historians.[24] Jeremy Black's warning against the adoption of paradigm/diffusion models in military history is relevant here.[25]

In truth, for all except the largest navies, the most relevant histories of this period relate less to the dominant Royal Navy and more to its victims. This is an area of enquiry that is not particularly well served in English language publications. Mahan offers advice on what one should do to become the dominant navy, but has less to teach those for whom this will never be possible. Indeed, for most navies the writing of, for example, Theophile Aube or Raoul Castex might have rather more to offer than Mahan and Corbett given that they offer advice as to how one might gain value from an inferior fleet. In contrast to Mahan, Castex argued that inferior navies could achieve valuable results through 'strategic manoeuvre', implying the diversion rather than the concentration of friendly resources.[26] Similarly, Aube and his contemporaries in the French '*Jeune École*' in the mid-nineteenth century articulated an approach based, not on command of the sea, but on exploiting new technology to turn British dependence on seaborne communications into a vulnerability rather than a strength. In essence this implies a focus on sea denial rather than sea control. Similar arguments were advanced in the twentieth century by German writers such as Hugo von Waldeyer-Harte and Ernst Wilhelm Kruse, again allied to the employment of new technology, in this case the submarine.[27] The dominant tradition in Anglophone maritime strategy and history, built upon a model derived from British success in the wars against France, may actually suggest solutions that are of little utility for most navies and that seduce historians away from the true complexities of war at sea in the age of sail.

In conclusion, the British Royal Navy of the Napoleonic period was a superb fighting organisation, able to prevail over its main opponents in a series of both major and minor engagements despite the absence of any great technological advantage and despite frequently being outnumbered. Whilst there is little disputing the tactical prowess of the Royal Navy, the contribution that British maritime power made towards ultimate victory over Napoleon remains a matter of debate. The events of this period, and the Revolutionary wars that preceded them, were subsequently used by numerous writers at

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[24] HARDING, 1999: 281-287.
[25] BLACK, 2004b: 3-4.
[26] CASTEX. 1994.
[27] For further discussion of these issues see SPELLER, 2008b: 133-143.

the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century, and most notably by Mahan and Corbett, to provide evidence from which enduring 'principles' of maritime strategy and maritime power could be derived. These tended to focus on the reasons for British success and on the requirement to gain command of the sea, notwithstanding significant differences of emphasis between the various writers. While the specific impact of such work on naval policy may be open to debate it is fair to say that this body of work helped to define the way navies thought about themselves and about maritime strategy. The dominance of this Anglo-American tradition also had an impact on subsequent historical analysis, by setting the framework within which such analysis is conducted. It is no accident that some commentators have chosen to examine the '*influence of seapower upon history*' while others have focused on '*the influence of history upon seapower*'. The study of the war at sea in the age of Napoleon demonstrates the importance of both and will, it is to be hoped, continue to generate debate in the years to come.

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