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SCHOOL OF NAVAL WARFARE
THESIS



THE INFLUENCE OF MAHAN UPON SEA POWER
by Edgar Farr Russell, Jr.
Defense Intelligence Agency

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Fig. 1 - Portrait of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

THE INFLUENCE OF MAHAN UPON SEA POWER

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1 April 1967

Abstract of
THE INFLUENCE OF MAHAN ON SEA POWER

Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, United States Navy (Retired) achieved world renown for his scholarly analysis of the development of sea power. Although he did not invent the term "sea power," he deduced its components and set forth basic principles of naval strategy which he considered immutable but subject to different forms of application. His object was to awaken the United States to the need for building sea power as a means to national greatness.

To attain this end he recommended the construction of a large navy, the expansion of the American merchant marine, the building of the Panama Canal, and the acquisition of territories overseas as sources of raw materials and as bases for the Navy and the merchant fleet.

With the passage of time, Mahan's influence apparently diminished; his views are thought by some to be no longer applicable. The problem, therefore, is to measure his influence upon sea power from the time he first enunciated his policy to the present.

The effects of Mahan's background, education, and naval service are analyzed to reveal the nature of his intellectual development. His international status after 1890 is well known; it is shown that his influence in the United States was considerable before that time. Theodore Roosevelt was

moved by him; Franklin Roosevelt applied many of his principles from 1913 to 1920 and from 1933 to 1945. The implementation of Mahan's theories in World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, and Vietnam are scrutinized, showing how his tenets were followed.

The major conclusions are that the Mahan doctrines are still valid without updating, that the United States is generally following his precepts today, and that his influence is still in effect. Some of his greatest contributions lay in his development and expansion of the Naval War College, where today advanced study by service officers makes possible an understanding of the relationship between sea power and land warfare and international relations. This broad appreciation is needed in order to understand the application of Mahan's doctrines in the contemporary world.

Because no specific study of the Admiral's doctrines obtains in American naval schools today, it is recommended that courses on his theories be instituted at the Naval War College, the Naval Academy, the Coast Guard Academy, and the Merchant Marine Academy. Since the Naval War College probably has the best facilities (staff, faculty, and library), it is recommended that this institution prepare courses of study for use here and at other schools.

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INTRODUCTION

When a guest enters the main entrance of the United States Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, his attention is drawn automatically to a large portrait of a United States Navy Rear Admiral situated about 150 feet away. Upon closer examination, it can be determined that the portrait, a copy of which appears as Fig. 1, is that of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose soulful expression and penetrating blue eyes give the viewer the feeling that Mahan is actually standing in the room. And indeed he may be doing just that.

Captain Mahan was promoted to Rear Admiral on the Retired List ten years after his retirement.¹ This honor was based not upon his fame and accomplishments but upon his being included automatically for promotion as a result of general legislation promoting all retired officers who had served in the Civil War.² Mahan was controversial during his lifetime and the passage of years has only slightly smoothed off the rough edges of this disputation.

¹Charles C. Taylor, The Life of Admiral Mahan, Naval Philosopher (New York: Doran, 1920), p. 272. Because he had become world famous as "Captain Mahan," he was reluctant to use his higher rank and in fact continued to publish his books as "Captain Mahan."

²Jack E. Godfrey, "Mahan's Concept of Seapower," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 16 August 1966, p. 6.

His painstaking study of maritime history and his development of naval concepts at the turn of the last century have earned him a place in military history equal to the great Prussian general, von Clausewitz, whose theories on land warfare have formed the basis for modern armies throughout the world.³ To those in the United States, Admiral Mahan seems much more real than does von Clausewitz because of Mahan's American nationality and the fact that he lived much later than von Clausewitz, who died in 1831.

Mahan lived, taught, and wrote during the metamorphosis of the United States Navy from a sail-propelled coastal defense force into a steam-powered two ocean Navy capable of and actually accomplishing the destruction of foreign fleets. Mahan's theories explained and justified this expansion; he encouraged and pointed the way for this transformation through his development of logical principles which he published during the latter part of his active naval service which ended in 1896. His later writings in general either treated these principles in greater detail or, more importantly, directed the attention of Americans toward the building of a strong navy and securing overseas bases to support the fleet in its worldwide operations.

³Ross H. Goodell, "Clausewitz's Philosophy of War and His Impact on Modern Strategy," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 16 August 1966.

Because he was openly pro-British, anti-German, and anti-Japanese and recommended the acquisition of territory for the security of the United States, Mahan came to personify Republican expansionism as set forth by Theodore Roosevelt and his followers. Later, such American idealists as Democrat Woodrow Wilson began to view with suspicion Mahan's strategic tenets. Since the end of World War II, the United States has become the leader in persuading empires to grant independence to their colonies. Even within the United States Navy some of Mahan's tactical principles as well as his strategic doctrines have been viewed as outmoded and have not been emphasized in recent years.⁴

The purpose of this thesis is to study Mahan's influence upon sea power in order to encourage interest in the re-examination of Mahan and his theories to the end that his interpretations and analyses may be used to keep the United States from having to repeat history.

Mahan was a prolific writer; in addition to publishing over 20 books, numerous periodical articles, and letters to newspapers, he delivered many lectures mostly on his favorite subject, sea power, but venturing often into broad national strategy. Even during his lifetime, other writers began

⁴John D. Hayes, "Peripheral Strategy-Mahan's Doctrine Today," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, November 1953, p. 1185.

interpreting and analyzing his theories. He was reviewed and criticized both favorably and unfavorably by these writers ranging from other naval scholars and general historians to purely hack writers, most of whom either consciously or unconsciously attempted to praise, condemn, clarify, or expand upon his theories.

Because of the volume of material produced by Mahan upon which others have written "condensed interpretations," the normal tendency of the modern scholar is to learn about Mahan from one of these other writers. It is this writer's opinion that the best way to know Mahan is first to read Mahan, all of his works exactly as he wrote them without the distortions that occur when writers quote him out of context. Later, one may proceed to read the works of these other writers.

In order to study the influence of Mahan upon sea power, it is desirable first to review briefly the influences on him which caused him to think the way he did and then to set forth in summary the principles that he advanced. In succeeding chapters his influence on sea power is discussed during three distinct periods: during the years of his life from 1890 to 1914; from 1914 through 1939, and from 1939 to the present. In the fifth chapter, the general validity of the components of Mahan's principles is treated and finally, conclusions are drawn on that which the writer feels may be the most important influence of Mahan upon sea power.

To supplement the text, an appendix tabulating major aspects of the Admiral's life is provided and several photographs are included as figures.

THE INFLUENCE OF MAHAN UPON SEA POWER

CHAPTER I

MAHAN--THE FORMATIVE YEARS

No amount of mental calibre, far less any mere knowledge can compensate for a deficiency in moral force in our profession.

-- Mahan¹

The biography of graduate No. 367 from the United States Naval Academy is tabulated most briefly as follows:

00367 Mahan, Alfred Thayer
RADM USN (RET) B-NY, A-NY
Retired 17 Nov '96 Capt. Died
1 Dec '14 Washington, D.C.²

From this greatly condensed synopsis of Mahan's life, one could go to the other extreme by reading Captain Puleston's excellent authoritative biography, Mahan.³ Both of these books are useful, the former providing readily major facts of Mahan's entry into the Navy during the age of sail and his death just after the outbreak of World War I. From the second book however, one can follow the less official aspects of his life. It is from Mahan biographies such as Puleston's

¹Alfred T. Mahan, "Naval Education," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, April 1879, p. 347.

²U.S. Naval Academy, Alumni Association, Register of Alumni, Graduates, and Former Naval Cadets and Midshipmen, 1845-1965 (Annapolis: 1965), p. 8.

³William D. Puleston, Mahan: the Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939).

and Taylor's or his own autobiography that the events which shaped his philosophy can be identified.⁴

Birth and Background. A chronology of the career of Admiral Mahan is set forth in Appendix I. Although Mahan was 50 years old and had completed 34 years of naval service (including his Naval Academy training) when he achieved national and international recognition, he was by no means merely an armchair strategist who suddenly burst out of his library with a thesis in hand. The dogma that he developed was crystallized slowly; it came as the result of the effects of various influences upon him. These influences merit attention in order to facilitate understanding Mahan's influence on others.

Alfred Mahan's grandfather, John Mahan, who emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1800, was strongly hostile toward the British; this feeling was developed in his son, Dennis Hart Mahan, who was born in the United States in 1802. Dennis Mahan was graduated first in his class from the United States Military Academy at West Point and as a military engineer taught at West Point throughout his long career, except for some years study of engineering in Europe. As a result of his military studies, he became an ardent admirer of France--French armies, military engineering, and

⁴Alfred T. Mahan, From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life (New York: Harper, 1907).

above all, Napoleon as a military leader. As Professor of Civil and Military Engineering and later Dean at West Point, Dennis Mahan achieved recognition while still young and enjoyed an outstandingly high reputation throughout his life which ended in 1871.

Into this academic atmosphere Alfred was born on 27 September 1840. All things being equal it would have been most natural for Alfred to have developed into an Anglophobe as were his grandfather and to a certain degree his Franco-ophile father. Such was not the case. Alfred developed into an Anglophile.

As a young boy at home Mahan was reared not only . . . passively absorbing but to a certain degree actively impressed with love for France and the Southern Section of the United States, while learning to look askance upon England and abolitionists. The experiences of life together with subsequent reading and reflection modified and in the end entirely overcame these early pre-possessions.⁵

His change in attitude commenced when still a boy with his reading for pleasure old issues of a British military publication entitled Colburn's United Service Magazine. This published both serious and humorous articles about life at sea and the Royal Navy. It is obvious from Mahan's own words that he was deeply and favorably impressed with the life of a

⁵Ibid., p. x, xi.

naval officer, the Royal Navy, and England as portrayed in this magazine.⁶

Education and Naval Training. Alfred's desire to become a naval officer led him to the United States Naval Academy which he entered as an Acting Midshipman at the age of 16 in 1856, greatly against the wishes of his father, who thought him to be better suited for a civilian profession. Because he had completed two years at Columbia College in New York, Mahan was admitted as a Third Classman, graduating second in his class of 20 in 1859.⁷ Upon graduation he was assigned to the frigate, U.S.S. Congress, a picture of which appears as Fig. 2.

Civil War Duty. When the Civil War began many of Mahan's classmates went South but Mahan and his father, though Southerners by sentiment, remained staunchly loyal to the North. Alfred's service during the Civil War consisted of sea duty aboard ships of the South Atlantic and West Gulf Blockading Squadrons and shore duty in 1862 at the Naval Academy which had been removed to Newport, Rhode Island. It was here that Mahan first served under Stephen B. Luce, then

⁶Ibid., p. v.

⁷Register of Alumni, USNA, p. 8. In addition to the 20 graduates, there were an additional 26 classmates who did not graduate.

a Lieutenant Commander, who later was to give Mahan his greatest opportunity in life: as a professor and President of the United States Naval War College.

His blockading duty impressed Mahan with the importance of commerce to the economic life of a nation, the importance of naval forces in controlling commerce, and the value of the blockade in preempting that commerce; this duty aided him later in formulating his theories regarding the nature and capabilities of a people to develop sea power. Early in the Civil War, because of the success of Confederate commerce raiders, Mahan became convinced of the significance of this aspect of naval warfare; he even developed a scheme to defeat Confederate commerce raiders.⁸ During the 25 years that were to elapse before his arrival at the Naval War College in 1886, he was to modify considerably this later conviction.

The Civil War provided Mahan with good seagoing experience and furnished him with the opportunity to study and practice naval tactics. In spite of his pre-Civil War duty on the Brazil Station, Mahan was however, at the end of the war, merely a good American naval officer who had little actual experience with the military forces of other countries. His career from the end of the Civil War to the time he reported to the Naval War College provided him the international

⁸Taylor, p. 15, 16, and Puleston, p. 32.

experience needed for him to be able to appraise and develop broad naval strategy.

Post Civil War Duty. One of the major influences on his life was his three year absence from the United States while serving as executive officer and commanding officer of ships on the China Station from 1867 to 1870. During this cruise Mahan saw first-hand the elements of national power as they were applied by many foreign countries and was especially impressed with the British Empire and its formidable sea power.

In particular, on his outbound voyage from New York in the steam sloop, Iroquois, he admired what he considered to be the beneficial British rule of Aden.⁹ He wrote to his father that "in the abstract the British seizure of this port could not be justified but that improvements under British dominion were sufficient practical justification."¹⁰ Continuing on its way, the ship visited Bombay; here Mahan observed the growing British economic development of India as a part of the British Empire. After calling at Singapore, he proceeded to Manila where he saw for the first time the city which he later was to help secure for the United States. Arriving at Hong Kong from Manila, after a nine-month outbound voyage, Iroquois required a major engine overhaul which was accomplished and the ship proceeded to Japan to go on

⁹Puleston, p. 42.

¹⁰Ibid.

station. A year later in the autumn of 1868, Iroquois again received its engine overhaul at Hong Kong and undoubtedly this emphasized to Mahan the importance of naval bases for the world-wide operation of naval ships.

During the two years that Mahan was on the Asiatic Station, there was considerable unrest in Japan, where the ports of Osaka and Kobe were being opened to Western commerce. At these ports as well as others in Japan such as Nagasaki Mahan saw, not only American ships of the Squadron, Hartford, Oneida, and Shenandoah but also naval squadrons from Great Britain, France, and Italy. The purpose of this "combined naval task force" was to overawe the Japanese and to protect the interests of the pertinent Western powers. Because of internal strife in Japan, which on some occasions was manifested by attacks on Western nationals, a combined landing force, supported by the guns of the four-nation naval squadron, was sent ashore near Kobe to protect Western merchants and diplomatic and consular officials who had taken refuge in the foreign concession. After this disturbance subsided the ships continued to shift personnel ashore to guard the Western trading settlement. This experience also strengthened his belief in the importance of the Navy in protecting its nationals and their legal activities on foreign soil.

Upon being relieved of command in September 1869, Mahan received permission to take six months leave and return to

the United States as a passenger aboard merchant ships. His return voyage took him to India where he visited Calcutta, Bombay, and other cities. He then transited the Suez Canal shortly after its opening and proceeded to visit Marseilles, Nice, Rome, southern Italy, Paris, London, and Spithead. At Spithead, he was given a tour aboard the newest battleship of the Royal Navy, H.M.S. Captain and in May 1870 departed from Liverpool for New York.

The Asiatic duty of Mahan coupled with his outbound and return voyages provided him with additional seagoing experience, but above all it broadened his knowledge of the world and the importance of the Navy in maintaining peace and protecting commerce. Further, according to Puleston; "The most vivid impression he brought home was the ubiquitousness of the British Red Coats. From Capetown on the way out to Bombay on the return trip those sentries of the British Empire were everywhere to be found."¹¹ Mahan admired the omnipresent British forces even though he said that he sometimes would attempt to dodge marching units to avoid the numerous salutes rendered him by entire squads of soldiers.¹² In a letter that he wrote in 1868 while in Yokohama to his sister he commented:

¹¹Ibid., p. 48. Captain Puleston describes most eloquently the impact on Mahan of his Asiatic duty.

¹²Mahan, From Sail to Steam, p. 211.

Are not the English a wonderful people? They alone of all civilized people keep troops here, and their transports, not only here, but all over the world are coming and going. Capetown, Aden, Bombay, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Yokohama, everywhere is to be seen their red-coated soldiery --and to them not only their own merchants but those of all other nations owe safety at times. Truly they may boast that the sun never sets upon their flag.¹³

Shortly after his return to the United States, Mahan was assigned to the S.S. Worcester, a merchant ship chartered by the United States to transport food to France. However, upon arrival at Plymouth, England, it was determined that the food was not needed in France and the ship remained in England pending disposition of the cargo.¹⁴ Mahan was given the opportunity to visit in England for several months and during this time traveled extensively absorbing English culture. Over a year later in December 1872, he received his first regular command, U.S.S. Wasp. He traveled by British commercial passenger steamer to assume command of the ship which was attached to the South Atlantic Station and lying in the River Plate off Montevideo. Here, as in Japan, Mahan's ship operated in close coordination with ships of other navies including those of England, France, Italy, Spain, and Brazil. These ships were also engaged in protecting the interests of

¹³Alfred T. Mahan, quoted in Taylor, p. 3, 4.

¹⁴Puleston, p. 49.

their nationals. After two years in this billet, during much of which Mahan was the senior naval officer present, he was relieved of command and with his family visited France and England on leave.

Upon return home he was assigned ashore for a short time and then was placed on half pay because of excess naval officers in the Navy. To economize he and his family in 1876 returned to France to live. A year later he was ordered back to full pay and assigned to the Naval Academy as Head of the Ordnance Department, a post he held from 1877 through 1880.¹⁵

Mahan used his leisure time at the Naval Academy to study British, French, and American professional naval journals, to write a prize-winning essay for the United States Naval Institute, and to engage in deep reflective thinking. He later wrote to one of his English friends that his reading of articles in the Journal of Royal United Service Institution inspired him to take an interest in the detailed study of

¹⁵The grandfather of the writer of this paper, Naval Cadet Robert T. Frazier, Class of 1883, was a plebe at the Naval Academy during the last year of Mahan's duty there. One of his classmates, the late Captain John Morris Ellicott, USN (Ret.) served under Luce prior to the latter's assignment as first President of the Naval War College, under Mahan aboard U.S.S. Chicago, under Dewey at Manila Bay, and on the Staff of the Naval War College. By the time of his death at the age of 96 in 1955 he had written a considerable number of articles about Admirals Mahan, Luce, and Dewey; the Naval War College; and the "Old Navy." John M. Ellicott, "Three Navy Cranks and What They Turned," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, October 1924, p. 1616.

naval history. This friend, Admiral P. H. Colomb, stated that in all probability a lecture given by Professor John K. Laughton at the Royal United Service Institution in 1874 and subsequently published entitled "The Scientific Study of Naval History" was a major factor in influencing Mahan to undertake his historical analysis of sea power.¹⁶

By the spring of 1880 he had concluded that the United States should build a navy equal to that of England and that this should be done while the Panama Canal was under construction. It seemed only logical to Mahan that the United States must have the means to defend the Panama Canal when constructed, just as the British had an adequate navy to defend the Suez Canal.

From the Naval Academy, Mahan was transferred to the New York Navy Yard and during his free time wrote his first book, The Gulf and Inland Waters.

Duty at the Naval War College. In 1883 he was ordered to command the U.S.S. Wachusett, an obsolete wooden-hulled steam sloop on station off the northeast coast of South America. It was during the monotony of this duty, broken only

¹⁶Vice Admiral P.H. Colomb in comments to John K. Laughton, "The Study of Naval History," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, July 1896, p. 816.

John K. Laughton, "The Scientific Study of Naval History," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, May 1874, p. 508-527.

by trouble ashore and operations with British naval ships, that Mahan pronounced his distaste for imperialism, colonies and the resulting troubles caused by having to protect foreign territory.¹⁷ It was also during this tour that he received the invitation from the then Commodore Luce to lecture at the Naval War College which Luce was in the process of establishing at the former Poor House building in Newport, Rhode Island. Mahan's acceptance of this invitation was to close any possible doors to his achieving distinction as a seagoing naval officer. It was, however, to bring to him lasting fame and world-wide recognition such as few naval officers before or since have ever achieved, and with Luce, credit for the existence and development of the Naval War College.¹⁸ After being relieved from command of Wachusett in mid-1885, Mahan spent almost a year continuing his studies and preparing his lectures.

Broad Principles of Sea Power. The lectures which Mahan gave after he reported as President of the Naval War College

¹⁷Puleston, p. 67.

¹⁸In speaking of Luce and the Naval War College in 1885 Captain Ellicott, has written enthusiastically: "As we went away and left him (Luce) sitting on the steps with only his negro mess boy and a suitcase, we youngsters felt extremely sorry for him. We could not realize that those piercing grey eyes of his were seeing far into the future and that that crank (Luce) was about to turn the greatest war engine this country has ever had." Ellicott, "Three Cranks," p. 1620.

relieving Commodore Luce in August 1886 formed the basis for his book, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, which, after its publication in 1890, made him famous.

Through his historical analysis of sea power he reached a number of conclusions and he set forth broad principles that found ready acceptance. In order to study the influence of Mahan upon sea power, it is desirable to outline briefly Mahan's major doctrines. These are enumerated by Mahan in the first 89 pages of his book and although it is somewhat of an oversimplification, it can be said that most of his writings for the remaining 24 years of his life consisted of expanding these concepts and applying them to the United States, either by writing or in practice as a member of the Naval Strategy Board.¹⁹

Mahan viewed the sea as a great highway or a wide common on which there had developed recognized trade routes. To him, the sea represented a vital communications link as opposed to many contemporaries who considered the sea a barrier or merely something that provided protection from other states.²⁰ He further concluded that:

The necessity of a navy, in the restricted sense of the word, springs therefore from the existence of a peaceful shipping, and disappears with it,

¹⁹Puleston, p. 95.

²⁰Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890), p. 25.

except in the case of a nation which has aggressive tendencies and keeps up a navy merely as a branch of the military establishment.²¹

This principle recognized the importance of the merchant marine with which Mahan had had greater contacts, as a frequent passenger aboard merchant ships and as a naval officer serving aboard a merchant ship chartered by the government, than had the average naval officer of his day. His interest in the merchant marine resulted in an equation that "Sea Power equals naval vessels plus naval bases plus merchant vessels."²²

Whereas Mahan in the early 1880's had considered colonies to be a liability, imperialistic in nature and requiring unnecessary military expenditures to protect, he came to revise his thinking. Between 1885 and 1890 he reached the conclusion that colonies were necessary to supply raw materials for an industrial homeland, markets for the manufactured goods of

²¹Ibid., p. 26.

²²This equation of Mahan's was wholeheartedly accepted by the proponents of a strong United States Merchant Marine and a framed copy of it hung in the room of every Cadet-Midshipman at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy during the writer's midshipman days at the Academy.

Ernest G. Campbell, "Mahan's Message on the Merchant Marine," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1960, p. 94.

This equation has been most recently quoted by the Committee of American Steamship Lines, The American Merchant Marine: Hero in War--Stepchild in Peace. (Washington: 1966), p. 1 which includes comments by General Wallace M. Greene, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps on the importance of sea power.

the mother country, a safe terminus for the merchant ships carrying their cargoes, and as bases for the naval forces needed to protect merchant shipping.²³ In discussing the development of colonies, Mahan treats them as being of several types: those serving as trading posts, those acquired for more formal and political purposes by rulers rather than by individuals, and finally, those needed primarily for protection. In this last category Mahan placed bases such as those established at the Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena, and Mauritius and other bases the value of which was chiefly strategic such as Gibraltar, Malta, and Louisburg.²⁴

Factors of Sea Power. Most basic in Mahan's study of sea power are six factors which he considered necessary in analyzing the sea power of a nation or the capability of a nation to develop sea power. They were:

1. Geographical Position
2. Physical Conformation
3. Extent of Territory
4. Number of population
5. Character of the People
6. Character of the Government.²⁵

²³Puleston, p. 61. Captain Puleston describes this change as being the result of evolution in Mahan's point of view similar to other changes which occurred gradually as he gained experience and engaged in deep thought.

²⁴Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, p. 27, 28.

²⁵Ibid., p. 28, 29.

Mahan discussed these factors in considerable detail, to a large degree comparing his model, England, with other powers, chiefly France, Holland, and Spain.²⁶ Most simply he maintained that if a nation is geographically situated so that it is neither forced to defend itself nor encouraged to extend its territory to adjacent areas, it has an advantage over a country whose boundaries are continental. Such a state as England therefore could concentrate its forces around its own coast but England had wisely sacrificed much of this advantage in order to protect its colonial system. By deploying its forces along trade routes a state could engage in commerce-destroying whenever this course of action was indicated. To deploy and operate forces properly for protection of trade routes or commerce-destroying it was necessary for a state such as England or the United States to have bases or "find bases in the ports of an ally."²⁷

Discussing the characteristic of physical conformation Mahan maintained that a state not only needed a coastline but also required numerous and deep harbors in order to develop sea power. The value of these harbors would be doubled if they also were outlets of navigable streams, thus providing internal transportation.

In treating extent of territory Mahan considered that it was not the area of the country but the total length of the

²⁶Ibid., p. 29-89.

²⁷Ibid., p. 31.

coastline and character of its harbors that determined its development as a sea power.

Related to these physical considerations were several human conditions that were significant. The size of the population was a major factor, not just in total numbers, but the proportion per square mile and more importantly, the number following the sea or at least available for employment on ships or ashore in support of maritime activities. Also important was the inclination of the people to seafaring.

National character, the fifth of Mahan's factors was related to the population. Except for the Romans, who developed sea power for military purposes alone, Mahan considered that no nation had developed sea power without an interest in developing peaceful and extensive commercial enterprises. In this regard he condemned the Spanish and Portuguese, whose commercial interests lay primarily in accumulating wealth in the form of gold rather than developing sound economic relationships with their colonies and improving their own industries. The sensible desire for profit through trade and expanding the empire politically therefore encouraged development of sea power in England.

To Mahan, the character of the government exercised a marked influence upon the development of sea power. Without government encouragement and support, states would not be able to develop sea power even if the previous five factors were favorable.

Strategic Principles. Turning from the six broad elements of sea power enunciated by Mahan to his four strategic principles we note that they were:

1. Concentration
2. Objective
3. Offensive
4. Communications.²⁸

To Mahan, as with Clausewitz, the fundamental object in all military operations was to gain local superiority by "concentration." This principle, though simple in theory, has often been forgotten by commanders; when remembered is often difficult to achieve.

Concerning "objective," Mahan considered that the proper objective of military operations is the organized military force of the enemy. In formulating this principle he not only demonstrated his ability to recognize that which was militarily important but also his observance of the spirit as well as the letter of international law.

In his third principle, "offensive," he stated that, "War once declared must be waged offensively, aggressively. The enemy must not be fended off but smitten down."

²⁸Alfred T. Mahan, Naval Strategy Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911), p. 5, 255, 266, 267.

Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, p. 7-9, 514-516.

"Communications," his fourth element of strategy, "devour all other elements."²⁹ By "communications" Mahan meant communications in the full logistical sense.

Subconclusion. Throughout his writings Mahan furnishes other principles, and makes recommendations on strategy but these are his major contributions. Whereas his historical analyses are clear, his philosophy is subject to interpretation. Because his expansion of basic principles and strategy recommendations are scattered throughout his works, virtually any nation interested in achieving sea power can draw conclusions from his writings. For the United States, it has been most simply suggested that Mahan's concepts were in essence:

1. The United States should be a world power.
2. Control of the seas is necessary for world power status.
3. The way to maintain such control is by a fleet of powerful warships.³⁰

It is noted that the cited principles which formed the basis for Mahan's theories are not those for which he has been criticized. In general, his corollaries or expansion of theories have been the subject of most dissenting discussions.

Mahan was a most unusual individual whose mind matured slowly reflecting the influences upon him as a result of his

²⁹Mahan, Naval Strategy, p. 255.

³⁰Hayes, p. 1185.

seagoing experience and his study which culminated when he was about 45 but were not apparent to the world until he was 50.³¹ His mind continued to develop at an accelerated pace through the next 24 years until his death. The influence of this late-blooming genius upon the sea power of his world and ours has been indeed profound.

³¹Puleston, p. 61. "The latent gift was there and was startlingly exhibited in its culmination, but time was necessary for it to mature."

CHAPTER II

MAHAN'S INFLUENCE DURING HIS LIFETIME

No other person has so directly and profoundly influenced the theory of sea power and naval strategy as Alfred Thayer Mahan.

-- Margaret Tuttle Sprout¹

The influence of Mahan upon sea power is by no means as simple to analyze as it would seem after merely reading the story of his life. In fact his influence during his lifetime is rather complex and to a certain degree the writer feels that the Admiral himself contributed to the complexity of this aspect.

Most writers in evaluating Mahan's influence during his lifetime tend to begin the period with the year 1890 and end it with the year he died, 1914. The first date is of course the year in which Mahan published his classic work, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 and in which his British readers began to recognize his brilliance.

If Mahan were alive today, he would probably agree with this date. The writer believes that this does some injustice to Mahan and to a small group of far-sighted Americans, his early disciples. Mahan was a dignified and aloof individual to many of his contemporaries and even to some of his

¹Margaret T. Sprout, "Mahan, Evangelist of Sea Power," Edward M. Earle, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), p. 415.

classmates.² He was, on the other hand, a most sensitive individual who was subject to personal slights. In the early days of his success he felt that he was not recognized by his own country whereas other countries lavished honors upon him.³ This is the general picture that is given of Mahan; the writer does not consider it to be fully accurate.

Influence in the United States. To Admiral Stephen B. Luce, as fine a seagoing naval officer and gentleman as the Navy then had, probably belongs the credit of being the first to recognize, and to be influenced by Mahan. When Luce announced to the students of Mahan's first class at the Naval War College that the search for a Naval Jomini was over, he said, "He is here and his name is Mahan." Thus Mahan's influence was recognized publicly even if the class consisted of only 21 students.⁴

Next and most important is the Mahan-Theodore Roosevelt relationship which began, not in 1890 after his book was published, but in 1887. In that year Mahan invited Theodore

²John M. Ellicott, "Sidelights on Mahan," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, October 1948, p. 1249.

³Robert Brent, "Mahan--Mariner or Misfit," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, April 1966, p. 103. Mahan wrote to Luce after his appointment to command of U.S.S. Chicago: "Our own Navy by its representatives--has rejected both me and my work, for, I cannot but think that an adequate professional opinion would have changed the issue."

⁴U.S. Naval War College, Register of Officers, 1884-1964 (Newport, R.I.,: 1963), p. 1.

Puleston, p. 83.

Roosevelt to deliver a lecture at the War College on "The True Conditions of the War of 1812," on which subject Roosevelt had written a book. In commenting on this meeting, Captain Puleston wrote, "The meeting of Roosevelt and Mahan inaugurated a lifelong friendship that profoundly influenced the United States and its Navy."⁵ To this statement could be added "and the maritime nations of the world."

When Mahan's Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 was published, Mahan sent a copy to Theodore Roosevelt who was at that time a Civil Service Commissioner in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt, on 12 May 1890, wrote to Mahan:

During the last two days I have spent half of my time busy as I am, in reading your book; and that I found it interesting is shown by the fact that having taken it up, I have gone straight through and finished it. . . . It is a very good book--admirable; and I am greatly in error if does not become a naval classic.⁶

This praise from an American was certainly one of the earliest, if not the earliest, complimentary comment from an influential individual in any country.

Of significance also is the fact that a member of the War College Staff in 1885 (prior to Mahan's arrival in 1886) was Professor James R. Soley. Soley, who had been a civilian professor at the Naval Academy during Mahan's duty there from 1877 to 1880, became his friend, and remained at the Naval

⁵Ibid., p. 86.

⁶Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Taylor, p. 45.

War College until 1888.⁷ In 1890, Professor Soley was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

It can thus be seen that prior to 1890 Mahan had influenced a few key friends who worked on behalf of the United States Navy and on behalf of Mahan for the remainder of his life.

Mahan also had influenced others, but adversely. Chiefly they were Rear Admiral Henry Erben and Rear Admiral Francis M. Ramsay, neither of whom was in sympathy with Mahan. Ramsay, as Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, believed that "It is not the business of a Naval Officer to write books" and spent many years trying to transfer Mahan back to sea duty and to abolish the War College.⁸ He succeeded in the former and almost succeeded in the latter. Whereas Ramsay was a forbidding and unpleasant individual with less sea duty than Mahan, Admiral Erben was a good sailor who was generally liked by his subordinates.⁹ He was no scholar, however, and sincerely believed

⁷Professor Soley also was active in the U.S. Naval Institute with Mahan and published a paper in same volume of the 1879 Proceedings that Mahan's "Naval Education" essay appeared.

⁸Brent, p. 101.

⁹Prior to his reaching flag rank, Ramsay had been Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy (1881-1886) the first Academy graduate to fill the post. In this position he was thoroughly disliked by the naval cadets. The class of 1883 referred to their time under his command as being in a prison, Ramsay's tenure as "the repressive reign of Ramsay," and commented strongly on "the injustice of Ramsay's rule." U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1883, Banquet, Cadet-Midshipmen Class '83. Book privately published by the Class on the occasion of its banquet following graduation at Riggs House, Washington, D.C. on 9 June 1883, p. 9, 10, 29, 30.

that the War College was an "intellectual frill." He did not like Mahan and as the Flag Officer embarked in U.S.S. Chicago from 1893 to 1894 when Mahan was the Captain, took the opportunity to punish Mahan for his literary endeavors by giving him a poor fitness report. That Mahan's seagoing abilities were good can be verified not only by officers such as the late Captain John Morris Ellicott, U.S.N. (Ret.) who as a lieutenant sailed under Mahan and Erben in the Chicago but also by the Board of Inspection which rated the Chicago excellent upon Mahan's return to New York in 1895.¹⁰ For a photograph of Mahan's last sea command, see Fig. 3.

Mahan's influence in the United States by the late 1880's was very subtle, but in the writer's opinion it was definitely present. The annual report of Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy in December 1889 bears the "unmistakable imprint of Mahan's ideas."¹¹ Tracy wrote, "We must have a fleet capable of diverting a hostile force from our coast by threatening

¹⁰Ellicott, "Three Navy Cranks," p. 1625-1626 and "Side-lights on Mahan," p. 1249.

Brent, p. 103. Captain Brent also discusses in some detail the excellent fitness report and letter on Mahan prepared by Rear Admiral William A. Kirkland who relieved Admiral Erben aboard U.S.S. Chicago in September 1894, p. 103.

¹¹Sproul, "Mahan, Evangelist of Sea Power," p. 436. After maintaining that "we required a fighting force," Tracy cited as requirements "20 armored battleships with which to raise blockades" and to beat off the enemy's fleet on its approach.

his own, for a war though defensive in principle, may be conducted most effectively by being offensive in its operation."¹² A report of the Policy Board of six naval officers appointed by Tracy to study the requirements of the United States "outlined a program in terms of the large national destiny envisaged in Mahan's interpretation of history."¹³ Mahan's name did not appear in these reports nor did it appear in the debates preceding the passage of the Naval Act of 1890 which clearly was an implementation of Mahan's unpublished views.

In 1891, Mahan's friend, Assistant Secretary of the Navy James R. Soley, was instrumental in appointing him to a Naval Strategy Board, planning offensive naval operations during a period of tension with Chile. These operations were not executed because a peaceful solution to the problem was reached.

By 1895, however, Mahan's name and ideas had become well-known and were frequently cited in Congress. His prestige was so high that although he had retired from the Navy as a Captain in 1896, he was recalled to serve as a member of the Naval Strategy Board during the Spanish-American War. In

¹²Harold H. Sprout and Margaret T. Sprout, Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918. rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 207-209.

¹³Sprout, "Mahan, Evangelist of Sea Power," p. 436-437.

this capacity he was responsible for influencing the Navy to reject public clamor for dividing the Atlantic Fleet, thus putting into execution his theories of naval strategy especially those of concentration and objective. In 1899 he was appointed a United States delegate to the First Hague Conference.

It is true that Mahan's great influence in the United States between 1886 and 1900 did not bring him the great public acclaim and honors such as those he received from other countries but it should be remembered the United States, as a peacetime democracy, had not greatly developed its official government institutions and had no awards for non-combat distinguished service. Further, none of the recently established private institutions and societies had developed the stature, traditions, and system of honors that the European organizations had.

Influence in England. In the preceding pages of this chapter considerable attention has been devoted to an analysis of Mahan's early influence in the United States because this aspect is more complex and often has been neglected or misunderstood by writers. His influence in other maritime nations, being less complex and having been well publicized, will now be treated briefly.

In general, it can be said that Mahan did not influence foreign nations to build navies but he did provide them with

a justification for their naval development or expansion programs. It is most revealing to note that by 1889 the various European countries had constructed or were building battleships as follows: Great Britain 45, France 24, Italy 13, Russia 11, Germany 11, and Austria 5.¹⁴ At this same time Japan was pressing its naval construction program, largely with British assistance (ship construction in Great Britain, construction in Japan, and British training assistance).

In England, Mahan's book produced immediate results upon its publication in 1890. Although Parliament already had voted to modernize and increase the size of the Royal Navy by the time his book appeared, Mahan's principles and theories not only were received as sound historical analyses but also provided eloquent justification for the naval policies of the country. As such these conclusions by a foreigner were most useful in explaining to the British people the sources and necessity of British sea power and gave to the Cabinet and Parliament an unprejudiced justification for increased naval expenditures.¹⁵

Among the individuals in England first influenced by Mahan were Rear Admiral P. H. Colomb, Royal Navy; Professor John K. Laughton, Royal Naval College; Professor James R. Thursfield, Fellow at Oxford and a writer on naval affairs

¹⁴Puleston, p. 108.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 106-107.

for The Times; Colonel George Sydenham Clarke, British Army; and Rear Admiral Bouverie Clark. It is interesting to note that some of these men, all highly capable and distinguished in 1890, later received high honors. Professor Laughton was later knighted. Colonel Clarke who had heard Mahan lecture at the Naval War College in 1888, was elevated to the peerage as Lord Sydenham. Rear Admiral Clark, with whom as Commander Clark Mahan had served in South America, later was knighted and became a Vice Admiral.¹⁶

The praise for his work by these men, most of whom wrote for the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, and other writers in England publicized Mahan's widely read book.¹⁷ Most significant among the influential readers in England were Prime Minister Gladstone, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, the Right Honorable Arthur Balfour and Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, all of whom wrote laudatory comments on Mahan's work.¹⁸ From these communications and those of his English publishers, Sampson Low, Marston and Company, Mahan learned of his influence in England but if it had not been for his assignment, against his will, as Commanding Officer of U.S.S. Chicago, he might never have received first-hand evidence of this influence. Unwittingly, Admiral Ramsay

¹⁶Taylor, p. 45, 133-134, 179.

¹⁷Puleston, p. 97.

¹⁸Taylor, p. 45-47, 304.

and Mahan's other enemies in the United States Navy placed him in a position personally to receive great honors and to achieve lasting fame.

During his two years in the European Squadron, Chicago visited England several times and it was on these occasions that Mahan was lavishly entertained and honored, much to Admiral Erben's disgust. He was presented at Buckingham Palace, invited to several dinners and a ball by Queen Victoria, entertained as an honored guest by the Royal United Service Institution, and honored at dinners by the Earl Spencer who was First Lord of the Admiralty, by the American Ambassador, and by his publishers.¹⁹ He was the honored guest at a dinner held by the Royal Navy Club of 1765 and 1785, the first time any non-British citizen had been privileged to dine with this club, which had numbered Nelson among its members.

In addition to the social honors accorded Mahan in England, aboard British ships, and at Mediterranean bases, he received two honorary doctor's degrees. On 20 June 1894, Mahan was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Civil Law by the University of Oxford and a short time later an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws by Cambridge University.²⁰

¹⁹Captain Ellicott was selected by Mahan to accompany him to his presentation at Court and other ceremonies. For additional information, see Ellicott, "Sidelights on Mahan," p. 1247.

²⁰For details of Mahan's influence and honors in England, see Taylor, p. 61-77 and Puleston, p. 154-162.

Six years later in 1900, the Royal United Service Institution awarded its Chesney Gold Medal for the first time, and its Council selected Mahan as the recipient. Unlike his other British honors which Mahan received in person in England, the medal and citation were transmitted to him by the British Embassy in Washington through the Navy Department.

In analyzing Mahan's influence in England, one is struck by the genuine friendliness and respect of the British for Mahan, and in accepting his honors, Mahan was deeply moved and pleased.²¹ He, however, was not given to emotional demonstrations and Captain Ellicott, who accompanied him on a number of occasions when he was being honored in England in 1894, has written of his reactions ". . . never did I see him in the least emotionally elated, but rather always displaying a dignified shrinking and diffidence."²² It is this writer's opinion that Mahan's reserve and quiet accepting of their honors served to strengthen the bond between him and these influential Englishmen. For this reason and many others Mahan was able to enter with ease and become a part of the

²¹Mahan, From Sail to Steam, p. 313-314.

For a short but excellent analysis of the influence of Mahan which added impetus to the establishment of permanent Royal Naval Staff and War Colleges at Greenwich, see Christopher Lloyd, "The Royal Naval Colleges at Portsmouth and Greenwich," The Mariner's Mirror, May 1966, p. 145-156.

²²Ellicott, "Three Navy Cranks," p. 1623.

aristocratic and intellectual world which ended in 1914. His great personal satisfaction in this respect was revealed only to his wife and a few close friends; when outside this small world he reassumed his aloofness.

Influence in France. At the time his Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 was published, the French Navy had been second to that of the British for over 150 years, and dedicated French officers examined Mahan's work carefully to identify their maritime shortcomings. These Mahan pointed out in great detail, from praise of France's aggressive national naval policy in the early sixteenth century to criticisms of French admirals and their tactics including obsession with defensive posture in battle in the nineteenth century.

One French naval officer, Captain Darrieus, a former Professor of Strategy at the French Naval War College said that Mahan's book should be read and reread, and in a book of his own, War on the Sea, Strategy and Tactics, he summarized much of Mahan's theory, even following the latter's theme so closely as to analyze the same period in history.²³ He agreed with and emphasized Mahan's lessons; he "passionately lamented the downfall of French sea power" that Mahan had so aptly described.²⁴

²³Gabriel Darrieus, War on the Sea, Strategy and Tactics (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1908).

²⁴Puleston, p. 107.

In spite of a number of receptions honoring Mahan in France during his 1893-1895 sea duty and translation of some of his books into French, French naval leaders were not able to utilize his teachings to restore to France a place of naval equality with England.²⁵

Influence in Germany. It has been said that "In his Sea Power books Mahan gave away to the enemy England's whole system of peace."²⁶ That this statement is true is best exemplified by examining Mahan's influence in Germany.

His greatest disciple in that country was Kaiser Wilhelm II, who in 1889 had dismissed the aging Chancellor, Prince Otto von Bismarck, partly because Bismarck had wanted Germany to concentrate on being a land power. Wilhelm's beliefs that Germany required a navy to protect her merchant marine and rapidly expanding trade with her increasing colonial possessions were confirmed by Mahan's books. The Kaiser even quoted Mahan in an "historic" speech in June 1892 to justify his conviction that Germany's future lay upon the sea."²⁷ He publicized Mahan's books among his subordinates and recruited Admiral von Tirpitz as a Mahan disciple. Although the Germans had always been good sailors there had

²⁵Taylor, p. 63, 127.

²⁶Ibid., p. 131

²⁷Puleston, p. 107.

never been a real German Navy because until 1871 there had never been a unified Germany. To acquaint Germans with their naval destiny, the Kaiser had Mahan's books translated into German and published in great volume. With police state efficiency, Wilhelm had complete sets placed aboard every German naval vessel, in all government institutions, schools, and public libraries.²⁸

In 1894, the Kaiser, in a telegram to an Englishman, wrote:

I am just now, not reading but devouring Captain Mahan's book; and am trying to learn it by heart. It is a first-class work and classical in all points. It is on board all my ships and constantly quoted by my Captains and officers.

William, I. and R.²⁹

In carrying out the wishes of the Kaiser, Admirals von Tirpitz and von Koester reminded the Germans of the loss of world power by the Dutch after the destruction of the Dutch Navy and the resulting virtual disappearance of the Dutch merchant marine from the high seas.³⁰

Even in Mahan's time, the amount of money spent indicated the degree of interest that governments had in public programs.

²⁸Taylor, p. 131-132.

²⁹Photographic copy of telegram from Kaiser Wilhelm II, I. and R. (Emperor and King) to Mr. Poultney Bigelow, 26 May 1894 reproduced by Taylor, p. 131.

³⁰Puleston, p. 107-108.

The writer feels that the fact that German Naval expenditures rose from \$170 million for the 10-year period 1885-1894 to \$920 million for the 10-year period 1905-1914 is vivid testimony of the influence of Mahan on German sea power.³¹ Germany did not lavish honors upon Mahan as did England but in 1895 Mahan was introduced to the Kaiser who entertained him aboard his yacht, Hohenzollern, in England and gave him an autographed picture.

Influence in Japan. Mahan lived to become most apprehensive of his influence in Germany and he felt the same way about Japan. As a "have-not" nation busily embarked on modernization and expansion, Japan, like Germany, took Mahan's teachings to heart, absorbing not only his broad strategic concepts but also his tactical principles.

As previously mentioned, Japan by 1890 was engaged in a naval expansion program with British assistance. Mahan's influence over the Japanese did not commence as promptly after the publication of his book as it did in England or Germany but once the Japanese read The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, they immediately recognized its value. His classic work was translated into Japanese and was made a textbook of the Japanese military and naval academies.³² The

³¹Taylor, p. 132.

³²Ibid., p. 114-117.

Japanese royal family bought three hundred copies and ordered more to distribute to all high schools and colleges in Japan. As other books by Mahan were published they were translated into Japanese, more of his works eventually being translated into Japanese than any other language with possible exception of German.

Most interesting and prophetic was the fact that when The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future was published in 1897 the Japanese translated it and published it as The Sea Power in the Pacific Ocean.³³

Though slower publicly to acknowledge Mahan's influence than England or Germany, the Japanese first successfully tested his principles in combat and confirmed the value of large naval ships. Margaret Sprout has written that the naval battles of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 were widely interpreted as proving the fighting value of capital ships.³⁴ Later during the Russo-Japanese War, Admiral Count Heihachiro Togo, the Nelson of Japan, utilized Mahan's concept of "Concentration" and was able to gain victory over one-half of the Russian fleet before he had to take under attack the Russian Baltic Fleet that was sent to relieve besieged

³³Ibid., p. 117.

Alfred T. Mahan, The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897).

³⁴Sprout, "Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power," p. 437.

Port Arthur. This battle in the Tsushima Straits in 1905 revealed not only basic Russian maritime weaknesses but also the fact that Japan was a great naval power.³⁵

Subconclusion. Mahan's influence on sea power was not apparent until he reached the age of 45 and for the next five years it was practically limited to America. With the publication of his book, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, in May 1890, his influence became international in scope and he received recognition and honors from foreign countries, particularly England, Germany, and Japan, unprecedented at the time and unequalled to the present. In the United States, his influence increased but his official public honors during his lifetime never equaled those accorded him by England. At home, however, as their close friend and confidant he influenced Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge not only in naval matters but also on foreign policy. As his world-wide influence increased he became more accustomed to his honors, but because of his retiring nature never wore his laurels with the gusto to which lesser men would have succumbed. He was in general satisfied with his success and realized modestly that he was a most respected naval scholar and an international celebrity. In his autobiography he noted with obvious pleasure that his books had

³⁵Puleston, p. 249-253.

been translated into French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and reportedly Italian.³⁶

As he grew older, his deep moral and religious convictions became more apparent contributing that to his demeanor which made him appear dignified, stern, and aloof to all but his closest friends and imparted a certain mystical quality to him which remains to this day. For almost the last 25 years of his life Mahan was one of the most highly respected Americans in the world.

³⁶Mahan, From Sail to Steam, p. 302.

CHAPTER III

MAHAN'S INFLUENCE FROM 1914 TO 1939

I not only admired the Admiral, but regarded him as one of the greatest and most useful influences in American life. He was one of those few men who leave a permanent mark on history and literature, aside from their profound and far-reaching influence on contemporary thought. He was a great man and a very good man and good citizen.

-- Theodore Roosevelt¹

These words of praise take on added significance when one realizes that they were written by a great President about a United States Navy "tombstone" rear admiral who never commanded more than one ship at a time and was not a combat hero.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, however was no ordinary "tombstone" rear admiral. As Margaret Sprout has written, "Few persons leave so deep an imprint on world events as that left by Mahan and fewer still live to see so full a realization of their life's work."²

Mahan lived to see his writings praised by scholars, statesmen, and military strategists from many foreign countries. In his own country he was highly respected and his early Navy detractors had faded from the scene. Even the few critics who

¹Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Taylor, p. 245.

²Sprout, "Mahan: Evangelist of Sea Power," p. 436.

were still skeptical of his theories admitted that his intellectual honesty and personal integrity were beyond reproach.³ He had been appointed to commissions and boards studying the reorganization of the Navy and had been sought out by publishers to write current interest articles or books on the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and finally World War I.

Influence during World War I. By mid 1914 a troubled Mahan had made his famous suggestion that the British declare war and immediately strike the growing German Navy.⁴ After Mahan published his first article on military operations in World War I, the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, in response to a request by President Wilson, issued a directive in August 1914 stating that it would be "highly unwise and improper for officers of the Navy and Army of the United States to make public statements which contained any color of political or military criticism of other nations."⁵ Although Mahan appealed for exemption from this directive because he was retired, his plea was turned down by the Navy Department and his writing days were terminated.

³Puleston, p. 355-356.

⁴Ibid., p. 341.

⁵The text of this order and Mahan's attempts to have the order withdrawn in his case appear in Taylor, p. 274-276.

Three months later, on 1 December 1914, Mahan died at Washington, D.C. where he had moved to become a Research Associate at the Carnegie Institution.

Five years previously, in 1909, Mahan's principal disciple, Theodore Roosevelt, had left the White House and with Mahan's death it might have seemed that the Mahan influence on American policy had ended. Such was not the case because although Alfred Thayer Mahan died on 1 December 1914, his theories lived on in the mind of another Roosevelt, Franklin Delano.

When he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913, a post which his cousin Theodore had occupied in 1897, Franklin Roosevelt learned of Mahan from his cousin.

Theodore Roosevelt left the White House in 1909; on his last day in office, he wrote a personal letter to incoming President Taft, advising him not to divide the fleet. The letter included as its first sentence the following admonition: "One closing legacy. Under no circumstances divide the battleship fleet between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans prior to the finishing of the Panama Canal."⁶ This letter was the result of requests by Mahan. When Franklin Roosevelt was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913, Theodore Roosevelt, then out of office for four years, wrote Franklin

⁶The entire letter is photographically reproduced by William E. Livezey, Mahan on Sea Power (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), p. 236-237.

Roosevelt a letter, apparently on his own and not in response to any suggestion by Mahan. In May 1913, Theodore Roosevelt wrote to his cousin:

It is not my place to advise but there is one matter so vital that I want to call your attention to it. I do not anticipate trouble with Japan, but it may come, and if it does it will come suddenly. In that case we shall be in an unpardonable position if we permit ourselves to be caught with our fleet separated. There ought not to be a battleship or any formidable fleet in the Pacific unless our entire fleet is in the Pacific. Russia's fate ought to be a warning for all times as to the criminal folly of dividing the fleet if there is even the remotest chance of War.⁷

In the writer's opinion, this letter was to have a profound effect upon the United States Navy because with it Republican Theodore Roosevelt entrusted to his Democratic cousin Franklin Roosevelt the unofficial guardianship of Mahan's principles. Franklin, who admired his elder cousin greatly, and whose career his paralleled closely, accepted this responsibility and during the remaining year and a half before Mahan's death corresponded with the Admiral on a number of occasions.

In May 1914, Franklin Roosevelt wrote to Mahan to ask the latter's help in organizing public opinion to defeat new West Coast pressures to keep at least part of the fleet in the Pacific. Mahan agreed to help by writing articles and

⁷Theodore Roosevelt, quoted by William Neumann, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt: a Disciple of Mahan," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1952, p. 713-714.

Roosevelt, in responding to Mahan's agreement, suggested that one of the popular magazines would be the most appropriate vehicle for such articles.⁸ Franklin then advised his cousin Theodore of Mahan's agreement. True to his word, Mahan prepared an article which was published by the North American Review in September 1914.⁹

In June 1914 Mahan wrote to Franklin Roosevelt: "Personally, I feel that our danger in the Pacific much exceeds that in the Atlantic," and he recommended the development of maintenance and repair facilities on the West Coast.¹⁰ Roosevelt agreed. Still concerned with the Pacific in early August 1914, Mahan recommended to Roosevelt that "the fleet should be brought into immediate readiness and so disposed as to permit of very rapid concentration ready to proceed when desired."¹¹ He further suggested increased efforts to have the Panama Canal operational to allow transit of the battle-ships if necessary.

When in mid-August 1914, Japan delivered its ultimatum to Germany, Mahan became worried about the possibility of Japan's securing control over German-held islands in the Pacific and so advised Roosevelt. To him Japan did not seem

⁸Ibid., p. 714.

⁹Alfred T. Mahan, "The Panama Canal and the Distribution of the Fleet," North American Review, September 1914, p. 406-417.

¹⁰Alfred T. Mahan, quoted by Neumann, p. 716.

¹¹Ibid., p. 717.

to be an appropriate ally for Great Britain, and he felt that if Japan held these islands as a result of wartime service to the Allies, they would pose a threat to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Accordingly he suggested that the British be persuaded to attempt to forestall Japanese seizure of the German-held Pacific Islands.

Turning from his strategic thinking to tactical analysis, Mahan wrote to Roosevelt on 4 August 1914 that ". . . all our interests favor British success." In line with this he suggested that the planned United States "Proclamation of Neutrality" omit the customary formula which allowed belligerent ships to obtain "coal, only enough to reach the nearest national port."¹² If this formula were included, Mahan maintained that it would permit German ships to obtain enough fuel in the United States to proceed back to Germany conducting belligerent operations on the return voyage whereas British ships could obtain only small amounts of fuel.

As their correspondence grew, Mahan realized that Theodore Roosevelt had given him a most effective disciple in young Franklin Roosevelt, and Mahan considered Franklin to be the most appropriate official recipient of his ideas. After moving to Washington, Mahan visited Franklin Roosevelt's office in November 1914 to meet him but he was out and the two men never met each other.

¹²Ibid.

navy. With the assumption of the Presidency by Woodrow Wilson in 1913, it was expected that the Navy would be de-emphasized because of the control by the Democratic Party and the difference in character between the aggressive Theodore Roosevelt and the retiring Wilson. Such was not completely the case; during the first two years of Wilson's first administration, five more battleships were authorized, actually a slight increase in the programs of previous years.¹⁶ It should be observed that the failure of the Administration to include other needed supporting ships was an indication that it may have been "battleship-minded" but was not really "navy-minded." Much of the credit for the passage of this bill belongs to a disciple of Mahan, Democratic Congressman Richmond P. Hobson, a Naval Academy graduate who had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor as a lieutenant during the Spanish-American War.¹⁷

Later, as World War I continued in Europe and the United States was being drawn closer to the conflict, a Navy-recommended accelerated shipbuilding program was instituted by "The Act of August 29, 1916." The provisions of this act

¹⁶Brayton Harris, The Age of the Battleship, 1890-1922 (New York: Watts, 1965), p. 151.

¹⁷The U.S.S. Hobson, a destroyer-minesweeper named for Hobson, was sunk in a collision with great loss of life in the mid-Atlantic on 27 April 1952. Raymond V.B. Blackman, ed., Jane's Fighting Ships, 1953-54 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), p. 410.

As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt operated rather independently of the Secretary, Josephus Daniels, whom Roosevelt thought "too slow for words."¹³ Joseph Morrison states that Franklin Roosevelt considered himself a disciple of Mahan in naval strategy. He maintains that Roosevelt's impatience with Daniels which "often bordered on insubordination would have cost the head of any admiral who had dared venture into such turbulent waters."¹⁴

It is quite apparent that Josephus Daniels was not the ardent admirer of Mahan that his Assistant Secretary was. In his sympathetic biography of Daniels, Morrison (with some relish) states that the Secretary's order for officers to refrain from public comments of a foreign political nature "would muzzle the pro-British Mahan."¹⁵

After Mahan's death it could be easily determined that he had enjoyed his greatest prestige during the Republican Administrations of McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft and that the Republican Party had been a "large Navy" party whereas the Democrats had tended to hold a "small Navy" concept. It is noted, however, that many Democrats individually supported the idea of the United States having a first class

¹³Joseph L. Morrison, Josephus Daniels-the Small -d Democrat. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 51.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 67.

authorizing the construction of 157 ships, 66 of which were to be started immediately, practically constituted a well-balanced navy: 10 battleships, 6 battle cruisers, 10 scout cruisers, 50 destroyers, 68 submarines, 3 fuel ships, 2 destroyer tenders, 2 gunboats, 2 ammunition ships, 1 repair ship, 1 transport, 1 hospital ship, and 1 submarine tender.¹⁸

This ambitious program which would have been heartily approved by Mahan was never to be accomplished, two events being responsible largely for this. The first which occurred on 31 May 1916 was the Battle of Jutland and the second was the United States entry into the war on 6 April 1917.

The Battle of Jutland was to have been an employment of Mahan's theory of "Concentration" by the German High Seas Fleet against what Admiral von Scheer had hoped would be a dispersed British Grand Fleet. The battle did not develop that way and the German fleet, though performing well and inflicting great losses on the British, was not able to break Britain's command of the sea and was forced to return to German ports for virtually the remainder of the war. The High Seas Fleet did venture out on two subsequent occasions, but it returned "quickly and ignominiously" and when again ordered to sea in November 1918, a mutiny resulted "presaging the collapse of Imperial Germany."¹⁹ This battle, which involved

¹⁸Harris, p. 153.

¹⁹A brief but good description with a diagram of this battle and a bibliography for greater detailed research is provided by Barrie W.E. Pitt, "Battle of Jutland," Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: 1966), v. XIII, p. 169-171.

100 ships and 45,000 men of the German Navy opposing the British force of 148 ships and 60,000 men, has been termed the "biggest naval battle in history."²⁰ It was, however, the beginning of the end for the battleship fleet.

By the time the United States entered the war in 1917, none of the large ships authorized in 1916 were completed and the German High Seas Fleet, smaller in strength than the existing United States Navy, was bottled up by the British and could not operate effectively against the Allies. Although the 1916 program had come too late, it was actually not needed and the United States halted construction of the battleships and battle cruisers, concentrating on building destroyers and submarine chasers. It was obvious that the major United States contribution to the war at sea would be in conducting anti-submarine warfare.²¹

Mahan was primarily a battleship man and the United States, Great Britain, Japan, and Germany had heeded his advice. The German strategic defeat at Jutland had forced the German Navy to concentrate on submarine warfare and commerce raiding, the most colorful example of which was the employment of the sailing ship Seeadler by Count Felix von Luckner.²² Mahan late in

²⁰Ibid., p. 170.

²¹Harris, p. 153.

²²A most readable account of von Luckner's career is provided by Lowell Thomas, Count Luckner, the Sea Devil (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1927).

life had come to view as undecisive the concept of guerre de course as practiced by the French, but the Germans, able to do only that, came close to winning the war at sea in two World Wars.

To develop coordinated naval plans with the British, Rear Admiral William Snowden Sims, who was President of the Naval War College, was sent to England in 1917. Sims, who had revolutionized naval ordnance and target practice in the early 1900's, had been Mahan's close friend and although they differed greatly on occasion, each respected the other's knowledge. Sims, too, was a leader in developing the modern United States Navy but was not a disciple of Mahan as such.

Sims was informed by the British that the Germans were sinking 50 merchant ships a week using the guerre de course concept and he determined that all available patrol and escort craft should be sent to England immediately and that construction of these craft should be greatly expanded.²³ The United States had built escort ships and patrol craft in numbers needed only to support the battleship fleet and had not envisioned the need for additional craft for anti-submarine warfare. Admiral Sims suggested the formation of a merchant ship convoy system to the doubtful British. Mahan, who had considered the protection of the merchant marine a primary mission of the navy, had considered the submarine primarily

²³Harris, p. 150.

a commerce-raiding instrument and had not realized the great potential of this naval arm. Sims updated Mahan in this respect.

By the end of the war, Admiral Sims' analysis had been confirmed: merchant ship convoys had been highly successful and the United States had helped to win the sea war without having to use the battle fleet. To the casual observer it would have seemed that Mahan's influence had declined greatly.

Influence during the Inter-War Period 1918-1939.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, was still Assistant Secretary of the Navy and remained at his post until 1920 when he made his unsuccessful bid for the Vice-Presidency. He had remembered Mahan and his teachings and in 1922, while recovering from polio, planned to edit a revised edition of the Admiral's writings.²⁴ Unfortunately his other work prevented him from carrying out this project.

Although the United States had intended to resume its 1916 naval construction program after the war, President Harding decided to cancel construction based on a provision of the Act which authorized such action if a conference of the great powers could agree to an international reduction of armaments. The resulting Washington Conference beginning on 12 November 1921, provided for the limiting of naval tonnage on

²⁴Neumann, p. 718.

a 5:5:3:1.75:1.75 ratio.²⁵ The treaty drafted in 1922 ended the age of the battleship, and the United States along with other countries suspended work and scrapped a number of large hulls. Although Mahan would not have been pleased with the treaty's naval limitations which maintained the naval status quo, he would have been gratified by its restrictions on the fortification of certain areas in the Pacific which Japan received as mandates after the war.

Even though the United States Navy was most unhappy with the results of the State Department-sponsored Washington Naval Conference, the results in the long run were beneficial. The Navy was allowed to spend some of the released money to concentrate on developing and perfecting weapons such as the airplane, the submarine, the aircraft carrier, and the destroyer.

There are other events of early 1920's which tend to indicate a diminishing of Mahan's influence. The great publicity surrounding Brigadier General William Mitchell's tests with the aircraft bombing of naval vessels added another blow to Mahan's philosophy insofar as laymen were concerned. Proponents of air power, in citing Mitchell's success in sinking warships, often fail to realize that the ships he sank were dead in the water and unmanned, thus possessing neither air defense nor damage control capability. For example his

²⁵Harris, p. 159.

classic sinking of the captured German battleship, Ostfriesland, required two days and attack "by 69 aircraft which dropped a total of 69 bombs--with only 16 hits from altitudes of 1,200 to 2,000 feet." The ship, leaking before the tests began, finally sank because of progressive flooding. The last attack consisted of near misses by six 2,000 pound bombs which did heavy damage to the hull.²⁶

Admiral Sims had faith in the role of aircraft in the Navy and his defense of Mitchell's progressive theories led to the conversion of the collier Jupiter as the first American aircraft carrier, renamed U.S.S. Langley, in 1922.²⁷ Later, under provisions of the Washington Naval Treaty, the United States was permitted to convert Saratoga and Lexington, then under construction as battle cruisers, to aircraft carriers. In 1930, at the London Naval Conference, the parties to the 1922 Treaty agreed to further limitations: in 1930, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines were included.²⁸

The United States Navy, however, was able to continue its development of new weapons throughout the peacetime years of the 1920's and the early 1930's, developments modest in

²⁶Ibid., p. 200.

²⁷U.S. Navy Dept., Bureau of Naval Personnel, Naval Orientation, NAVPERS 16138-D (Washington, 1961), p. 301.

²⁸Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy at War 1941-1945 (Washington: United States Navy Dept., 1946), p. 5.

size because of money limitations but broad and revolutionary in scope. The battle fleet of Mahan was gone, seemingly forever.

Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the Presidency in 1933 during the depression and it was rumored that he was planning to reduce the Navy Department budget by 100 million dollars. His close associates, remembering his seven years as Assistant Secretary of the Navy and his belief in Mahan's theories, doubted this, and they were correct. When Roosevelt entered the White House, the influence of Mahan entered with him just as it had 32 years earlier with Theodore Roosevelt. In spite of the economic depression Roosevelt authorized the use of National Recovery Administration funds "to begin the largest single program of naval construction undertaken by any nation since the end of World War I."²⁹

The Navy building program was "stepped up materially" in 1933 by the authorization to construct 2 new aircraft carriers, 4 cruisers, 20 destroyers and 4 submarines.³⁰ In March 1934, Congress approved construction of additional ships to bring the fleet up to the maximum permitted by the naval treaties of 1922 and 1930. Unfortunately the money for this was not appropriated. Plans, however, were drawn up for improved

²⁹Neumann, p. 719.

³⁰King, p. 6.

battleships in 1937, 1938, and 1939 to replace obsolescent ships in the fleet. In 1937 the 6,000-ton Atlanta class cruisers, with extensive antiaircraft batteries, were designed, and a year later experimental programs for patrol vessels and motor torpedo boats were inaugurated.

Subconclusion. As the clouds of war darkened over Europe, President Roosevelt, in 1938, recommended to Congress a 20 percent increase in naval strength, exclusive of replacements. The Congress approved and authorized the implementation of Roosevelt's program.³¹

The increased Navy programs of Roosevelt were progressing steadily when the war in Europe began in 1939, but most of the ships designed were under construction and not ready for service. The United States was on the road to naval rearmament and it was Roosevelt, the "amateur naval strategist" and disciple of Mahan who had pressed vigorously for these building programs.³²

³¹Ibid., p. 6, 7.

³²Morrison in his book on Josephus Daniels refers to both Roosevelts as "amateur" naval enthusiasts on page 51. The writer would classify both men as professionals who understood the full meaning of "sea power" as have few others and applied their knowledge with great success.

CHAPTER IV

MAHAN'S INFLUENCE FROM 1939 TO THE PRESENT

Naval strategists of all nations are of one opinion that Admiral Mahan's works will for ever occupy the highest position as a world wide authority in the study of military science. I express my deep and cordial reverence for his far-reaching knowledge and keen judgement.

-- Togo¹

These words written prior to 1920 by a great naval officer were not forgotten, at least not by Japan. For the United States, the Second World War opened with the first class Japanese fleet attacking Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. From the flagship of this task force, Akagi flew the same "Z" flag that Admiral Togo had flown on his flagship, Mikasa in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905.² It is noted ironically that during the summer of 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy, after planning its Pearl Harbor attack tested the plan in a war game at its Naval War College.³ Captain William McCarty Little, U.S.N. (Ret.), who was Mahan's protégé at the Naval War College for many years and who developed naval war gaming there, would have been greatly chagrined had he lived to see the successful Japanese application of his work.

¹Admiral Count Heihachiro Togo, Imperial Japanese Navy, quoted in Taylor, p. 116.

²Walter Lord, Day of Infamy (New York: Holt, 1957), p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 13.

United States Naval Posture. The beginning of World War II found the United States possessing a two-ocean navy of which Mahan would have been proud. In addition to a large naval base in Hawaii there were smaller facilities at Guam and the Philippines. The Panama Canal, one of Mahan's major projects, had been in operation for about 25 years. This strong naval posture had not resulted directly from the influence of Mahan but largely from that of one of his major disciples, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was building up the United States Navy after the lean years of the 1920's and early 1930's.

A revealing graphic representation of the status of the United States Navy from the years following the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 to January 1944 is provided by Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King.⁴ This reflects the decrease of authorized naval tonnage from about 1.6 to 1.3 million after the Conference, a generally steady trend in authorized and on hand tonnage from 1930 through 1938, a rising trend from 1.6 million tons in 1939 until 1941, and a jump to 3 million tons with the approach and involvement of the United States in the Second World War. From this chart, the effects of President Roosevelt's programs became apparent by 1938 and the very great rise from 1941 to 1944 would appear to be the

⁴King, p. 4.

result not only of Roosevelt's domestic policy but it also reflects the impact of World War II.

In addition to his ship construction programs, Roosevelt meeting with Churchill in 1940, had obtained base rights from the British in exchange for 50 obsolescent destroyers which were no longer suitable for broad fleet service. Bases secured by these rights under 99-year leases gave the United States facilities for use in war time and they were of strategic importance long after the war was over.⁵ Later the United States negotiated agreements for facilities in Greenland, Iceland, and the Azores. By obtaining these bases the United States was able to advance its sea frontiers for hundreds of miles in the Atlantic. Roosevelt had applied Mahan's principle of securing bases thereby guaranteeing the lifeline of communications.

Adherence to Mahan's Strategic Concepts. As the war progressed the United States followed the strategic principles of Mahan by acquiring more and more advanced bases in order to conduct the war. Most noteworthy was the island-hopping campaign conducted in the Pacific. As United States ground forces, with great naval support, captured the heretofore

⁵Ibid., p. 9. By this agreement the United States acquired base rights in Newfoundland, Bermuda, Bahamas (Great Exuma Island), British Guiana, and the British West Indies (Antigua, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad).

almost unknown islands in the South Pacific, they were applying Mahan's tenets.⁶

Adherence to Mahan's Tactical Doctrine. Whereas the United States and its allies obviously applied Mahan's strategic principles, their adherence to his tactical doctrines was less obvious. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had caught unawares the United States battleship fleet in one large concentration and inflicted heavy losses on the Navy. As a result of this initial defeat, the immediate conduct of the war fell to the aircraft carriers and smaller ships such as destroyers and submarines. Around the carriers were grouped the supporting ships: destroyers, cruisers when available, and submarines, thus forming the fast carrier task force. For the remainder of the war the carrier task force formed the backbone of the fleet. The battleships, repaired or built as the war progressed, were utilized for major attacks against concentrated Japanese fleets and for shore bombardment.⁷

⁶Ibid., p. 197. In his report on logistics and bases, Fleet Admiral King wrote: "The 1940 Navy had no properly equipped advance bases other than Pearl Harbor. More than 400 have since been established in the Atlantic and Pacific areas in order to maintain the fleet and air forces in the forward areas where there was fighting to be done. As we progressed across the Pacific, islands captured in one amphibious operation were converted into bases which became spring boards for the next advance."

⁷Several years ago when the writer was on active duty for training at the U.S. Naval Amphibious School, Little

The United States early in the war realized that behind much of Japan's military aggression lay the desire to secure raw materials for economic expansion and to gain the support of military operations needed for economic control over Asia. With the destruction of much of the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Japanese merchant ships were free to ply the Pacific trade routes, protected when necessary by the Japanese Navy. In addition to following Mahan's tactical doctrines of concentration and objective the Japanese had implemented his teachings on the value of a nationally owned merchant marine. It was necessary, therefore, for the United States not only to destroy Japanese naval ships but also to destroy the merchant fleet on which Japan's war making potential depended.

Using its submarine forces supplemented by available aircraft the United States was forced to turn to the guerre de course or commerce raiding which Mahan had been convinced could not by itself be decisive and in which Germany had been defeated finally in World War I. In the Pacific war the United States won an outstanding victory over the Japanese merchant and naval fleets. In his official reports, Fleet

Creek, Virginia, there was a movement within the Navy to bring back the battleship. The gunnery instructor made it a point to emphasize that the only weapon in the world that could penetrate 32 feet of reinforced concrete was the projectile from a 16-inch naval gun, atomic and rocket weapons notwithstanding.

Admiral King wrote: "Our submarines are credited with almost two-thirds of the total tonnage of Japanese merchant marine losses, or a greater part than all other forces, surface and air, Army and Navy combined. . . . Of the total number of Japanese naval vessels sunk, our submarines are credited with almost one-third."⁸

During the war, American submarines sank a total of 1,042 merchant ships over 1,000 tons gross totalling 4,180,010 tons. Submarines accounted for the sinking of 276 Japanese naval vessels including 1 battleship, 8 aircraft carriers, 12 cruisers, 43 destroyers, 23 submarines and 189 minor combatant vessels.⁹

Application of the Theory of Concentration. Although the successful submarine war of the United States in World War II is usually referred to as guerre de course and is often cited as being in complete contradiction to Mahan's theory of concentration, the writer considers this is not really valid. To Mahan the principle of "concentration" was not as narrow as many of his readers have viewed it. He felt that concentration must be applied "in spirit, not in letter only; exercised with understanding, not merely literally."¹⁰

⁸King, p. 201.

⁹Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁰Mahan, Naval Strategy, p. 74.

To him concentration meant "exclusiveness of purpose" and "keeping a superior force at the decisive point."¹¹ Mahan further stated that a very considerable separation in space might be consistent with mutual support.¹²

It is the writer's opinion that the United States submarine war in the Pacific was actually the application of Mahan's theory of concentration. The United States submarine force was not merely a number of independent raiders; it was an organized offensive deployed force provided with intelligence on the general location of the enemy, with the logistics support to reach that position, and with the proper weapons to destroy the enemy upon contact. The principle of concentration consists basically of superiority at the decisive point. To the submarine force, one boat at the proper position was in effect concentration of force.¹³

Victory in World War II, a major naval as well as land war, had been achieved by the largest navy in the world composed of a small group of professional regular officers and enlisted men augmented by large numbers of reserve personnel

¹¹Ibid., p. 6, 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 74-75.

¹³For a brief treatment of the British application of Mahan's theory of concentration in June 1940, see Stephen W. Roskill, The Strategy of Sea Power; Its Development and Application (London: Collins, 1962), p. 165.

and utilizing the large modern fleet of naval and merchant ships. In the winning of the war the actions taken were generally in accordance with Mahan's broad doctrines but those taking the actions did not consciously or publicly ascribe them to Mahan.

With some merit, it has been written that: "World War II, the test of arms which proved Mahan's thesis also produced conditions which ostensibly indicated that such a thesis had become obsolete."¹⁴ During the war, the refinement and large scale employment of instruments such as the airplane, the aircraft carrier, the submarine, and nuclear weapons were decisive contributions to victory. The modern United States Navy, which really had not had the opportunity to prove its broad national effectiveness during the First World War or to develop its own modern traditions, did both in World War II using these "new" instruments. Since Mahan had not been involved with the concept or development of these or in the way in which they were employed, the victorious Navy of the post-World War II years quite logically turned away from Mahan. This does not mean that its respect for him diminished but naval officers generally did not study his works as extensively or with the great interest as they did earlier. Captain Hayes, rather eloquently, has stated, "Before World

¹⁴Hayes, p. 1185-86.

War II the Navy was still untried and Mahan furnished it with a beacon, but today rich in its own traditions and experience, it can establish doctrines in its own right. . .¹⁵

Naval Posture after World War II. Immediately after the conclusion of World War II, the main emphasis in the United States was to demobilize; Navy and merchant marine were no exceptions. Thousands of officers and men were released or retired and large numbers of ships were inactivated. Once again as in the early 1920's the battle fleet as envisaged by Mahan was reduced; this time, however, many of the ships were placed in moth balls in the reserve fleet. With its reduced budgets, the Navy continued its selective development particularly of improved aircraft, submarines, and electronics equipment.

The outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950 found the United States Navy in perhaps the best condition for war than it had been since 1898. Once again, control of the seas was necessary and lines of communications which Mahan considered "devoured all other considerations" were essential to support United States military operations in Korea. Luckily, the enemy had a limited navy with no major combatants (aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, or submarines) and the United States controlled the seas from the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 1186.

beginning of the war. But the Navy lacked in its active fleet the firepower which only battleships could bring to bear upon heavily constructed shore defenses from very long ranges. Accordingly, battleships were brought out of retirement and employed for the tasks of thick penetration and accurate long range firing in which they excel. After the termination of the Korean conflict, the battleships were laid up permanently.¹⁶ The Navy once again had been a major contributor to the successful termination of hostilities and carrier-based aircraft had proven their worth against tactical land targets to a degree greater than even in World War II.

Literary Indications of Mahan's Influence. By 1939, the Navy had ceased to attribute its development to Mahan directly. In that year, however, Captain Puleston published his analytical biography of Mahan. Like almost all works on Mahan, this book depends heavily on Mahan's autobiography, From Sail to Steam and on Taylor's 1920 highly complimentary biography, The Life of Admiral Mahan, but has become itself an authoritative work. It is the writer's opinion that Puleston's book assisted in a war time revival of interest in Mahan and his philosophy. Indicative of this is the fact that in 1944, the original publishers, Little, Brown and Company, brought out a

¹⁶A brief but most useful analysis of the development, value, and future use of the battleship is provided by Bernard Brodie, A Guide to Naval Strategy, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 19-27.

twelfth edition of Mahan's The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783. Later in 1947 Livezey published his Mahan on Sea Power.

Although Mahan's influence appears to have diminished from 1945 to the present, professional interest in him seems to have been stimulated probably because of the naval aspects of the Korean conflict and the forum provided by the United States Naval Institute. From the earliest days of the Institute, which was founded in 1873, writers have used its published Proceedings to comment on older concepts and to propound new theories for consideration by other naval officers. Prior to the Korean conflict, articles on Mahan in the Proceedings had been infrequent and for the most part were historical sketches of Mahan, the naval officer, rather than analyses of Mahan, the naval strategist. These articles were useful in keeping Mahan's name before the naval public but did not contribute directly to his influence. Of these articles three by Captain Ellicott are most significant but apparently have been rarely referred to by scholars. Two of these have been cited earlier: "Three Navy Cranks and What They Turned," and "Sidelights on Mahan." The third dealt with Mahan and Erben on the U.S.S. Chicago.¹⁷

¹⁷John M. Ellicott, "With Erben and Mahan on the 'Chicago,'" United States Naval Institute Proceedings, September 1941, p. 1234-1240.

In 1952 the situation apparently changed. The frequency of articles on Mahan increased and with this, came greater emphasis on technical studies of his teachings. In that year Colonel Reinhardt published an article in which he analyzed Mahan's principles and pointed out the need for someone to do for air power what Mahan did for sea power.¹⁸ Later in 1952 Admiral Arthur Ageton discussed in his Proceedings article the contemporary validity of the lessons to be learned from history.¹⁹ A month later, Neumann's "Franklin Delano Roosevelt: a Disciple of Admiral Mahan" appeared in the Proceedings.²⁰ Next and also most significant was Captain Hayes' scholarly article previously mentioned: "Peripheral Strategy--Mahan's Doctrine Today," published in 1953. Four years later, Francis Duncan's "Mahan--Historian with a Purpose" added a spiritual insight to the Mahan study.²¹

¹⁸George C. Reinhardt, "Air Power Needs Its Mahan," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, April 1952, p. 362-367.

¹⁹Arthur A. Ageton, "Are the Lessons of History No Longer Valid?," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, June 1952, p. 624-633.

²⁰This article previously cited was especially valuable as original research because Neumann examined hitherto unknown correspondence between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mahan held in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park. Strangely, no copies of these were to be found in Mahan's personal papers on deposit at the Library of Congress. Neumann, p. 713.

²¹Francis Duncan, "Mahan-Historian with a Purpose," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1957, p. 498-503.

Most recently, Captain Robert Brent's previously mentioned "Mahan--Mariner or Misfit" published in April 1966 appears to have stimulated anew an interest in Mahan. Although this article is basically historical, certain observations by Captain Brent on intellectualism in the Navy have evoked comment by another Mahan student, Captain Hayes, and a dialogue may be developing.²²

Subconclusion. During World War II, it is felt that Mahan's influence was definitely present though not expressly attributed to him. In addition to Roosevelt, who was a student of Mahan's broad strategic theories, a large number of senior officers of the Navy had been graduated from the Naval Academy prior to Mahan's death and had studied Mahan at the height of his fame. Such men as Fleet Admirals King, Nimitz, and Halsey had studied at the Naval War College, not to mention the numerous admirals junior to them who were also War College graduates.

To one outsider at least, Mahan's influence was present and vexing. Writing of his service as Secretary of War during

²²John D. Hayes, "Comment and Discussion on 'Mahan--Mariner or Misfit.'" United States Naval Institute Proceedings, January 1967, p. 101-104.

Robert Brent, "Comment and Discussion on 'Mahan--Mariner or Misfit.'" United States Naval Institute Proceedings, January 1967, p. 104.

the period 1940-1945, Henry L. Stimson remarked about "the psychology of the Navy Department which frequently seemed to retire from the realms of logic into a dim religious world in which Neptune was God, Mahan his prophet, and the United States Navy the only true Church."²³

The impact of Roosevelt on the Navy over a period extending from 1913 to 1945 with an interruption from 1920 to 1933, is perhaps best stated by William Neumann: "In the years that followed Franklin Roosevelt expanded naval power beyond the greatest expectations of either Mahan or Theodore Roosevelt."²⁴ When, after the President's death in 1945, Mrs. Roosevelt was asked which books influenced most her husband's thinking she replied that he had "always talked of Mahan's history as one of the books he found most illuminating."²⁵

With Roosevelt's death, the disciple most influenced by Mahan disappeared from the scene, and after the end of World War II many of the senior naval officers who had studied so thoroughly Mahan's principles retired or left the active naval service. Starting with Captain Puleston's 1939 book, there has been increased professional interest in Mahan. This

²³Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 506.

²⁴Neumann, p. 719.

²⁵Eleanor Roosevelt, quoted in Neumann, p. 719.

interest by no means indicates a return of Mahan's influence which deteriorated superficially after the First World War, returned strongly but indirectly in 1933 through Franklin D. Roosevelt, and ceased with Roosevelt's death in 1945, but it does offer hope to the admirers of Mahan that his influence may be returning.

CHAPTER V

MAHAN'S PRINCIPLES TODAY

Yes, the era of the big battleship is coming but I think it will pass. They are putting too many eggs in one basket. In future wars there will be need to cover large areas with smaller vessels.

-- Mahan¹

This comment by Mahan to a junior officer aboard the U.S.S. Chicago almost 75 years ago is most noteworthy and it is but one of many indications that Mahan was more farsighted than many writers give him credit for being. That Mahan was a "battleship man" there is no question but even he was reluctant to endorse the very large big-gun ships proposed 10 years later by the then Lieutenant Commander Sims. In his analysis of Mahan's theories Admiral Ageton wrote:

Mahan always hailed enthusiastically the advent of any new weapon. He was eager to see it tested and accepted into the arsenal of current weapons. But he was also zealous to rebuke the extravagant claims of its proponents. And he always expected a defense to be developed as a counter to any new weapon.²

Critics of Mahan. Mahan's critics have existed since the days prior to 1890 and they have been of four distinct types. First were the "Ramsays and Erbens" who apparently

¹Alfred T. Mahan, quoted by Ellicott, "Sidelights on Mahan," p. 1248.

²Ageton, p. 626.

honestly considered him an impractical intellectual who was a poor naval officer. Second were writers like the famed Charles Beard, Louis Hacker, and most recently Barbara Tuchman who have interpreted Mahan as a rather sinister individual.³ Third are those who either disagreed with his principles at the time like Fred Jane or like William Kaufmann who considers that his theories are outmoded.⁴ Fourth are writers like John Grenville and George Young who consider that Mahan has been given credit for the development of the doctrines of sea power and the success of the Naval War College which properly belongs to Admiral Stephen Luce.⁵

³Charles A. Beard, the noted historian claimed that the "so-called philosophy of Mahan is no philosophy at all." Charles A. Beard quoted by Francis Duncan, p. 501.

Louis M. Hacker referred to Mahan as a "philosopher of death and destruction." Louis M. Hacker, "The Incendiary Mahan," Scribner's Magazine, April 1934, p. 264.

Barbara Tuchman in discussing Mahan's activities as a member of the United States Delegation to the Hague Conference of 1899 wrote, "In every commission and discussion Mahan made his presence felt like a voice of conscience saying 'No;' it was however a conscience operating not in behalf of peace but in behalf of unfettered exercise of belligerent power." Barbara W. Tuchman, The Proud Tower, a Portrait of the World before the War 1890-1914 (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 260.

⁴Frederick T. Jane, Heresies of Sea Power (London: Longmans, Green, 1906), p. 1, 20, 39, 62, 111-112, 152, 256-257.

William W. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 7.

⁵John A. S. Grenville and George Young, Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). In reaching their conclusions the authors like many other Mahan

The writings of these individuals have been offset to a considerable degree by the excellent works of Captains Puleston, Hayes, and Brent; Admiral Ageton; and Francis Duncan who clearly understand Mahan. As a result of these criticisms of Mahan and his philosophy, the question emerges: "Are Mahan's principles valid today?"

Validity of the Components of Sea Power. The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 sets forth Mahan's six components of sea power which were outlined briefly in Chapter I of this thesis. In recapitulation they were:

1. Geographical Position
2. Physical Conformation
3. Extent of Territory
4. Number of Population
5. Character of the People
6. Character of the Government.⁶

One method of testing the validity of these components would be to compare the sea powers of 1890 with those of today. In the earlier period the sea powers were England,

students were apparently hypnotized by the date 1890 not realizing that Mahan's influence was in effect prior to that date. They cite the 1889 Report of the Secretary of the Navy as "proof" that Mahan was not the originator of the naval plans. Apparently they were not aware of Margaret Sprout's analysis in her "Mahan, Evangelist of Sea Power," p. 436, in which she maintained this 1889 report bears the "unmistakable imprint of Mahan's ideas."

⁶Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, p. 28, 29.

the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and Russia. Of these countries England, the United States, Japan, and Russia possessed all of the components for a natural development of sea power. The large Russian fleet was not developed to protect trade which was Mahan's concept as the prime reason for the existence of a navy. The true stature of the Russian Navy became apparent after its defeat by the Japanese in 1905. Germany's navy was being developed ostensibly for protection of trade and colonies. It was not a natural growth but actually a frenzied race to achieve superiority over the British Navy.

Now, 77 years later, only the United States, the Soviet Union and to a lesser degree England are great naval powers but Japan, France, and Italy would still qualify as sea powers because of their large merchant fleets and related maritime industries. Germany after failing twice to defeat the Allied navies and having been divided geographically after World War II is in a respectable position as a sea power but its Navy, unnaturally expanded to wage aggressive war in two world conflicts is now only a fraction of its former strength.

Countries such as Norway, Sweden, Greece, Liberia, and Panama have large merchant marines but of these only Norway and Sweden possess the components of sea power. Their small navies are good but are not capable of providing complete protection to their merchant fleets. The Norwegian and

Swedish ships are engaged in world-wide trade, much of it not with the homeland. The large merchant fleets of Greece, Liberia, and Panama are similarly engaged. To a large degree these fleets consist of "flag of convenience" shipping which is not really a part of the economic sphere of the countries and these nations have limited maritime industries. In time of general war, Greek, Liberian, and Panamanian flag ships probably would change their registries overnight and disappear into the merchant marines of other countries. It appears, therefore, that the nations which naturally possessed Mahan's components of sea power in 1890 are those which are sea powers today except for Germany which lost half its territory after World War II. The emergence of the Soviet Union as a formidable sea power is not the result of natural development but is the result of determined efforts by the Soviets to compete with the West in economic and military fields. As far as the writer can determine no nation has developed into a great sea power without possessing all of Mahan's components at least to some degree.

It is most appropriate to observe that in the official basic United States naval warfare publication, Naval Warfare, NWP 10(A), published in 1961, the elements of national power are listed as:

1. Geographical Position
2. Numerical Strength and Character of the Population
3. Character of the Government
4. Cultural Development
5. Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Military Potential.⁷

The influence of Mahan is definitely apparent in this listing which includes four of his six components practically verbatim.

Validity of the Principles of Naval Strategy. After analyzing the writings of Jomini concerning land warfare Mahan developed the four strategic principles of naval warfare outlined in Chapter II, principles of concentration, objective, offensive, and communications.⁸ Mahan never claimed to have invented the term "sea power" nor did he invent these principles of naval strategy. He merely applied the land military principles of Jomini and Clausewitz to naval warfare. He reduced the number from about 8 or 10 to four principles but expanded upon the meanings of these four.

To examine the validity of these principles today, one can examine the results of recent history. In the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese adhered to all of Mahan's points by concentrating their sea and air forces at the decisive

⁷U.S. Navy Dept., Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Naval Warfare, NWP 10(A) (Washington, 1961), p. 2-3.

⁸Mahan, Naval Strategy, p. 5, 32, 255, 266-267.

Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, p. 7-9, 514-516.

point, Pearl Harbor. The objective in accordance with Mahan's philosophy was the military forces of the United States at Pearl Harbor. By remaining on the offensive they were successful from the day of Pearl Harbor to the Battle of Midway in June 1942 at which time the Japanese were defeated and lost the offensive. Up to this time, the Japanese communications or logistics line was uninterrupted. After the Battle of Midway, the United States Navy was able to interrupt the lines of communications. Gaining the offensive after the Battle of Midway, the United States commenced its island-hopping campaign to secure advance bases in accordance with Mahan's theories. At this point the Japanese, having lost the offensive, and while suffering logistics interruptions made what may have been their fatal blunder: they stopped concentrating their forces at the decisive point and changed the emphasis of their objective from attack on the naval forces of the United States to defense of the islands under attack.⁹

It has been held that the British, usually good followers of Mahan, also made the same mistake during World War II and should have held the Luftwaffe as their prime objective of aerial attack instead of shifting to urban bombing.¹⁰

⁹Ageton, p. 628.

¹⁰Ibid.

Of course the world of today is different from that of 70 or even 25 years ago. Writers like William Kaufmann consider that the changing methods of warfare require principles different from those of Mahan. In his book, The MaNamara Strategy, Kaufmann stated, "Admiral Mahan pondering the lessons of Trafalgar, would have found nothing there to inform him about the outcome of a conventional engagement between two major nuclear powers."¹¹ This may be true but if it is, there is probably nothing any better available to determine such an outcome than Mahan's scholarly work.

It is revealing to note that individuals who feel that the world has changed so greatly that basic principles change have not been confined to the twentieth century. In 1874, the President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, Admiral Sir Cooper Key, said:

There is no doubt that of late years there has been far less love for the study of naval history among young officers than there was when I first entered the Service. People are much in the habit of saying that everything has changed and the history of the past is therefore of little value. But the principles on which our naval tactics must be based remain as they were. . . "¹²

In appraising the world situation and the management of the Department of Defense by Secretary Robert McNamara there

¹¹Kaufmann, p. 7.

¹²Admiral Sir Cooper Key, RN, comments on Laughton, "The Scientific Study of Naval History," p. 525.

are often claims made with pride by his supporters that he has revolutionized the Department from the financial point of view and also from the point of view of military strategy. His detractors also make the same claims but not with pleasure. As revolutionary as Secretary McNamara's financial, cost effectiveness, and systems analysis concepts appear, Lieutenant General August Schomburg, U.S.A., Commandant of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces has written: "Actually, Mr. McNamara's innovations drain deeply on the past; they represent an extension of techniques of economic analysis long used in military operations research since World War II."¹³

In the same respect, the broad military strategy and tactics employed by the United States are not as far removed from Mahan as it would appear. In fact many of Mahan's theories are being practiced in the Vietnamese conflict which is admitted by both military and civilian writers as being an unconventional one, completely different from past wars. In Vietnam, the United States is effectively producing concentration at the decisive point both in its land and sea wars. In North Vietnam United States air strikes have as

¹³August Schomburg, "Foreword," Samuel A. Tucker, ed., A Modern Design for Defense Decision: a McNamara-Hitch-Enthoven Anthology. (Washington: U.S. Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1966), p. iii.

their objective almost exclusively North Vietnamese military forces, lines of communications, and logistics. It is true that in the South, American objectives are broader than military victory but they include the concept of neutralization and defeat of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops in addition to "revolutionary development" or pacification.¹⁴

In order to conduct the struggle the United States is maintaining its control over the sea lines of communications, augmenting its merchant fleet to transport supplies and establishing large advance bases and logistics depots in South Vietnam.

Moving from the so-called limited conflict of Vietnam to strategic deterrence and mobility, Secretary McNamara is emphasizing strategic mobility and flexible response.¹⁵ To this end he and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while approving reductions in the number and size of overseas bases and troop

¹⁴It has been suggested by Senator Thomas J. McIntyre of New Hampshire that two battleships be reactivated to intensify the bombardment of North Vietnam. For a detailed discussion of the implications of reactivation, see Randall G. Richard, "Will Tourist Attraction Menace Viet Cong?" The Providence (R.I.) Sunday Journal, 5 March 1967, p. N-52:1-8.

¹⁵It has been stated that Mahan's father may be called the father of the modern concept of strategic mobility because he maintained that rapid movement is an element in almost every success in war. Niu Sien-Chong, "Two Forgotten American Strategists," Military Review, November 1966, p. 55-56.

strengths are substituting greatly improved airlift of troops and equipment and are planning construction of fast deployment logistics ships (FDL) to be prepositioned at critical overseas locations. In effect they are adhering to Mahan's four naval strategy principles substituting improved communications for overseas bases on land.

Whereas the influence of Mahan is apparent in the official United States Navy manual, Naval Warfare, NWP, 10(A), insofar as his components of sea power are concerned, it appears as though the authors have ignored his principles of naval strategy and have gone back to study the same principles of land warfare that he studied. Appendix C to this book lists the following principles of war with the comment that they "represent observations relating to principles of war which appear to be applicable in some degree to naval warfare."

1. Objective
2. Morale
3. Simplicity
4. Control
5. Offensive
6. Exploitation
7. Mobility
8. Concentration
9. Economy
10. Surprise
11. Security
12. Readiness.¹⁶

¹⁶Naval Warfare, NWP, 10(A), p. C-2--C-9.

This list which was published in 1961 was modified in 1966 by Change 1 which deleted "Morale" as one of the principles. Of Mahan's basic four principles of naval strategy, all are however, included in this long list although the definitions in the manual are broader than Mahan's theories. One apparent difference is observed. Whereas Mahan and many other scholars have considered the basic principles of strategy unchanging but subject to application in different forms, Naval Warfare, 10(A) states: "Frequently, however, they are too abstract or too general to be entirely meaningful in themselves. For this reason they cannot be considered as immutable doctrine."¹⁷

Subconclusion. It is concluded that Mahan's components of sea power are basically correct today. To become a sea power a state weak in one or more of these components must remedy this weakness or accentuate one or more of the remaining components. Concerning his four principles of naval strategy it appears that they are still valid and a navy which for one reason or another is forced to deviate from these must compensate or substitute for this change in strategy in order to achieve the same results as suggested by Mahan.

The writer believes that Mahan and Admiral Sir Cooper Key, who eventually served as First Sea Lord, maintained

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3-7.

correctly that the principles of naval strategy and tactics are immutable and that it is their application not the basic principles which change with changing situations and technological developments.¹⁸ In analyzing the strategy and tactics of the United States today the writer does not wish to imply that the Secretary of Defense or the Joint Chiefs of Staff are necessarily disciples of Mahan spending what little leisure time they have reading his books. Mahan was methodically logical and his doctrines were merely the result of the application of common sense. It is interesting to note that Secretary McNamara has suggested that "systems analysis" may perhaps best be characterized as "quantitative common sense."¹⁹ Admittedly because of political considerations, the conflict in Vietnam is not being conducted precisely according to Mahan's theories but enough of his precepts are being followed to validate them today. Admiral Robert B. Carney in commenting on Mahan wrote: "It was his adherence to principles, and his ability to keep his thinking from being

¹⁸Mahan, Naval Strategy, p. 2.

It is most significant that Professor W. H. Russell of the United States Naval Academy has confirmed the validity of Mahan's principles citing as proof a recent statistical analysis by a young naval officer in which it was indicated that Mahan's methods were practical not only in the technologically simple early twentieth century but also during the present period of technological revolution. W. H. Russell, "Mahan," n.p.: n.p., 1958.

¹⁹Robert S. McNamara, quoted by Schomburg, p. iii.

obscured by the limitations of the weapons he knew, which made so much of his writings applicable even with the change of weapons and weapons systems that were to come."²⁰

²⁰Robert B. Carney, "Always the Sea," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1955, p. 497.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The shrinkage of oceanic space has, by bringing continental nations into closer contact, decreased insular significance and increased the universality and intensity of continental struggles and the necessity to secure control of intervening-sea lines whose distance diminishes with each inventive decade.¹

-- Homer Lea¹

This statement was made at the beginning of the twentieth century by a contemporary of Mahan, an almost forgotten American who served as a Lieutenant General in the Chinese Imperial Reform Army. To it, the writer believes Mahan would have subscribed. With the development of aviation, this quotation is even truer today than it was sixty-five years ago. Today, control of the sea-lanes is not just a task for sea power alone but a task for combined sea and air power.

After the Spanish-American War, the United States emerged as a world power. It was no accident that this emergence occurred coincidental with the rise of the modern United States Navy. Although this entry into the club of great powers was probably noted by the other major nations, President Theodore Roosevelt took no chances and sent his "Great White Fleet" on a world tour in 1907. After this successful trip,

¹Homer Lea, quoted by Niu Sien-Chong, p. 58.

there was no doubt of the military and industrial strength of the United States.

Mahan's Influence on Sea Power. To the quiet, dignified, scholarly, spiritual, and conservative Alfred Thayer Mahan belongs much credit for influencing individuals of prominence on naval and national matters. For over a half a century it has become traditional for Mahan's admirers to maintain that whereas Mahan was accorded great recognition by foreign countries, his own countrymen did not appreciate him and his influence was not felt so promptly. Mahan, himself, often felt depressed for the same reason and indicated that he was an individual of whose knowledge and wisdom Congress showed little awareness. In this respect the writer considers that Mahan and his admirers have been actually mistaken. Even if his recognition was not as effusively or as quickly bestowed by his native land as by England, Mahan enjoyed a position of high prestige as a confidant of a great President and later served as a naval mentor to that President's young relative who himself was to assume the Presidency. Mahan's influence on both Roosevelts and on thoughtful naval officers over a period ranging from about 1885 to 1945 was profound.

In addition to this intangible recognition, Mahan has been honored by having buildings named for him at his alma mater, the United States Naval Academy, and at the United States Naval War College to which he devoted many years of

his life, and the Navy named a destroyer for him. In a recent manual, the Navy Department has expressed this opinion: "Alfred T. Mahan occupies a supreme position as a writer."²

All told, the writer concludes that the United States and in particular the United States Navy has every reason to be proud of its recognition of the work of Mahan.

It appears however that his direct influence ended with the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the end of the Second World War. Although his doctrines are not taught in any great detail as they were in years past, it would seem that in general his principles are being followed in the United States. Interest in him has increased since the Korean conflict but has not reestablished his influence to an identifiable degree. In this regard it is most noteworthy that even today practically every book on international relations, national strategy, or naval matters has some treatment of Mahan even if only superficial or distorted.

Mahan's Greatest Influence. In studying the influence of Mahan upon sea power, it has become apparent to the writer that Mahan's greatest influence has not been merely his successful efforts to enunciate naval doctrine, to increase the size and capability of the United States Navy, to secure

²U.S. Navy Dept., Naval Orientation, NAVPERS 16138-D, p. 27.

overseas bases or even to build the Panama Canal. Admittedly, these efforts were great enough to insure his place as a great naval officer and analytical historian. Except for his books, Mahan alone was not responsible for these accomplishments and had he not undertaken this work, other naval officers might have accomplished the same results.

His greatest influence, however, appears to be more subtle than these tangible accomplishments. As a protégé of Admiral Stephen B. Luce, founder and first President of the United States Naval War College, and his successor as President of the College, Admiral Mahan encouraged advanced study by naval officers in an atmosphere of academic freedom the better to understand sea power, its relationships with land warfare and its relationships with international relations. That this influence of Mahan is in effect today was perhaps most strikingly exemplified by Vice Admiral John T. Hayward, U.S.N., President of the Naval War College in his welcoming address to the June 1967 Class. In it he promised the members of the class, consisting of officers from the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force; civilians from several government agencies; and foreign naval officers that he would do all in his power during the coming academic year to insure that they ran just as fast as they could, intellectually.³

³John T. Hayward, "War College Begins Its 83rd Year," Newport (R.I.) Daily News, 12 August 1966, p. 1:1-5.

It is often stated with a considerable degree of accuracy that the naval officer today does not have the leisure that the officers of Mahan's day had to engage in contemplative thinking. Even at sea, few officers have the time when off watch to engage in professional reading and writing because of the necessary administrative work required properly to operate the complex ships and aircraft in today's Navy. For many of these officers and civilian students, the year that they study at the Naval War College is the only time in their careers that they are able to engage in the reflective thought advocated by Mahan and to run intellectually as fast as they can.

Recommendations. Students of Mahan in examining his doctrines in light of the technology of today often suggest that his principles be updated. It is true that his theories are dispersed with historical analysis throughout his numerous books. It is true also that his style of writing is that of the nineteenth century and does not have the succinctness of today's military style. Because of this, detailed study of Mahan's doctrines no longer occupies a place of prominence in the curricula of naval schools in the United States. At the Naval War College where Mahan is perhaps accorded the most honor, formal treatment of him and his army counterparts, von Clausewitz and Jomini, are limited to two excellent lectures by a Naval officer and an Army officer on the faculty.

Because the writer considers that Mahan and his theories are fundamentally valid, are applicable today, and are of more than just historic interest, he believes that it is highly desirable for attention once again to be focused on Mahan.

It is recommended, therefore, that courses be instituted on sea power based upon Mahan's writings supplemented by the views of present day naval thinkers at schools such as the Naval War College, the Naval Academy, the Coast Guard Academy, and the Merchant Marine Academy.

It is realized that with the great increase in technology over the years, the curricula of all of these schools have broadened and for students and faculty alike there do not seem to be enough hours in a day to add another subject. If this be the case, then perhaps such a course could be added as an elective for those students able and desiring to accomplish the extra work.

Because of its complete library of Mahan documents and highly knowledgeable staff and faculty, such courses probably could best be developed at the Naval War College for its own use and for use at other schools.

It is only by continued study with a view to expanding knowledge and increasing appreciation of the relationship of sea power to other forms of military power and political power that the United States can achieve the maximum security

for its money spent from naval budgets. The study of sea power by groups from all services in this atmosphere of intellectual freedom begun by Admiral Luce but developed and expanded by Admiral Mahan and continuing today with improvements and updating of curricula is perhaps the greatest influence of Admiral Mahan upon sea power.

Let us, therefore, continue to respect Mahan and his teachings and even revere them if we wish, but above all, let us study them!

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APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY OF CAREER OF REAR ADMIRAL

ALFRED THAYER MAHAN, U.S.N. (RET.)

- 1840 Born at United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. on 27 September.
- 1854 Entered Columbia College, New York.
- 1856 Appointed Acting Midshipman and entered United States Naval Academy as a Third Classman on 30 September.
- 1859 Graduated second in his class from United States Naval Academy.
- 1859 Assigned to frigate U.S.S. Congress for duty on Brazil Station.
- 1861 Promoted to lieutenant, assigned briefly to steam transport U.S.S. James Adger, then transferred to steam sloop U.S.S. Pocahontas.
- 1862 Succeeded to temporary command of U.S.S. Pocahontas.
- 1862 Assigned to United States Naval Academy, then established at Newport, Rhode Island under Lieutenant Commander Stephen B. Luce.
- 1863 Ordered to U.S.S. Macedonian as executive officer under Lieutenant Commander Luce for midshipmen cruise.
- 1863 Ordered to U.S.S. Seminole as first lieutenant.
- 1864 Assigned as executive officer of U.S.S. James Adger.
- 1864 Assigned as Squadron Ordnance Officer on Staff of Rear Admiral John Dahlgren during siege and fall of Charleston, South Carolina.
- 1865 Returned to U.S.S. James Adger and promoted to lieutenant commander in June.
- 1865 Assigned to U.S.S. Muscoota in December for duty in Gulf of Mexico observing French operations in Mexico.
- 1866 Ordered to temporary duty at Washington, D.C. Navy Yard.

- 1867 Ordered as executive officer to steam sloop U.S.S. Iroquois for duty on China Station.
- 1868 Succeeded to Command of Iroquois at Hong Kong.
- 1869 Ordered to temporary command of U.S.S. Aroostook on China Station in July.
- 1869 Detached from Aroostook in September and proceeded on leave aboard commercial steamers to United States by way of Suez Canal and Europe.
- 1870 Arrived in New York after six-month leave.
- 1871 Ordered to S.S. Worcester, merchant ship under charter to United States, for voyage to France via England in February.
- 1871 Returned to Boston in Worcester after visiting only England in July.
- 1872 Married Miss Ellen Lyle Evans of New York in June.
- 1872 Promoted to Commander in November.
- 1872 Ordered to first regular command, U.S.S. Wasp on South Atlantic Station in December and embarked with Mrs. Mahan aboard commercial steamer for Montevideo in December.
- 1873 Arrived at River Plate in February and assumed command of Wasp.
- 1873 Daughter, Helen Evans Mahan, born in Montevideo in August.
- 1874 Delivered lecture on "Naval Battles" to group of officers.
- 1875 Detached in January from Wasp and with family proceeded on leave via commercial steamer to France and England and returned to United States.
- 1875 Reported for duty at Boston Navy Yard in September.
- 1876 Placed on furlough at reduced pay (\$1,150 per year).
- 1877 Moved with family to Pau, France to economize in January.

- 1877 Second daughter, Ellen Kuhn Mahan, born in France in July.
- 1877 Pay restored and ordered to United States Naval Academy as Head of Ordnance Department in September.
- 1880 Ordered to Navigation Department of New York Navy Yard.
- 1881 Son, Lyle Evans Mahan, born in New York in February.
- 1883 Ordered to command steam sloop U.S.S. Wachusett on station off West Coast of South America and proceeded to Aspinwall (Colon), Panama by commercial steamer.
- 1884 Accepted invitation in September from Captain Stephen B. Luce to lecture on naval history and tactics at Naval War College being established.
- 1885 Arrived at San Francisco in Wachusett for ship de-commissioning in August.
- 1885 Promoted to Captain in September and proceeded to New York to prepare lectures for following year.
- 1886 Reported to United States Naval War College as President relieving Captain Luce in August.
- 1887 War College transferred to Torpedo Station and Mahan ordered to Puget Sound to select site for naval station.
- 1889 Returned to Newport briefly and supervised plan for new War College building.
- 1890 Mahan's Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783 published in May.
- 1891 Appointed to informal Naval Strategy Board to plan operations for crisis in Chile.
- 1892 War College Building completed and Mahan again appointed President.
- 1893 Ordered to command protected cruiser U.S.S. Chicago flying flag of Rear Admiral Henry Erben for duty in Europe.
- 1894 Received honorary doctor's degrees from Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

- 1895 Returned in March to New York in Chicago, after triumphant European tour, decommissioned the ship and was detached.
- 1895 Received honorary doctor's degree from Harvard University.
- 1896 Retired as Captain after 40 years service in November.
- 1897 Received honorary doctor's degree from Yale University.
- 1898 Ordered to return from European vacation by Secretary of the Navy John D. Long to serve on Board of Naval Strategy during Spanish-American War.
- 1899 Appointed delegate to the First Hague Peace Conference by President McKinley on recommendation of Secretary of State John Hay.
- 1900 Awarded the first Chesney Gold Medal by the United Service Institution in recognition of his literary works bearing on welfare of British Empire.
- 1900 Received honorary doctor's degree from Columbia College.
- 1902 Elected President of the American Historical Association.
- 1906 Requested by Secretary of the Navy to prepare history of Board of Naval Strategy on which Mahan had served.
- 1906 Promoted to Rear Admiral on the retired list.
- 1907 Ordered to active naval duty to revise his lectures on naval strategy for War College.
- 1908 Ordered to temporary special duty in Washington by President Theodore Roosevelt to serve as his technical naval advisor.
- 1909 Appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to serve on Commission to report on reorganization of the Navy and later appointed Chairman of Joint Military and Naval Commission.
- 1909 Received honorary doctor's degree from McGill University.

- 1909 Under instructions from Navy Department lectured,
1910 sessions of the Naval War College during 1909, 1910,
1911 and 1911.
- 1912 Detached from all official duty on 6 June.
- 1912 On last trip to Europe talked with First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill.
- 1914 Moved to Washington, D.C. to accept appointment as a Research Associate of the Carnegie Institution on 1 November.
- 1914 Died at U.S. Naval Hospital in Washington on 1 December.



Fig. 2 - Frigate, U.S.S. Congress,
Mahan's First Ship After
Graduation from the United
States Naval Academy in 1859



Fig. 3 - Protected Cruiser, U.S.S.
Chicago, Mahan's Last Sea
Command