

The Anatomy of Panic:
The Impact of Naval Scares and Public Opinion in Late Nineteenth-Century
Britain

by

Iain O'Shea
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2008
M.A., University of New Brunswick, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of History

©Iain O'Shea, 2017
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part,
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

The Anatomy of Panic:
The Impact of Naval Scares and Public Opinion in Late Nineteenth-Century
Britain

by

Iain O'Shea
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2008
M.A., University of New Brunswick, 2010

Supervisory Committee

Dr. David Zimmerman, Supervisor
Department of History

Dr. Simon Devereaux, Departmental Member
Department of History

Dr. Lisa SurrIDGE, Outside Member
Department of English

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. David Zimmerman, Supervisor
Department of History

Dr. Simon Devereaux, Departmental Member
Department of History

Dr. Lisa Surridge, Outside Member
Department of English

Popular navalism in nineteenth-century Britain was a natural but not inevitable outcome of the geographical reality of an island nation possessing a large maritime empire. The long-term evolution of democracy and the rapid growth of the mass-circulation press transformed the civil-military relationship in the last decades of the century, leading to a series of naval scares. These were episodes of intense public interest and engagement in naval affairs, manifested through Parliamentary speeches, newspaper and periodical contributions and in private correspondence. Naval historians have emphasized technological and strategic narratives in the modernization of the Royal Navy, and in the process neglected the dramatic political struggles in 1884–94 that provided the vital precondition for naval reform and expansion — money. The relevant question is not whether the naval scares were objectively justified, but how public discourses were employed by individuals and interest groups to transform the naval political economy by creating a ‘blue-water’ strategic common sense that would support the creation of ocean-going battlefleets designed to win and maintain ‘command of the sea.’ A triangular relationship between the Government, the navy and the public, connected largely through

the press, rapidly evolved over the course of three naval scares, in 1884, 1888 and 1893.

A pro-navy political equilibrium was constructed that raised peacetime naval expenditure to unprecedented heights and laid the foundations for the more widely known reforms of the twentieth-century 'Fisher Era.'

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Chapter 1 — Introduction	1
Nineteenth Century Context	5
Naval Historiography	22
Historiography of Navalism	39
Chapter 2 — The Navy and the Public in the Nineteenth Century	55
The First Scare: 1844–45	65
The Second Panic: 1852	72
Ironclads and Follies: the Ironclad Scare of 1859–60	80
The Turn to Economy: 1868–83	91
Chapter 3 — 'What is the Truth About the Navy': the 1884 Navy Scare	102
Narrative of Events, 1883–85	108
'Official Optimism' versus 'Alarmism' in 1883	142
W.T. Stead, New Journalism and the 1884 Navy Scare	148
The Unsung Sequel: 'The Truth About Coaling Stations'	166
Government Failure to Mitigate Navalist Demands, 1884–85	174
Synthesizing Opinion in Monthly Magazines, 1884–85	180
Chapter 4 — Lord Randolph Churchill and the Campaign for Economy, 1885–87	189
Narrative of Events, 1885–87	195
The Manoeuvres and the Reality of War	222
Home Rule and the Liberal Naval Administration	233
Administrative Reform and Randolph Churchill's Resignation	239
Chapter 5 — The 1888 Navy Scare and the Naval Defence Act, 1889	252
Narrative of Events, 1888–89	257
Credibility and Celebrity: The Resignation of Lord Charles Beresford	288
Invasion versus Blue-Water Strategic Planning	298
The Public Expert: Admiral Hornby and New Agitation	309

The Government Responds: Why the Act of Parliament?	320
Chapter 6 — The Second Interregnum: Responding to the Naval Defence Act	329
Narrative of Events, 1889–92	334
Battleship Design and Technological Improvement.....	363
Personnel and the New Agitation	373
The Spencer-Harcourt Debates over Battleship Tables	384
Chapter 7 — The 1893 Navy Scare and the Fall of W.E. Gladstone	394
Narrative of Events, 1893–94	398
The Mediterranean as the Two-Power Standard Test Case	431
Harcourt vs Spencer — the Victory of the Admirals.....	444
Gladstone's Resignation and a Blue-Water Consensus.....	453
The Spencer Programme, Acts of Parliament and the Navy League.....	464
Chapter 8 — Conclusion.....	474
Bibliography	486

Acknowledgements

The scale of the debts that I have incurred in the completion of this project is far beyond the magnitude that I anticipated when I began this journey so many years ago.

David Zimmerman, my supervisor, has been endlessly patient and helpful as I have worked through the long process of writing and editing. I deeply appreciate the insight that you have brought to my work and the opportunities that you have given me to teach and share my knowledge.

Thanks to my committee members, Simon Devereaux and Lisa Surrige, who saved me from many errors and greatly improved this project. Thanks also to Christopher Bell for his time.

The office staff in the History Department has saved me from many paperwork blunders. A special thanks to the incredible Heather Waterlander for all her help.

The research for this project could not have been done without the excellent support and advice of the staffs of the National Archives in Kew, the British Library, the Bodleian Library's Special Collections, the Caird Research Library at the National Maritime Museum, the Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge, the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, and McGill University's Special Collections in Montreal, Canada. The research was generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral fellowship.

My family has been very patient through this struggle, and their support has been beyond words and price. I hope the trip to Britain was worth the hours that Darcy and Valerie O'Shea spent with me in libraries and archives. You have been incredible.

Stephanie DiTomaso, my Bundth, I could not have done this without you.

Abbreviations

CDC	Colonial Defence Committee
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DNO	Director of Naval Ordnance
FIC	Foreign Intelligence Committee
IDA	Imperial Defence Act
LCC	London Chamber of Commerce
MP	Member of Parliament
NDA	Naval Defence Act
NID	Naval Intelligence Department
NVHDA	Naval Volunteer Home Defence Association
RNAV	Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers
RUSI	Royal United Service Institution

Chapter 1 — Introduction

We have been very much before the public. The Naval scare has caught hold of the Press and its readers. I regretted it for although I entirely assent to the necessity of maintaining and carrying out the policy of strengthening the Navy, a scare is apt to raise false issues and to set a certain number of people against treating the question with sobriety and common sense. I was all along ready to do what I think the Service and the Country wanted. After the way in which it was taken up, I am sorry to say, by my predecessor, we shall be in this position, that whatever we do will be claimed as the result of the scare, and our opponents will claim the credit for it while we had all the work and worry...

First Lord of the Admiralty Earl Spencer to Rear-Admiral H.F. Stephenson,
January 14, 1894¹

Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty from 1892–95, wrote the above letter to one of his senior admirals to explain the pressure that had been placed on the administration by the growing public clamour for a new naval programme. The 1893 Navy Scare, which Spencer was engaging with in his letter, was the third episode in a series of naval scares, in 1884, 1888 and 1893, that each resulted in a massive peacetime shipbuilding programme. Spencer intentionally minimized the role of public agitation in the creation of a new programme, even though the political conflict within the Liberal Party had been so bad that the Prime Minister, the ‘Grand Old Man’ William Ewart Gladstone, was forced to resign because of his opposition to ‘useless expenditure.’ Spencer shows the conundrum facing a history of naval scares, because they obviously had a role and yet contemporaries, even in the press, were loath to admit it. Spencer defended his administration’s naval policy, justifiably insisting that *he* had always been

¹*The Red Earl: the Papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer, Vol. II: 1885-1910*, Peter Gordon, ed., (Northampton: Northampton Records Society, 1986), 236-7.

willing to support the navy; it is true that he was a strong voice in support of the navy, but it is also true that public support provided valuable leverage in ministerial debates. The British Government was always going to support some kind of powerful naval force, but the size and composition of the force that was actually created owed a great deal to public interest in the navy that supported extensive public discourses on everything from technology to strategy to administrative structures. This dissertation examines the political impact of naval scares in the 1880s and 90s, and argues that the rapid pace of naval modernization and expansion was made possible by the agitation of navalists and naval officers, who constructed a credible pro-navy face of the public that overcame the opposition of economizing politicians.

Contemporaries were consciously aware of the phenomena of naval scares, which were short-term episodes of intense political activity on behalf of the Royal Navy that encompassed discourses in the press, Parliament and private correspondence and were usually built on existing professional discourse. These venues provided forums for navalists, men who wrote or spoke publicly on specifically naval issues in an attempt to influence the decisions of policy makers, to create a discourse on the nuances of naval expansion and reform. Pro-navy activism in the nineteenth century turned naval supremacy into a common sense concept, whether it was for protecting Britain's food imports, securing the Empire from predatory imperial powers or isolating Britain from dangerous Continental entanglements. In the late nineteenth century, after naval steam technology had reached the point where ocean-going ironclads were practical, this common sense was based around a blue-water strategic vision that prioritized the 'command of the sea' by ocean-going battlefleets as the primary goal of a worldwide

navy. British battlefleets would blockade their opponents or bring them to battle in a fleet action, and behind this shield British cruisers would protect worldwide trade routes. Without the experience of a first-class naval war under modern technological conditions to inform their decisions, British naval officers created the concept of the Two-Power Standard, which mandated that the Royal Navy be as powerful as the next two strongest naval powers combined (always France and Russia for the late nineteenth century). This standard was seized by the public as a simple yardstick for the sufficiency of the navy, and, in spite of its vagueness, remained at the heart of the public discourse on the state of the navy until the twentieth century. Over the course of a fifteen-year period, navalist thinkers realized that the New Journalism and the mass public could transform the process of British naval policy formation and ultimately regularized the agitation through organizations like the Navy League. The scares were significant elements of the process of modernization, and they deserve to be understood on their own terms as an integral part to this story.

Public panics of various kinds occurred during the nineteenth century, covering a variety of issues from foreign invasion to child exploitation. This study focuses on the three successive panics in 1884, 1888 and 1893 that drove naval expenditure to unprecedented peacetime heights in response to the construction of serious public anxiety over the condition of the navy and its ability to keep Britain, the Empire and its commerce secure. In these moments of heightened public interest and political conflict, both press and Parliament were drawn into debates ordinarily restricted to a limited audience of naval professionals and keen civilian navalists. Naval scares were zones of conflict and uncertainty, as proponents of naval preparedness struggled with the pressures

of retrenchment, of administrative procedure, of technological innovation. The navy needed to fulfill the extensive peacetime demands of diplomacy and imperial policing while simultaneously preparing for the increasingly anticipated full-scale naval war with a first-class navy, like that of France. The scares occurred because the nation demanded a clear articulation of the standards of naval defence, and starting in 1884 a much higher level of preparedness was required to garner public confidence. The 1888 and 1893 scares both occurred when the previous programmes of construction were coming to an end, and threatened to return the nation to a level of expenditure that the service, and a large proportion of politicians and the public, had agreed was unacceptably low. Thinkers were convinced of the usefulness of their activities, for even while they might face rejection, John Colomb told his readers that, “It is consistent with Admiralty practice to damn proposals made in the House and Press, and then carry them out on the sly.”²

Naval scares form the link between the narrative of rapid technological change in the mid-nineteenth century and the narrative of the long-term origins of the First World War, primarily the strands dealing with militarism, imperial rivalries, the arms race and the development of alliance systems. All of these processes are intertwined with the development of a literate and politically engaged public and the growth of state intervention in society. Naval officers were becoming a coherent, professional group capable of interacting with elements of the press and politics to further their agenda for national defence requirements. Considering the multiplicity of interests involved in naval affairs, the tendency to lay blame on one group for ‘manipulating’ public opinion is unfair. The public was not so naive, nor was any one interest group sufficiently unified or powerful so as to dominate the discourse. The public was powerful, but inchoate and so

²John C.R.Colomb, “China and the Service Members' Committee,” *Times*, 36177 (Jun 25, 1900), 5.

fragmented as to be entirely ineffectual except in moments of extreme concentration. Contemporaries were quite aware of the scares, as Spencer's complaint shows, and the first analysis of the phenomenon predates the period of this study. Newspaper and periodical articles were quick to directly engage with these phenomena throughout the century, although the nature and extent of this participation dramatically changed as the character of the mass press transformed in the middle and latter half of the century. The scares of the 1880s and early 90s were different from their predecessors in being far more self-aware, both in terms of people being observant of trends in public opinion and people deliberately setting out to rouse the public. These differed from their descendants because later episodes would feature more highly developed methods for influencing public opinion, and because the previous scares had empowered the Admiralty against the civilian ministers and broken the back of Treasury resistance.

Nineteenth Century Context

The late nineteenth century was the culmination of a long-term transformation of society begun by the Industrial Revolution and leading to two important developments, political democratization and the creation of the mass media.³ Democratization merged public opinion with political power and public engagement ensured that the policy-making process would include both domestic and foreign affairs, particularly as they were presented in the press. Mass panics were not isolated to the short period of late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and thus were not the product of specific individuals or

³Peter N. Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval: Social History Since 1750*, 2nd Ed. (London: MacMillan, 1975) describes population growth, industrialization and the modernization of the state as the three primary motors of social change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

events. Mass public opinion, at least as it was represented by shifting aggregations of thinkers and organizations, had an increasingly direct effect on politics as the nineteenth century passed. Naval scares in the 1880s and 90s form a coherent grouping and were part of pivotal changes in the Royal Navy, but earlier panics were equally important in their times and will receive a more detailed description in the next chapter. Surveys rightly treat naval scares as the British manifestation of the militarism that was spreading in Continental Europe, but closer analysis reveals an unexpected degree of intellectual rigour and sophistication in the development of solutions to credible fears about the sufficiency and efficiency of the Royal Navy. Before delving into the scares themselves, some context on the developments of the nineteenth century will help explain why public agitation became significant enough to motivate political action. There were very few people in British society in the late nineteenth century who totally opposed to defence spending, and in practice people across the socio-political spectrum were all wedded to the idea of naval supremacy. The only question was whether supremacy was threatened.

The pressure of naval spending was an important driving force behind the development of the British state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acting in combination with innovative social spending in the late nineteenth century to further state intervention in society.⁴ The vast sums required for large naval programmes in 1893 and 1909 would lead to substantial taxation reforms that further altered the social structure of British society through the erosion of primarily aristocratic wealth. The social issue created long term fiscal pressures and reduced the financial ability of the state to respond

⁴See the excellent nineteenth century political history survey, R.S. Alexander, *Europe's Uncertain Path, 1814-1914: State formation and civil society*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume II: The rise of classes and nation states, 1760-1914*, (Cambridge, 1993)

to short term crises, but it was these crises that spawned new and innovative measures. In Britain, this meant that the state was increasing its expenditure in the late nineteenth century while the economic boom of the first half of the century was being replaced with the 'Great Depression' of 1873–95. Simultaneously, the Second Industrial Revolution, 1870–1914, saw the development of a new group of industries, like steel, oil, paper, machine tools, electricity, automobiles and communications, in which Britain lagged.⁵ The importance of engineering and science to these new discoveries impacted all areas of society, including the navy where officers were increasingly expected to gain a working knowledge of technical systems. Torpedo and gunnery duties were some of the first mechanical elements to be handed from naval engineering officers to the executive class. New naval technology, from torpedoes to electric light, meant the expense of building and maintaining ships increased, forcing the navy to fight in a very competitive field to win sufficient expenditure to adapt to the changing situation.

Nationalism had earlier origins in Britain than on the European continent and was well established in the nineteenth century. As Linda Colley describes, the British identity that was created in the eighteenth century comprised multiple coexisting layers of local, regional and national identities, with key unifying forces being found in Protestantism, imperial expansion, economic prosperity and the series of wars with France.⁶ Nationalism was an important force in connecting domestic and foreign affairs, as an educated public developed opinions about diplomacy, national honour and global power (and economic) balances. When new forms of ethno-cultural nationalism reached Ireland, however, they

⁵See Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

⁶Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (London: Vintage, 1996). For European context see Michael Broers, *Europe After Napoleon: Revolution, reaction and romanticism, 1814-1848*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

threatened to tear apart the United Kingdom. The Irish Question, not the navy, was the dominant political controversy of the late nineteenth century. Irish political energy was turned towards obstructionism in this period and mainly impacted naval policy by distracting the Government, although there was a persistent lobby for Ireland's contribution to the navy to be spent in Ireland.⁷ According to Jan Ruger, the Royal Navy was able to successfully draw on themes of modernity, masculinity and national insularity that had become important aspect of British national identity, particularly when component nationalities were becoming more self-conscious.⁸ In this fashion, the navy was able to successfully appeal to overarching British identity and loyalties.

Nationalism affected all social classes, even the working class that has generally been characterized as anti-imperialist by luminaries like E.P. Thompson.⁹ John Breuilly explained that nationalism was created by many factors:

At a political level one could stress franchise reform, welfare provisions, legal reforms which assisted working-class organisation, electoral advances, and even participation in government at some level or another. Finally, at a cultural level one could stress the growth of mass media, which often projected nationalist ideas, and of compulsory, state-controlled education, which could help form the values of working-class children.¹⁰

Nationalism and class-consciousness were not mutually exclusive elements in multi-layered personnel identities. Eric Hobsbawm does astutely argue that studies of nationalism can be misleading by giving too much weight to a possibly unrepresentative

⁷There was agitation for more of the naval budget to be spent in Ireland, particularly in the development of dockyards, like Haulbowline in Cork, and shipbuilding industries. For examples see UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:338, (Jul 26, 1889), c. 1427; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 1, 1889), c. 63.

⁸Jan Ruger, "Nation, Empire and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom, 1887-1914," *Past & Present*, 185 (Nov 2004): 159-87. The *Navy and Army Illustrated* consistently advertised for Player's brand tobacco, tagged as 'Navy Cut' with a sailor's image on the packaging.

⁹E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968).

¹⁰John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 320.

vocal minority.¹¹ Certainly in the naval scares examined here it is the vocal minority who dominate the narrative because they claimed to speak for the best interests of the country, and on several occasions were able to amass enough publicity to make this claim politically credible. It is impossible to ascertain if the opinions expressed were of the majority, but what mattered in the political struggles was that the claim of representation was believed by contemporaries.

Imperial rivalries dramatically increased in the 1880s, and provided additional pressure on the defense budgets of all the Great Powers. After the 1885 Berlin Conference, the Powers embarked on 'New Imperialism,' which in Britain's case meant the immediate expansion of the political boundaries of the Empire. John Darwin has done excellent work in describing the transition from a commercial to a territorial Empire, which was a primarily defensive measure to protect British economic interests from being swallowed up by protectionist powers like France or Germany.¹² E.J. Feuchtwanger argues that imperialism was seized upon as a means of transcending the problems of relative economic decline, an increasing trade imbalance and socialism.¹³ Relative decline describes a situation where Britain was, in absolute terms, continuing its economic, demographic and imperial growth, but relative to other world powers was not advancing as quickly.¹⁴ This historiography focuses on economics, and treats imperialism

¹¹Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5-9.

¹²For more on the complex array of commercial and political aspects of the Empire, see John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The rise and fall of the British world-system, 1830-1970*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹³E.J. Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire: Britain, 1865-1914*, (London: E. Arnold, 1985), "Chapter 4: The 1880s: Victorian Confidence Falts."

¹⁴Aaron L. Friedburg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the experience of relative decline, 1895-1905*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

and militarism as a means of compensating for the lack of economic competitiveness.¹⁵

This narrative is more accurate for the immediate pre-war period than for the late nineteenth century. While historians are questioning the narrative of decline, British naval expansion was largely justified as a defensive response to imperial and naval competition from Europe.¹⁶ Even the anti-imperialist ‘little Englanders,’ like W.E. Gladstone, were unlikely in practice to abandon imperial possessions once they were acquired, and were just as likely to embroil the British state in foreign adventures — most obviously the decades-long imbroglio in Egypt in the 1880s.

The modern historical understanding of imperialism has transitioned from one of unidirectional imposition to a bilateral discourse in which both sides influence and change the other. Imperialism had always relied on the exportation of British culture to the colonies, but research has shown that Britain was equally influenced by the influx of ideas and people from the empire.¹⁷ The culture of imperialism benefitted from the spread of Social Darwinistic ideas of national fitness at the end of the century, whereby nations were tested for fitness by competition on the imperial stage.¹⁸ These concerns only reached a crisis point in the 1899–1902 Boer War, where a third of all army recruits were rejected as physically unfit, leading to increasing state intervention in public health and to social movements like the Boy Scouts. From the 1880s and 90s, the Empire became the

¹⁵Martin J. Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁶Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: a history of British naval policy in the pre-dreadnought era, 1880-1905*, (1940), 16. The narrative of decline has been successfully challenged by Keith Nielson as an anachronistic application of Britain’s post-Second World War situation.

¹⁷David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); see also Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: the impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century*, (2005).

¹⁸John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880*, (London: Routledge, 1969), 53-4.

core of Britain's status as a Great Power, and the need to secure these scattered colonies and the trade routes that connected them would underlie public panic over naval affairs. The demographic and industrial growth of nineteenth century Britain was built on the ability to import food and raw materials from scattered overseas colonies and trading partners. Trade with Europe and the United States always overshadowed imperial trade, but the security of the latter was more appealing as other states raised tariff walls, even leading to efforts within Britain to end the policy of free trade.¹⁹ The need to defend these supplies relied on naval power, and would be a recurrent theme of navalist agitation, albeit one that showed up more often in detailed periodical articles and expert lectures discussing the challenges of trade defence, rather than in the daily newspapers comparing numbers of battleships.

Nationalism and imperialism combined to promote militarism, which in Britain's case was reshaped into navalism — although there was a persistent tension between the army and navy. A major European war was not only possible, but generally considered to be an unavoidable part of national life by strategists, particularly after the mid nineteenth century wars. As historian R.S. Alexander explains, Napoleon III, Cavour and Bismarck based diplomacy around *realpolitik*, which “gave short shrift to belief that peace among the powers was necessary or conducive to the stability and interests of a particular state.”²⁰ One influential long-term lesson of the German wars of unification was the importance of rapid mobilization and offensive operations; its ultimate pre-war guise was the ‘readiness for instant war’ of which Fisher is only the best-known proponent. The Empire relied on control of oceanic trade routes and submarine telegraph cables, which

¹⁹The subject of excellent work by E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The politics, economics, and ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880-1914*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005).

²⁰Alexander, *Europe's Uncertain Path*, xiii.

could only be secured by blue-water naval forces. It is no coincidence that the ‘New Imperialism’ of the 1880s and 90s occurred simultaneously to naval scares that focused on building a blue-water fleet capable of winning command of the sea.

A significant product of the militarism in society was the creation of a popular invasion literature, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century. In many instances these stories were aimed at juvenile audiences, in common with many imperial adventure stories. These dramatic stories played out worst-case scenarios where British weakness was only overcome by Nelsonian genius.²¹ This literature is important for understanding the spread of concern about national defences, but it is only background for the study of naval panics. Thinkers were engaging exhaustively and directly with issues of national defence, and literary works were a by-product of this conversation, rather than a unique window into the *mentalité* of the age. Writers used fiction to illustrate points, particularly to younger audiences, that were being argued in factual articles. It is also the case that many of the most important pieces of invasion literature relied on the navy being conveniently absent, an eventuality that was solidly disproven in the Admiralty’s official response to the 1888 invasion scare.

As social, economic and international conditions were being transformed, the structure of British politics was also fundamentally changed. Three franchise reform bills were passed in 1832, 1867 and 1884 that redistributed electoral seats along increasingly egalitarian lines, giving the vote to more men, first the middle classes and then the

²¹A. Michael Matin, “Scrutinizing the Battle of Dorking: The Royal United Service Institution and the mid-Victorian invasion scare,” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39:2 (2011), 385-407; Matin, “The Creativity of War Planners: Armed forces professionals and the pre-1914 British invasion-scare genre,” *ELH*, 78:4 (Winter 2011): 801-831. For other cultural manifestations of militarism, see Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

working classes. The 1832 Reform Act has been characterized as a direct response to an aroused public opinion, but Jonathan Parry argues convincingly that it was developed over a longer period of time by a group of statesmen, although the public attention gave the process much needed influence.²² Contemporaries did believe that public opinion became more important after the Reform Act, even if the concept was initially indistinct and limited by class.²³ They emphasized alliances with newspapers, to disseminate information (like Blue Books of diplomatic correspondence), and ministerial explanations for generating public support.

‘Small-l liberalism’ became one of the dominant ideologies in Europe in the post-Napoleon period, especially in Britain.²⁴ Jonathan Parry’s description of liberal ideology and leadership emphasizes the belief in representative government, which entailed inclusiveness and responsiveness to public opinion, specifically educated respectable opinion, although he sees this tradition transforming with the split of the Party over Home Rule in 1886.²⁵ T.A. Jenkins rightly emphasizes the endurance of the Whig tradition within a complex variety of Liberal sub-groups, meaning that even in the 1890s there were still a number of peers serving in Cabinet, notably Earl Spencer as First Lord of the Admiralty.²⁶ Early Liberals benefitted from the unity of great ‘concentrating’ questions, like the Anti-Corn Law League, but by the end of the century had turned to political programmes, which probably made it easier to incorporate a variety of issues

²²Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 72-89.

²³Rebecca Berens Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength: British Naval Power and Foreign Policy under Pax Britannica*, (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2011), 23-5.

²⁴Broers, *Europe After Napoleon*, “Liberalism: the ideology of property.”

²⁵Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 1-14.

²⁶For more on the creation of the Liberal Party see T.A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy, 1830-1886*, (London: MacMillan, 1994).

like the state of the navy.²⁷ Bernard Semmel's examination of the interaction between liberal ideology and naval strategy concluded that, "[t]hough 'panics' intermittently roused voters and Parliaments, England continued to pursue courses whose chief recommendation was that they were relatively economical."²⁸ Semmel characterizes mercantile and industrial interests as pacifist, believers in peace through economic development, who were struggling with the navalist effort to develop national defences. This study will emphasize that the Liberal Party, through the experience of the scares and constant political lobbying, reached an ideological accommodation with naval expansion by the 1890s.

The Conservative Party was evolving along similar lines to the Liberals, particularly in the early 1880s with the rise of Randolph Churchill and ideas of Tory Democracy, and arranged itself to appeal on principles of property, religion and Empire.²⁹ Churchill was certainly notable for making mass speeches and interacting with journalists and editors, but Lord Salisbury, the long-serving leader of the Conservatives from the mid-1880s to the turn of the century, was equally skilled at broadening the party's appeal to newly enfranchised working-class voters.³⁰ The revival of urban conservatism among the masses and the acceptance of the power of the people ensured the Conservative Party a bright electoral future. It is also clear that leading Conservatives were interacting with the press on equally intimate terms to the Liberals.

²⁷D.A. Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery: a study in leadership and policy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 99.

²⁸Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, 172-81.

²⁹A major part of W.D. Rubinstein, *Britain's Century: A political and social history, 1815-1905*, (London: Arnold, 1998), "Social Class in Britain, 1815-1905." for more detail see Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*.

³⁰Robert F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: a political life*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 219-20; E.D. Steele, *Lord Salisbury: a political biography*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 141-50.

For this study, the question becomes not so much whether public opinion impacted government policy, but how did public opinion adjudicate between conflicting schools of thought and direct its energies into meaningful political action. On a theoretical level, Robert Spitzer emphasizes the power of communication, because “the state cannot govern without considering the societal consequences of its decisions and policies since the media’s impact on policy is so closely tied to public attitudes.”³¹ Stephen Koss points out that the political elite had realized the value of the media in the new democratic political structure, and this manifested itself by the increasing knighthoods, ennoblements and other honours given to the press barons, such as George Newnes or the famous Alfred Harmsworth.³² A free press was also part of the ‘liberal ethos’ that dominated the nineteenth century and emphasized the importance of public discussion in the political process.³³ At the same time, politicians had an ambiguous relationship with the actual publications and journalists, because “While deploring the transgressions of the press, they were always ready to turn them to their own advantage.”³⁴ Neither political party desired a public reputation of ‘obeying’ newspaper statements, meaning the effectiveness of public agitation cannot be simply assumed. This was particularly common with defence issues, which both parties argued should be nonpartisan whenever they were in opposition while arguing for the responsibility of Parliament whenever they were in power. The press was given greater access to official information, such as Parliamentary Blue Books that the Foreign Office provided to

³¹Robert Spitzer, “Introduction: Defining the Media-Policy Link,” in Spitzer, ed., *Media and Public Policy*, (Westport: Praeger, 1993), 9.

³²Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. I The nineteenth century*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), 312-3, 327-8.

³³Mark Hampton, “Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830-1914,” *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37:1, (Spr., 2004), 73.

³⁴Koss, *Political Press, I*, 222.

newspapers in order to serve their own domestic policy and influence public opinion, naturally the London press was the most favoured.³⁵

There is abundant evidence that politicians paid close attention to the statements of journalists. Politicians needed information about the attitudes and opinions of the public, and the media was a valuable and readily available source. Dean E. Alger notes that politicians were not concerned with the whole public, but with those elements that were most likely to benefit them, targeting their audience based on geography, demography and interests, just as readers could tune out or ignore messages.³⁶ J.A. Spender noted that, as assistant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1892, “Eminent people who were only names to me came to call at the office and I talked with them face to face....”, although Gladstone preferred to send notes.³⁷ When T.A. Brassey, editor of *The Naval Annual*, was employed at the Admiralty he kept Spencer informed of the *Annual*'s activities as well as taking the opportunity to present his own ideas and analysis to the First Lord.³⁸ He even requested Admiralty plates of Russian warships in 1892, which Spencer approved but the Naval Intelligence Department (NID) declined.³⁹ These liaisons were typical of the time, as men of all political shades recognized the value of cultivating newspaper opinion as a means of favourably influencing and informing the public.

The mass press that developed from the 1880s onward would only charge readers a token price for its products. The majority of the funding was increasingly drawn from

³⁵Keith Wilson, “Foreign Office, Press and Public: Information and Education, 1887-1914,” in Wilson, ed., *Empire and Continent: studies in British foreign policy from the 1880s to the First World War*, (London: Mansell, 1987), 31-49.

³⁶Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 14-18.

³⁷J.A. Spender, *Life, Journalism and Politics: Volume I*, (London: Cassell and Company, 1927), 49.

³⁸BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, T.A. Brassey to Spencer, Jan 22, 1893; T.A. Brassey to Greene, Feb 13, 1893.

³⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, T.A. Brassey to Spencer, Feb 10, 1893; C.A.G. Bridge to Spencer, Feb 13, 1893.

advertising revenue, which incidentally encouraged the use of looser, eye-catching formats and illustrations. Thomas Beecham, purveyor of the popular Beecham's Pills, had an advertising budget of £22,000 in 1884.⁴⁰ Advertising allowed specialty periodicals to target smaller sections of the public and remain commercially viable. Longstanding service journals, like the *Army and Navy Gazette*, *United Service Magazine* and *Journal of the RUSI* were joined by new organs like the *Navy League Journal* and the pioneering *Navy and Army Illustrated*. The *Navy and Army Illustrated* applied cutting-edge printing technology to disseminate high-quality photographs patriotically showcasing all aspects of naval and army life, technology and activities. Lee and Perrins Worcestershire Sauce and Player's Navy Cut Tobacco among others targeted advertising to the civilian public who might be interested in imitating perceived military culture.⁴¹ New technology was quickly used by astute businessmen to tap into the popular interest in national and imperial defence that had been generated in the 1880s and 90s.

The spread of the press was reliant on a literate mass public. It is overly simplistic to link the Education Act of 1870, which mandated basic primary education for all children, with the rise of newspaper panics in the 1880s.⁴² Literacy was a long-term evolution that included important elements like the public library movement and working-class self-education organizations.⁴³ There are also some indications that Britons were not as universally politically active as the press would imply, with many citizens not

⁴⁰Allan C. Dooley, *Author and Printer in Victorian England*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Terry Nevett, "Advertising and Editorial Integrity in the Nineteenth Century," Michael Harris and Allan Lee, Eds, *The Press in English from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986); Koss, *Political Press*, 344-7.

⁴¹Every issue I have found which includes the newspaper advertising wrapper around the high-quality core pages, has an ad for Lee and Perrins. Many also have Player's Navy Cut Tobacco. Bound volumes of journals remove this advertising wrapper.

⁴²For the complex origins of the Act, see Gordon Baker, "The romantic and radical nature of the 1870 Education Act," *History of Education*, 30:3 (May 2001): 211-32.

⁴³Twyman, *Printing 1770-1970*, 17.

reading daily newspapers even after 1900.⁴⁴ The nature of journalism changed to match the changing market. The press mellowed over time and was less dominated by political loyalties, so that by the end of the century rigid loyalty to a journal's partisan affiliation was no longer a necessity for contributors.⁴⁵ Journals still had political leanings, such as the Radicalism of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and editors could not wantonly flout this identity if they wanted to maintain circulation. Editors could act independently of political instruction, and increasingly did so, enhancing the claim of the press to represent the opinion of the public. By the 1880s the innovative evolutions of 'New Journalism' had led to "bold headlines, gossip columns, interviews, sports reporting, pictures, and 'news stories' whose appeal derived from a subjective interest in the evolving human drama."⁴⁶ Good reporting did not disappear, since quality papers were able to adopt some of the methods of New Journalism to enhance their circulation, such as war reporting.⁴⁷ In the case of naval matters, it was even easier for the press to argue that it was acting in a truly non-partisan manner.

The press is very important to this study, because it is one of the only means available to test the strength and direction of public opinion. It is also very problematic. Correspondence columns were a development of the late nineteenth century and suggest the direct dissemination of public views. In practice these letters were often written by frequent contributors and were subject to editorial selection and influence, although it

⁴⁴Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914*, (London: Ashfield, 1987), 363.

⁴⁵Koss, *Political Press*, I, 425-31.

⁴⁶Joel H. Wiener, "Introduction," Laurel Brake, "The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in London in the 1880s," 1-24; and Wiener, "How New was the New Journalism," 47-72 in Wiener, Ed, *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), xii.

⁴⁷James D. Startt, "Good Journalism in the Era of New Journalism: The British Press, 1902-1914," in Wiener, *Papers for the Millions*, 294.

was important to maintain the appearance of objectivity.⁴⁸ Articles were written by individuals for their own purposes, both professional and personal, and the reception of ideas is difficult to anticipate. When thinking of public opinion, Denis McQuail observes that “impersonality, anonymity, and vastness of scale might describe the phenomenon in general, much actual audience experience is personal, small scale, and integrated into social life and familiar ways.”⁴⁹ For this reason, the public discussed in this dissertation is not the entire population, but a subset of people who are actively engaged in the discussion, development and application of a particular idea or project. The vast majority of the population was not directly involved in the multitude of issues and policies, but authors nevertheless competed for the intellectual authority of representing the majority opinion. This study will use the available personal papers of important politicians and naval officers to add depth to the understanding of the complex interaction between Government, the Services and the press. All parties agreed that public opinion was important, and the press had acquired the greatest credibility to speak for the constantly changing opinions of the nation.

The navy learned quickly how to turn the new democratic, literate public to its own advantage. Jan Ruger provides an excellent account of how the navy developed a powerful system of public relations, including ship launches, fleet reviews and naval exhibitions to cultivate a favourable impression.⁵⁰ There had always been vocal naval officers, but in the late nineteenth century many articulate writers within the Service began to write publicly in a common discursive project in order to influence public

⁴⁸Koss, *Political Press*, 336; Kate Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880-1914: Culture and profit*. (Ashgate, 2001), 247.

⁴⁹Denis McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 6-7.

⁵⁰Jan Ruger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the age of empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

perceptions on the state of the navy. Lord Charles Beresford is historically the best known of this group, largely because of his later rivalry with Admiral Fisher, and was a particularly important commentator in the 1880s. He had the credibility of gallant conduct under fire during the Bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. Beresford served as an MP for several years, and provided a Parliamentary mouthpiece for concerns that he shared with a larger circle of officers centered on the highly respected Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby. Parliament and the press were avenues for publicizing the concerns of the navy without the filtering influence of the Admiralty and political Minister. Officers were constrained by official regulations from writing publicly while on active Service, but many officers had little qualm over writing under a pseudonym while active, and under their own name while on half-pay. In the late nineteenth century, the media began the long process of assuming the role of representing the armed forces to the nation, and providing the public with a “realistic view of defence.”⁵¹ In this role, articles written by respected officers were good for credibility, and for circulation.

Naval officers were able to speak to the new mass public with the authority of naval professionals. Professionalization was a wider process in society, as numerous groups that shared specialized expertise and training organized themselves into associations to act in the interests of their members.⁵² In the eighteenth century naval officers took over the duty of navigation, which entailed a system of examinations that helped the profession rapidly develop a distinct identity.⁵³ In the nineteenth century professionalization meant a transition to centralized, Admiralty-controlled entry of cadets, the creation of mandatory retirement and pensions, more systematic promotions,

⁵¹Alan Hooper, *The Military and the Media*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1982), 7.

⁵²See Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (New York: Routledge, 1990)

⁵³Rubinstein, *Britain's Century*, 287.

and greater uniformity in training.⁵⁴ Possibly the most important intellectual organization for the professional navy in the nineteenth century was the Royal United Service Institution (RUSI), founded in 1838 — *Colburn's United Service Magazine*, a long-lived independent monthly periodical directed at both civilian and Service audiences, was founded the previous year and claimed credit for inspiring the RUSI. The RUSI was an independent organization and provided a space for naval and military officers to present ideas and generate discussion, and to disseminate these ideas and important foreign works through its *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. Lectures were generally given by officers, but occasionally civilians presented on current and historical topics both voluntarily and by request.⁵⁵ Only the development of the NID in the late 1880s and the Naval War Staff in 1910 would restore official control over the cutting edge of inquiry. Later lobby groups, like the Navy League, would follow the same associational model and publication style of the RUSI to disseminate their own ideas.

This study will focus on Britain, but scares were an international phenomenon. The *République Française* discussed the agitation in England over the state of the Royal Navy, and, “describes it as a manoeuvre got up with the double object of lulling France to sleep and of preparing the public for an increase of the navy estimates.” The *Pall Mall Gazette* did not fail to notice these international reactions to its own “Truth about the Navy” articles, and to utilize these statements for its own purposes.⁵⁶ The French tendency seems to have been to attribute the scare to some kind of official manipulation,

⁵⁴Michael Lewis, *The Navy in Transition, 1814-1864: A Social History*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 127.

⁵⁵For example, then-lieutenant Carlyon Bellairs, later a notable politician and navalist theorist, accepted an invitation to lecture, but there were subsequent shenanigans when his superior, Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, unusually refused to grant permission. McGill, Bellairs Papers, MS 639/1, Mar 2, 1893. Illegible to C. Bellairs. Bellairs accepted the invite (Bellairs Papers, MS 639/1, C.W. Bowdler, Editor to Bellairs, Mar 17, 1893).

⁵⁶“France and China,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6100 (Sep 27, 1884), 8.

certainly an opinion that Manchester-school polemicists would seize upon in explaining the scares. This would be echoed in later scares, when England would look to navalist agitation in Germany and attribute it to official manipulation of public opinion through a government-directed media. In the long lead-up to the First World War, newspaper and periodical discourses helped contribute to the nationalist phobias (Anglo-, Franco-, Teuto-) that helped lay the groundwork for the Great War.

Naval Historiography

The history of the Royal Navy in the long nineteenth century has not received the kind of attention lavished on the era of the World Wars, but there is a reasonably large body of scholarship particularly devoted to technological change and its consequences. Revolutionary devices of war were created, like the steam engine, heavy ordnance, armour and the locomotive torpedo, forcing the evolution of tactical and strategic thought as well as the creation of innovative private armaments manufacturers. Far from the reactionary body that nineteenth-century polemicists characterized, new research convincingly shows that the Admiralty adopted moderate, economical reform and innovation while remaining cautious of dramatic changes. The challenge facing the Admiralty and naval thinkers in general was their reliance upon discourse and theory to determine policy, because there was no war experience to rely upon. Previous conflicts fought in the Age of Sail had the possibility of holding relevant lessons, but even these principles were a theoretical construct devised to give some predictive ability about the reality of future conflicts. Naval historians have built an excellent picture of technological, tactical and strategic evolution, but these have not taken seriously the

complexity and importance of civil-military relations and naval politics as they developed in the late nineteenth century.

The three scares examined by this study are notable because they occurred in peacetime, and were separate from any specific fear of war. The threats that underlay the scares were constructed, anticipated, and projected. Scares were largely the product of domestic fear and uncertainty, rather than a clear foreign threat, although the credibility of the foreign threat was important to domestic commentators. France and Russia were the primary concern for naval thinkers in the 1880s and 90s. The Anglo-German rivalry and arms race did not really begin until after Germany's 1898 Navy Law and the 1905 Morocco Crisis.⁵⁷ France was the second-largest naval power and dominated British strategy, but Keith Nielson has convincingly argued that Russia was seen as the long-term strategic threat, in spite of the inconsistency of Russia's naval power.⁵⁸ In the face of these threats, rapid technological change removed the feeling of certainty that the

⁵⁷Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*. The exact chronological location of the shift to treat Germany as the primary strategic threat remains under debate. Marder's original work interpreted the Fisher reforms as a prescient manoeuvre to concentrate forces on the new German threat, and this played into later historical narratives of the relative decline of Britain because it was pulling back forces from the Empire. Revisionist historians minimized the role of Germany, particularly in the effort to prove that battlecruisers were intended to secure the imperial periphery against the threat of France and Russia. Recent work by Matthew Seligmann returns to the emphasis on the German threat, specifically in the form of Armed Merchant Cruisers which could employ the latest large, fast transatlantic liners. In his view, this was the justification for the fast battlecruisers which could hunt down and easily destroy these raiders (Seligmann, "Switching Horses: The Admiralty's Recognition of the Threat from Germany, 1900-1905," *International History Review*, XXX (Jun 2008): 239-58; Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901-1914: Admiralty plans to protect trade in a war against Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 69, 77-8). Nicholas Lambert successfully challenges this relationship, arguing that France was the main threat behind the battlecruiser designs, for the same reasons that scholars challenge his own 'flotilla defence' thesis, for reading too much into very limited evidence (Nicholas Lambert, "Righting the Scholarship: The battle-cruiser in history and historiography," *The Historical Journal*, 58:1 (2015): 281-6). Nevertheless, the danger posed by armed merchant ships did preoccupy thinkers in the prewar period, particularly as the German threat became well established after the 1905 and 1911 Moroccan crises. This dissertation certainly indicates the continuous interest which British naval thinkers devoted to the twin issues of commerce protection and commerce raiding, and Seligmann is right in not overly fixating on the question of convoys, which were far more important against a submarine threat than fast surface vessels with numerous light quick-firing guns that could decimate clumped ships.

⁵⁸Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British policy and Russia, 1894-1917*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Royal Navy was qualitatively superior, in both men and ships. Numbers alone offered some guarantee that Britain's fate would not be left to chance or to an individual Admiral's skill — the Nelsonian legacy was not particularly comforting.

Pioneering work by the naval historian Arthur Marder in the mid-twentieth century laid important foundations for the understanding of the pre-First World War Royal Navy, and established a persistent bias towards what he termed the 'Fisher Era.' His focus, and the transition point between *Anatomy of British Sea Power* and the five-part series *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, was the 1904 reform programme implemented by the redoubtable and quotable Admiral Sir John A. Fisher, First Sea Lord.⁵⁹ Over 160 small cruisers and gunboats on imperial stations would be scrapped because, Fisher explained, they were obsolete and “unable to fight or run away;”⁶⁰ the manpower freed up would provide vessels in the Home fleet with nucleus crews to enable their rapid deployment in wartime; the navy's capital ships would be concentrated in Home waters, including the reduction of the Mediterranean fleet, and imperial presence would be provided by smaller mobile squadrons of large cruisers.

The final measure was the creation of large capital ships, HMS *Dreadnought* being the first, relying on steam turbines for high speed and uniform-calibre all-big-gun armament for superior firepower. Fisher argued that it made all existing battleships obsolete. It also served as a testament to British armaments manufacturers and shipyards

⁵⁹There were other important components, including the 1902 Selborne Scheme which introduced the common entry and training of naval officers, who only specialized in executive, engineering, or marine duties after four years, and improved their scientific and technical education. The real failure of the system was the inclusion of the Marines, because no officer cadet chose to enter that specialty because of the poor career prospects, and they were separated again in 1910. In 1903 the Home Fleet was created to improve the readiness of the fleet for war and ensure command of the sea in Home waters.

⁶⁰This exact phrase was used on October 1, 1827 by Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B. in referring to twenty-eight gun ships. Napier, *The Navy: Its Past and Present State, in a series of letters*. William Napier, Ed. (London: John & Daniel A. Darling, 1851), 44-7.

that produced the vessel in just over a year. The wisdom and aim of these reforms was the subject of intense debate among contemporaries, who questioned the decisions to scrap an overly large number of small vessels with no regard to their role in imperial security and trade defence, abandon the Mediterranean, and give up Britain's existing supremacy in what were quickly termed 'pre-dreadnoughts.' It is certainly worth noting that the general principles implemented by Fisher were not new; Admiral Hornby was proposing a nucleus crew system in the 1890s, and the replacement of warships made obsolete by rapid technological change was confronted throughout the 1880s and 90s.

Fisher's role in the reform of the Royal Navy was overstated by Marder, who concluded that Fisher's tenure at the Admiralty was “the most memorable and the most profitable in the modern history of the Royal Navy” because it energetically reformed the mass of outdated ideas and traditions that plagued the navy.⁶¹ Marder had limited access to documents and was heavily influenced by Fisher's personal papers. Jon Sumida has shown the problems in Fisher's account of events, and the inaccuracy inherent in Fisher's papers, which are carefully selected to give a favourable impression.⁶² Contemporaries, like Admiral Hornby, preserved their incoming letters, often making it very difficult to trace their own thoughts and positions. Fisher's archive is the opposite, carefully excising any trace of outside influence and preserving mainly Fisher's own writings, thus leaving the impression that Fisher was a lone visionary in a vacuum of reactionary ignorance. D. George Boyce's collection of the Second Earl of Selborne's papers, who was the First Lord of the Admiralty from 1900–1905, convincingly demonstrates Selborne's vital role

⁶¹Arthur Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, Vol I: The Road To War, 1904-1914*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 205-7. Original edition 1961.

⁶²Jon T. Sumida, “Sir John Fisher and the Dreadnought: the sources of naval mythology,” *Journal of Military History*, 59:4 (Oct 1995), 619-37.

in developing the personnel reform scheme and moderating Fisher's efforts to ensure the political approval of such a revolutionary (for the navy at least) undertaking.⁶³ As this dissertation describes the complexity of naval discourses, it will become obvious that Fisher existed amidst a wealth of active naval thinkers and that branding his opponents as reactionaries for criticizing his reforms was a publicity stunt, not an accurate description.

While historians have challenged Marder's views on strategy, tactics and technology, the main bias of Marder's work has remained. New historical debates on Britain's strategic emphasis, the role of the battlecruiser, naval gunnery effectiveness, and fleet tactics have added a great deal of complexity to the history of the Royal Navy and on both sides clearly demonstrate the intellectual sophistication of the Admiralty and naval officers more generally. These continue to prioritize the study of the Royal Navy between 1900–1914, with very little attention given to the obvious continuities between this period and the late nineteenth century. The *Journal of Strategic Studies* produced special issue in December 2015 focusing entirely on “New Interpretations of the Royal Navy in the 'Fisher Era.’” Jon Sumida's powerful *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* recognizes that the Royal Navy's greatest challenge was constantly finance, and yet there is very little attention to the public political struggle that was undertaken through the press and important organizations like the Navy League. The 1909 Navy Scare, which produced the political will to build eight dreadnought-class warships instead of two, indicates the significance of public discourses for the future of the navy, because without the financial backing to build ships, their design was of little consequence. Historians have focused on the merits of theories by Sumida and Lambert that promote almost

⁶³D. George Boyce, *The Crisis of British Power: The imperial and naval papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895-1910*, (London: Historian's Press, 1990).

'conspiracy theories' of hidden tactical and strategic policies underneath the Admiralty's official position, the best known being Lambert's 'flotilla defence' argument.⁶⁴

Understanding navalist discourses makes it implausible that radical new strategies would be adopted without information being communicated to a concerned public, or subjected to expert scrutiny at institutions the RUSI.

Revisionist historians have been particularly drawn to the complexity and possibility of novel naval technologies, notably the combat capability of the battlecruiser design, the effectiveness of British naval gunnery and Fisher's dreams of a revolutionary strategy of flotilla defence. Keith Neilson provides a convincing argument that the narrative of the decline of Britain is marred by reading the post-Second World War decline of Britain back into the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ The rejection of the narrative of decline in the pre-war period is justified, and contemporaries were certainly more confident in British industrial capacity than they have been given credit for. As this dissertation will show, the fear was that the Government would choose to avoid necessary expenditure for partisan political reasons, not that the country was incapable of paying.

Jon Sumida provides the first substantial reworking of Marder's analysis, examining in detail the development of fire-control systems and how the abandonment of the Argo clock created by Arthur Pollen ultimately undermined Fisher's plan to use long-range, lightly-armoured battlecruisers as the fleet's primary capital ships rather than

⁶⁴See Matthew Seligmann, "Naval History by Conspiracy Theory: The British Admiralty before the First World War and the Methodology of Revisionism," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:7 (2015): 966-84.

⁶⁵Keith Neilson, "Greatly Exaggerated': The myth of the decline of Great Britain before 1914," *International History Review*, 13:4 (Nov 1991): 695-725. Three notable examples of the narrative of decline are Friedburg, *The Weary Titan*; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic change and military conflict from 500 to 2000*, (New York, 1987); and Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*.

heavily-armoured dreadnought battleships.⁶⁶ Sumida is rightly critical of the quality of official thinking institutions, arguing that “neither the technical departments of the Admiralty, naval technical schools, nor the dockyards possessed the staff to carry out research and development projects that required specialized expertise or sustained effort.”⁶⁷ Sumida's analysis is detailed and complex, recognizing the important pressure of fiscal economy behind the new strategic approach. John Brooks has capably argued that the problems delaying effective long-range gunnery were more general, including the practical ability to spot and identify shell splashes, accurate gun aiming and director control. By analysing the relationship between technology, strategy and finance, Brooks concludes that the decision to build HMS *Dreadnought* and the battlecruiser HMS *Inflexible* using all-big-gun armament and turbine propulsion “was risky, insufficiently considered, based on inaccurate intelligence and unnecessary.”⁶⁸ Contemporary criticism of the concepts underlying the *Dreadnought* and *Inflexible*, particularly the questionable ideas that speed was the same thing as protection and the practicality of salvo-firing, were voiced by contemporaries.⁶⁹

Sumida's arguments have transitioned to focus on the impact of two technological realities, the threat of torpedo attack and the inability of British equipment to fire accurately at long ranges, which he argues created a tactical-technical synthesis

⁶⁶Jon T. Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, technology and British naval policy, 1889-1914*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). Sumida was heavily influenced by the archival records of Arthur Pollen. for more see Anthony Pollen, *The Great Gunnery Scandal: The Mystery of Jutland*, (London: Collins, 1980) which focuses on the technological rivalry between the naval officer Frederic Dreyer and Pollen over fire-control systems.

⁶⁷Jon T. Sumida, “British Naval Administration and Policy in the Age of Fisher,” *Journal of Military History*, 54:1 (Jan 1, 1990), 5.

⁶⁸John Brooks, “*Dreadnought*: Blunder or Stroke of Genius?,” *War in History*, 14:2 (2007), 157; for more elaboration see Brooks, *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland*, (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁶⁹See 'Captain, R.N.', “The *Inflexible* and the *Dreadnought*,” *United Service Magazine*, NS 34:936 (Nov 1906), 127; 'Captain, R.N.', “Food for Thought,” *United Service Magazine*, NS 34:938 (Jan 1907), 354; 'Black Joke,' “A.B.G.B.S.,” *United Service Magazine*, NS 34:940 (Mar 1907), 584; Julian S. Corbett, “The Strategical Value of Speed in Battle-ships,” *JRUSI*, NS 35:954 (Jul 1907), 825.

where the fleet would repeatedly close to moderate range and fire in a 'pulse' before retreating out of torpedo range.⁷⁰ Stephen McLaughlin argues that contemporary tactical discourse emphasized gunnery at ranges of 14,000 yards closing down to 8,000, regardless of technological shortcomings, while the torpedo threat posed by enemy destroyers was best met by superior destroyer escorts. The fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth*-class were superior vessels for service as a fast wing of the battlefleet, since the thin armour of battlecruisers had made them less desirable for closing with the enemy as a flanking force in fleet actions.⁷¹

The emphasis on the Fisher's preference for the battlecruiser was further developed by Nicholas Lambert in his argument that Fisher was attempting to implement an asymmetrical strategy of 'flotilla defence' that would use destroyers and submarines to control Home waters and deny command of the sea to the enemy, while mobile battlecruiser squadrons would patrol the imperial periphery.⁷² The 1909 Navy Scare and the subsequent 'People's Budget' provided the massive sums required for a traditional battlefleet, negating the necessity of a more economical strategy. Christopher Bell has recently re-evaluated the core argument that Fisher succeeded in convincing Churchill to implement flotilla defence, explaining that Churchill only considered this method for the

⁷⁰See Sumida, "A Matter of Timing: The Royal Navy and the Tactics of Defensive Battle, 1912-1916," *Journal of Military History*, 67:1 (Jan 2003): 85-136; Sumida, "Expectation, Adaptation, and Resignation: British Battlefleet Tactical Planning, August 1914-April 1916," *Naval War College Review*, 60:3 (Summer 2007): 101-22.

⁷¹Stephen McLaughlin, "Battlelines and Fast Wings: Battlefleet tactics in the Royal Navy, 1900-1914," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:7 (Dec 2015): 985-1005.

⁷²Nicholas A. Lambert, "Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904-9," *Journal of Military History*, 59:4 (Oct 1995): 639-60; these arguments were elaborated in Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

secondary theatre of the Mediterranean, not Home waters, and even then he was forced by senior naval officers to maintain a one-power Mediterranean standard in 1912.⁷³

In his strongly worded response to Bell, Lambert in fact retreated from his earlier claims of radical flotilla defence, focusing instead on what he claimed was a new method of calculating fleet strength by using 'force units' instead of battleships, for instance where a number of submarines would be the equivalent of a battleship.⁷⁴ Bell points out, along the lines identified in this dissertation, that there had always been a qualitative element to British naval discussion. The 'force units' argument was a public-relations tool to convince the public that the one-power Mediterranean standard had not been abandoned, and avoid the political repercussions of being seen as weakening the navy.⁷⁵ Bell's analysis of the inner development of the Navy Estimates in 1914 is particularly enlightening, because strategic considerations, like 'flotilla defence,' were subservient to larger political and diplomatic considerations, like public commitments and the request for Canadian dreadnought contributions, which were able to overcome some of the Treasury's opposition to a new naval programme.⁷⁶ Incidentally, Bell also rejects Nicholas Lambert's 'conspiracy theory' argument that Britain was planning on using economic warfare to achieve a rapid victory, arguing that Churchill had little faith in economic warfare and the idea in general was very uncertain and nebulous.⁷⁷ Bell has

⁷³Bell, "Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution Reconsidered: Winston Churchill at the Admiralty, 1911-1914," *War in History*. 18:3 (Jul 2011), 344-5; Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) 17-20, 37-8. Churchill did consider using flotilla craft to monitor German movements in the North Sea and shield the British Expeditionary Force.

⁷⁴Nicholas Lambert, "On Standards: A reply to Christopher Bell," *War in History*. 19:2 (Apr 2012): 217-40.

⁷⁵Christopher M. Bell, "On Standards and Scholarship: A response to Nicholas Lambert," *War in History*. 20:3 (Jul 2013), 400; Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, 34-5. In Churchill's case the standard was a 4:1 superiority in weight of projectiles, while in the 1880s a major question was whether French ironclads with wooden hulls and modernized guns and engines still counted as effective warships in comparisons.

⁷⁶Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, 30-34.

⁷⁷Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, 44-5.

done a great service for naval history to shift the emphasis away from 'conspiracy theories' to recognize the important continuities in policy-making that were not easily shaken off or wholly unreasonable in doing so.

Andrew Lambert's recent biography of Fisher argues that the 'secret' policy that Fisher was implementing was an intentional arms race. He sees this kind of economic pressure as part of a traditional 'British way of warfare,' and thus explains this departure from previous conservative moderation as an attempt to crush German competition.⁷⁸ It does lend some justification to Fisher's efforts to characterize his policies as revolutionary, although confidence in British industrial and shipbuilding capacity was a standard in the navalist discourse. While the thesis of 'relative decline' is no longer widely accepted, an arms race was still a poor policy choice because it necessarily relied on a fickle coalition of press, politicians and public opinion to provide the funds to overwhelm German competition. Events like the 1909 Navy Scare warrant further research to understand how the public political environment continued to be mobilized in favour of high levels of naval expenditure even when the competing demands of social welfare expenditure were rapidly climbing.

The debate between the revisionist historians and their critics demonstrates the need to pay more careful attention to contemporary thinking. Naval historians have produced detailed and nuanced analyses of strategy, tactics and technology, but these have skirted the complex public-political dimension that was a critical condition for financing the naval expansion of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Bell's conclusion to the debate paralleled my own opinion of Lambert's 'flotilla defence'

⁷⁸Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition: The creation of the steam battlefleet, 1815-1860*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1984), Chapter 8, "Radical Reform: John Fisher (1841-1920).

concept, that, “If we shift our perspective a little, and accept that Fisher and his ideas were a peripheral rather than a central part of the process, the evidence no longer points towards a Fisher-inspired naval revolution.”⁷⁹ The Royal Navy was continuously improving itself through the intellectual efforts of many dedicated officers and concerned politicians and citizens, and through the consequent political weight of popular naval activism that provided the financial means for implementing new ideas.

When naval history developed as a field in the late nineteenth century it projected backward contemporary attitudes towards the Admiralty’s technological receptiveness, which led to the belief that the Admiralty was very reactionary and resistant to new ideas. New research shows that the Admiralty was willing to invest in new technologies, although this was tempered by a reasonable and economical conservatism.⁸⁰ Recent historical work has recognized the challenge of accounting for technological change in many eras, when a multitude of political, social and economic factors motivate a variety of individuals in industry, government and the services to support or oppose specific projects.⁸¹ Kenneth Warren’s work on the innovative breech-loading ordnance developed by Armstrong reveals that a weapon is a “technical-social artifact” that must be understood in its political, economic and social context, as well as the personal character of the individuals involved.⁸² By the 1880s the Admiralty was greatly concerned with comparisons of the numbers of battleships fielded by each naval Power, and embraced both technological innovations, like numerous torpedo boats and destroyers, and large

⁷⁹Bell, “Standards and Scholarship,” 409.

⁸⁰Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition: the creation of the steam battlefleet, 1815-1860*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1984).

⁸¹See Ken Alder, *Engineering the Revolution: arms and Enlightenment in France, 1763-1815*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*; David Zimmerman, *Britain’s Shield: Radar and the defeat of the Luftwaffe*, (Stroud: Amberley, 2010).

⁸²Marshall J. Bastable, “From Breechloaders to Monster Guns: Sir William Armstrong and the Invention of Modern Artillery, 1854-1880,” *Technology and Culture*, 33:2 (Apr 1992), 213-47.

battlefleets. The expense of providing both drove naval officers to engage with the public to advocate their reform and expansion projects, and to explain the necessity to the nation. The technological choices made in the 1880s and 90s, over armour, ordnance, speed, size and many other characteristics, were determined by the larger political and intellectual processes which created successful combinations of policies and financing.

The late nineteenth-century Royal Navy is not devoid of historical attention. Roger Parkinson's *The Late Victorian Navy* is an excellent analysis of the pre-dreadnought era that rehabilitates the Royal Navy of the 1880s and 90s as an intelligent, modernizing force. This perspective is confirmed by Robert Davison's study of naval executive officers, which also emphasizes the evolutionary and complex reform movement.⁸³ Parkinson's work revolves around the NDA, which he considers the key point in adapting the navy to a new strategic and technological climate, whereby the fast steel navy was introduced and convoy abandoned in favour of a rigorous and comprehensive offensive against enemy ports designed to protect commerce by preventing enemy raiders from escaping to sea. While other historians have been quick to denigrate the ships that were built in the NDA, for instance their use of black powder for heavy ordnance, Parkinson rightly recognized that this was a key transition from iron to steel warships, with attendant affects on armour, size and speed.⁸⁴ Parkinson realizes that trade defence was always a core component of strategy, and he argues that the offensive blockade was the preferred method at the time for preventing the depredations of

⁸³Robert Davison, *Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's executive branch officers, 1880-1919*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

⁸⁴Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The pre-Dreadnought era and the origins of the First World War*; (New York: Boydell, 2008), 44-5. See also Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 239-40; Richard Humble, *Before the Dreadnought: The Royal Navy From Nelson to Fisher* (London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1976), 162.

commerce raiders, by preventing them from going to sea, or from returning for coal. This involved the gradual redistribution of the fleet to concentrate powerful ships in home waters, which was continued to its logical extent under Fisher. Parkinson's work on the pre-dreadnought era has been an important corrective to the neglect of late nineteenth-century naval history, emphasizing the strength and merit of the steel navy built in the last decade of the century.

Parkinson's work looks very specifically at the strategic realities, particularly the concept of convoy and trade defence, and the role that this played in the fleet that was built by the NDA. He recognizes the growth of navalism and press agitation, but makes the same choice as many authors, in treating the publicly conducted discourse on naval policy, technology and strategy as secondary to the internal, official work done at the Admiralty. To Parkinson the fleet's size and composition was a rational choice designed for the strategic reality that existed in the 1880s and 90s, clearly setting the focus of the work on the causal influences of foreign policy through the study of strategy. There is truth here, and the work does give a very detailed examination of the real and relative capabilities of the Royal Navy in its context; nevertheless, the impact of domestic politics in a Parliamentary democracy was significant, for in spite of many politicians' protestations to the contrary, the politics of national defence was never truly non-partisan. Naval scares will add to this story of naval progress, because they are the moments when the public lends its growing power to the cause of national defences. Considering the growing exposure of the public to information, the dedication many journals showed towards coverage of naval affairs, and the number of times in which newspaper comments spurred political debates in Parliament, it is necessary to give more depth to

the consideration of the domestic naval policy debates and the role that the public could play. The question of the navy was ultimately a question of politics, and political will.

Naval strategy in the late nineteenth century is beginning to receive more favourable treatment. Articles by Matthew Allen focus on the nineteenth century itself, investigating the intellectual interaction with important tactical, strategic and technological developments and giving more credit to the naval officers involved. Exercises like the 1885 naval manoeuvres were not perfect, but these experiences were vital to the progress of the navy, and reflect great credit upon the men that designed and practised them.⁸⁵ Shawn T. Grimes' recent work on naval strategy falls into the usual practice of focusing on pre-war developments in the twentieth century, but he does give greater credit to the groundwork that was laid in the 1880s and 90s. He makes a solid case that the main lines of British naval planning were created in the 1880s through a combination of work by the NID, formerly the Foreign Intelligence Committee (FIC), and the experience of the annual manoeuvres, which tested important concepts like the blockade, as well as the input from naval historians attempting to distill timeless lessons from past experience. In spite of criticism in reviews, this study will support Grimes' assertion of the "existence of a legitimate, progressive, and innovative approach to naval planning which effectively met the challenges confronting Britain...."⁸⁶ The late nineteenth-century Royal Navy is being rehabilitated through the growing historical appreciation of the deep continuities of naval policy. The present study will build on

⁸⁵Matthew Allen, "The British Mediterranean Squadron during the Great Eastern Crisis of 1878-79," *Mariner's Mirror*, 85:1 (1999): 53-67; Allen, "The Origins, Conduct and Outcomes of the British Naval Exercises of 1885," *Mariner's Mirror*, 91:3 (2005): 421-35; Allen, "The Deployment of Untried Technology: British naval tactics in the Ironclad Era," *War in History*, 15:3 (July 2008): 269-93.

⁸⁶Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 2, 1-11.

existing historical work, which prioritizes the functional aspects of the reform and expansion of the Royal Navy, by incorporating the political dimension of the story that was played out largely in Parliament and the press.

Admiral Sir Reginald H. Bacon called Fisher the “first of our Admirals to make an intelligent use of the Press for the benefit of the Navy,” but such flattery was seriously inaccurate.⁸⁷ Biographical work on leading naval intellectuals reveals the character and the men that were engaging in the double duty of educating the public about the state of the navy and directing policy-makers attention along specific lines, and supports this study’s favourable view of their quality and sincerity. Certain individuals, like Admiral Sir Thomas Symonds, may be dismissed as extremists, but frequently navalist agitators were notable thinkers. Donald M. Schurman produced substantial work which emphasized the important writings of Julian S. Corbett, Captain John Colomb and Admiral Philip Colomb, while Andrew Lambert has examined the role of the naval historian Professor John Knox Laughton.⁸⁸ Recent scholarship has emphasized the interaction between technology and tactics, giving more credit to a wider array of thinkers, such as Shawn Grimes’ attention to the naval officer G.A. Ballard as a leading

⁸⁷Reginald H. Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), 180. Fisher was a better example of how the use of the press could backfire, when his rivalry with Beresford eroded both men’s reputations and careers. For example, in July 1908 Fisher’s ally, the journalist Archibald S. Hurd, explained that Beresford and Fisher, “have undoubtedly succeeded in dividing both the service and ‘society’ into schools of vehement and active partisans of the one personality or the other, and of the ideas in organisation, ships, and gunnery which they represent.... Both appear to command adherents in the Press and to make free use of their advocates.” (*The Quarrel in the Navy*,” *The Nation*, (Jul 1, 1908), 514-5). The animosity between Beresford and Fisher began in the Mediterranean in 1900, when Fisher as Commander-in-Chief reprimanded Beresford in a public signal for the poor handling of his flagship (in fact it was the flag-captain who was navigating). Later when Fisher questioned Beresford about a *Morning Post* article which described Beresford in command, Beresford insultingly replied that his name might be better known to the public than Fisher’s.

⁸⁸Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy, and the historical profession*, (London: Chatham, 1998); Donald M. Schurman, *Education of a Navy: The development of British naval strategic thought, 1867-1914*, (London: Cassell, 1965); Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922: Historian of British maritime policy from Drake to Jellicoe*, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981).

strategist or Andrew Lambert's description of Admiral G.P. Hornby.⁸⁹ The study of naval discourses suggests that serious intellectual development was occurring outside of official institutions, and that historians need to give more genuine consideration for the extensive tactical and strategic discussion which did occur in unofficial forums. With the political legacy of the highly effective 1880s and 90s naval scares in fresh memory, and all of these men either experiencing or participating directly in the agitations, there was every reason to continue public activism and encourage popular engagement with naval affairs.

Some of the best work on naval scares is entwined with the biographies of key actors, because they compensate for the pro-Fisher historiographical bias. Admiral Lord Charles Beresford has been favourably rehabilitated in recent work, as Fisher has been revealed to be an autocratic, vindictive and often under-handed operative.⁹⁰ Fisher was important, but his influence needs to be carefully contextualized as part of a much longer evolution, rather than revolution, of naval affairs. Beresford's memoirs point to a wide circle of reforming naval officers who formed after the 1884–85 surge of public interest turned towards a critique of naval administration, including luminaries like Lord Alcester, Admiral of the Fleet Henry Keppel, Admiral Sir Thomas M.C. Symonds, Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, Captain E.R. Fremantle, Admiral Sir Charles G.J.B. Elliot, Vice-Admiral Sir William Montagu Dowell, and Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton. Beresford disclaimed any need for credit for introducing the agitation for a £20,000,000 programme (the NDA), but insisted “that sooner or later my

⁸⁹Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the Royal Navy*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2012), 232; Andrew Lambert, *Admirals*, Chapter 7, “The Embodiment of the Victorian Navy: Geoffrey Hornby (1825-95).”

⁹⁰See particularly *The Crisis of British Power*, and Geoffrey Martin Bennett, *Charlie B: a biography of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., LL.D., D.C.L.*, (London: Dawnay, 1968).

recommendations have been adopted by the authorities, who thereby proved the justness of my case.⁹¹ Hornby's archive is extensive for the 1880s and 90s and demonstrates the complexity of the private discourse behind the articles and political statements, although very little of Hornby's own writings are preserved. Naval officers were one group that benefitted from the Victorian use of pseudonyms for articles, which provided a loophole for men on active service to share their ideas without repercussions.⁹²

Naval historiography is beginning to balance itself between proper appreciation for the Fisher Era and an understanding of the long-term continuities in naval policy. Revolutions are dramatic events and very attractive for authors looking to sell books, but the actual events do not bear out these interpretations. The evolution of the First World War Royal Navy was guided by many hands along a broadly similar trajectory, emphasizing the surety of numerical superiority with an emphasis on qualitative development. These objectives were not all realized, (for instance naval gunnery did not prove itself to be as successful as officers had hoped), but the naval profession was intent on securing the best technology, tactics and strategy available. Understanding these decisions is the objective of this dissertation, and the reason to give closer and more deliberate consideration to discourse that was conducted by leading politicians, naval officers and civilian thinkers for the express purpose of informing the nation and the government of the state and requirements of the Royal Navy.

⁹¹Charles de la Poer Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, vol 2, 2nd Ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1914), 338-40.

⁹²For this trend see Mary Ruth Hillier, "The Identification of Authors: The Great Victorian Enigma," in J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdell, eds., *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978), 123-48.

Historiography of Navalism

Naval scares have been difficult events for historians to come to grips with. They are easily over-simplified, either by subsuming these key episodes into the longer process of socio-political development or by extracting one from its context in an attempt to determine a ‘turning point.’ There is a widespread tendency in histories to focus on the shipbuilding programmes that arose from the political struggle of the naval scares while briefly mentioning the new popularity of the navy.⁹³ The Northbrook programme, Naval Defence Act (NDA) and Spencer Programme are without question critical steps in the expansion and reform of the Royal Navy, but the scope and design of these programmes was intimately related to the character of the discourses which make up a scare. Navalism has been given some important scholarly attention which has firmly established its existence and pervasive cultural presence, but the political effectiveness of the agitation has been downplayed, largely through the consistent bias towards the Fisher Era. This dissertation will go farther than the current historiography to show the political reality of the scares.

The naval scares of the 1880s and 90s were explicitly self-conscious — people were well aware of their existence and discussed the creation and impact of the scares as they happened. The perceived reality was due to primarily to the work of Richard Cobden, who’s 1862 *The Three Panics* first described the phenomena as they occurred in 1848, 1852 and 1859.⁹⁴ Cobden's political philosophy embraced retrenchment in government spending, particularly peacetime expenditure on the unproductive military

⁹³See for example Black, *The British Seaborne Empire*, 241-2 or Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, 1-2.

⁹⁴Richard Cobden, *The Three Panics: an historical episode*, (London: Ward & Co., 1862). Later reprinted with F.W. Hirst's *The Six Panics* by the Cobden Club, *The Burden of Armaments: a plea for retrenchment*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905).

forces of the country. These events are dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, including C.I. Hamilton's valuable examination of an earlier episode in 1844 which suggests that Cobden missed at least one important public episode.⁹⁵ Cobden's work was based on comparisons of expenditure, including total naval expenditure, expenditure on dockyard wages, the number of seamen employed and the number of French ships in commission. Cobden believed that the massive defence spending following the 1859–60 Navy Scare was useless because France was consistently maintaining a naval force approximately two-thirds the size of the Royal Navy, and wasteful panic expenditure only triggered a matching increase in French spending. He preferred expanding commercial relations with France as the means to ensure peace. Cobden declared that he would spend a 'hundred millions' if naval supremacy were threatened, but insisted that it was not — this phrase was constantly quoted by navalists who argued that the navy was insufficient for the range of duties required in war.

The ideological thrust of Cobden's work, that panic expenditure was wasteful and unnecessary, was maintained and updated by Frederick William Hirst's 1913 *The Six Panics*, which included scares in 1909, 1911 and 1913.⁹⁶ Hirst was part of the anti-militarist circle of the Cobden Club, and like Cobden he was writing in response to current events. Hirst insisted that the scares were fabrications created by a conspiracy of armaments industry publicists and lobbyists to justify more sales of their products that did not reflect the actual strategic position of the country. The work is very critical of the ability of democratically-elected governments to resist the irrational fears of the population. Hirst was writing for contemporaries with a particular political purpose,

⁹⁵C.I. Hamilton, "Diplomatic and Naval Effects of the Prince de Joinville's Note sur l'etat des forces navales de la France of 1844," *Historical Journal*, 32:3 (Sep 1989): 675-87.

⁹⁶Francis Wrigley Hirst, *The Six Panics and Other Essays*, (1913).

proving that the scares had enough power to warrant a thorough response, but historical work leaves serious doubts over the validity of his conspiracy theory.

The armaments conspiracy theory has not been validated by historical research, particularly in regards to the late nineteenth century. There is no doubt that British shipyards, coal mines, engineering and steel industries, and the armaments manufacturers all benefitted from official naval contracts. Increasing naval expenditure was used to compensate for increasing international economic competition, particularly from Germany and the United States.⁹⁷ Sydney Pollard and Paul Robertson's work on the British shipbuilding industry confirms that the profitability of armaments contracts helped these firms compensate for their declining international market share.⁹⁸ The creation of a military-industrial complex selling to an international market that William McNeill identifies in the late nineteenth century was located more specifically in the transition of the 1890s, although domestic contracts were of primary importance.⁹⁹ As the nineteenth century drew to a close, labour and national interests were also coming into play, with naval programmes being partly justified to support strategic industries and provide employment for British citizens.¹⁰⁰ Private companies, most notably Armstrong, became the primary technological innovators, and received increasingly substantial profits from their products.

⁹⁷Arthur J. Marder, "The English Armament Industry and Navalism in the Nineties," *Pacific Historical Review*, 7:3 (Sep 1938), 241-53.

⁹⁸Sydney Pollard and Paul Robertson, *The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1870-1914*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); see also Hugh Lyon, "The Relations between the Admiralty and Private Industry in the Development of Warships," in Bryan Ranft, ed., *Technical Change and British Naval Policy, 1860-1939*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977): 37-64.

⁹⁹William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, armed force, and society since A.D. 1000*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 262-306. One example is Kenneth Warren, *Armstrongs of Elswick: growth in engineering and armaments to the merger with Vickers*, (London: Macmillan, 1989). Warren defends the management's choices in the early years, avoiding the narrative of industrial decline, arguing that in the twentieth century poor management led to the decline of the firm after WWI.

¹⁰⁰For more on this shift see Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1999).

Industrial interest groups engaged with public opinion and appreciated the benefits of publicity and official favour, but a conspiracy of armaments industries is not sustainable for the late nineteenth century. A notable case was the protected cruiser developed by Armstrong at Elswick, using a sloping 'turtleback' armoured deck instead of side armour to reduce weight. Armstrong took advantage of the existing 1884 Navy Scare to write directly to the press explaining that this new design was affordable and would be far more effective in war than armed merchant ships.¹⁰¹ Armstrong followed up in early 1886 by writing privately to Beresford restating that the protected cruiser was a more practical and economical means of protecting commerce and empire; Armstrong finished by inviting Beresford to visit the Elswick yards and see the new “Sea going torpedo boats [which] are also much wanted.”¹⁰² Armstrong was obviously eager to promote his products through public and private channels, particularly through the sailor-politician Beresford, but the chronology suggests that he was responding to the opportunity provided by navalist activism rather than being a direct cause of the uproar.

Another example of the involvement of the armaments industry in navalist discourses was the 1886 ordnance crisis after a defective gun exploded on HMS *Collingwood*. After investigating, Captain Noble of Armstrong revealed defects that would require replacing the Mark-II guns with Mark-V.¹⁰³ Fisher, as Director of Naval Ordnance (DNO), swore the First Lord, Lord Ripon, to secrecy about Noble's involvement, but he also forwarded the information to Admiral Hornby to use in his

¹⁰¹“Occasional Notes,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6119 (Oct 20, 1884), 3; BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 66-7, Ripon to J.A. Fisher, May 27, 1886; BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 68-9, J.A. Fisher to Ripon, May 29, 1886. See Chapter 3 for more on this debate.

¹⁰²BL, Blakeney Collection, Add MS 63116, ff. 94-5, W.G. Armstrong to C. Beresford, Feb 25, 1886.

¹⁰³BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 57-60, J.A. Fisher to Ripon, May 10, 1886.

public campaign with the caveat that the sources of information be kept confidential.¹⁰⁴ Hornby did campaign about the inferiority of British ordnance, to the disappointment of some of his correspondents whose priority was deficient speed in warships.¹⁰⁵ Rather than a pawn of the armaments industry, Hornby should be seen as an independent actor being fed insider information to use at his discretion as part of a wider process of navalism. The industry was cooperative and happy to benefit from popular navalism and fear, but did not deliberately create panic in order to create more business, at least not any more so than other patriotic navalist thinkers. Rebecca Matzke recognizes the core truth, that “the political will needed to sustain a strong navy was never lacking in nineteenth-century Britain....”¹⁰⁶ This determination ensured political acceptance of higher levels of armaments spending when public complacency was shattered during naval scares.

Modern historians have produced valuable work which has firmly established the complex depth of British navalism. These works have tended to take a thematic perspective which is excellent at describing the broad phenomena, but prioritizes examples from the Fisher Era and conceals the important evolutionary processes of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ This study will take a chronological perspective to emphasize how the naval scares and the surrounding navalist agitation changed over time. The scares did not repeat themselves, because each episode was consciously organized based on assessments of what elements had succeeded or failed in previous scares.

¹⁰⁴BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 68-9, J.A. Fisher to Ripon, May 29, 1886; NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, J.A. Fisher to G.P. Hornby, May 21, 1886.

¹⁰⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Brent to G.P. Hornby, Aug 6, 1886.

¹⁰⁶Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 58.

¹⁰⁷See pioneering work by Arthur Marder, “The Origin of Popular Interest in the Royal Navy,” *JRUSI*, 82 (Feb 1, 1937): 763-71.

W. Mark Hamilton's excellent study, *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1889–1914*, firmly establishes the existence and proportions of the navalist lobby group in the pre-First World War Era. He gives a thematic overview, covering the Navy League, naval histories and strategic studies, the press and parliamentary discourses, which recognizes the continuity of activism at the cost of de-emphasizing the complex interactions between these forums. He argues that “The era of the New Navalism, from the late eighties up to 1914, made the British Navy almost as secure as the Crown, and just as popular.”¹⁰⁸ Hamilton’s work is broad, and for this reason tends to favour the more colourful examples from the late 1890s and early 1900s which neglects the important innovations during the 1880s. This tendency is even more evident in A.J.A. Morris' *The Scaremongers*, which examines the role of the mass press in the rise of militarism and international rivalries that led into the First World War.¹⁰⁹ Morris begins his study in 1896 with the founding of the *Daily Mail*, which did mark a noticeable shift towards aggressively nationalist right-wing media coverage, but he is focused on the Anglo-German Antagonism and underestimates the strategic complexity of the public discourses. The emphasis on popular navalism is a valuable addition to historical understanding, because it takes into account the work of a multitude of thinkers, publications and institutions had succeeded in creating a blue-water navalist common-sense across a broad range of the population.

Hamilton accepts several generalizations in his framing of navalist propaganda. One is the importance of Alfred Thayer Mahan’s several historical works on sea power, a

¹⁰⁸W. Mark Hamilton’s *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1889-1914*, (NY & London: Garland, 1986), 18-19.

¹⁰⁹A.J.A. Morris, *The Scaremongers: The advocacy of war and rearmament, 1896-1914*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

mainstay of surveys and analyses of the development of naval thought.¹¹⁰ Donald Schurman's discussion of the work of P.H. Colomb and John Colomb is a valuable corrective, showing the internal British discourse on the subject which enabled Mahan's work to become so popular.¹¹¹ The study of naval panics shows the much deeper history of public interest, and Mahan only joined in on an already aroused navalist public opinion. His works were so popular in Britain because they justified, after the fact, the contentious policy decisions of the 1880s and by the 1890s had helped these forces coalesce into a power that even William Ewart Gladstone, with all his eloquence and prestige, could not resist.

This dissertation builds on Hamilton's work by shifting from a thematic to a chronological focus and utilizing collections of the private papers of politicians and naval officers to determine the actual effect of public discourses. The naval scares examined by this dissertation emphasize the role of a coterie of naval officers in mediating the civil-military relationship by providing credible expert opinion to shape the strategic and technological perceptions of the educated, reading public which in turn was eager to support what these credible witnesses stated were the necessary national defences. In practice this was an extremely complex and variable relationship, which requires a chronological analysis of the individual episodes in order to understand the rapidly changing processes which a thematic approach can overly homogenize.

While the media was becoming more practiced at generating a clear and directed representation of public opinion, the Admiralty and the Government were also improving their public relations methods. Jan Ruger's *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany*

¹¹⁰One example would be Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: from the Enlightenment to the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹¹¹ Schurman, *The Education of the Navy*.

in the Age of Empire provides a comparative cultural history that examines the development of the cult of the navy and its role in national identity politics. Both countries employed similar methods to enhance the loyalty and patriotism of their citizens, including fleet reviews, ship launches and other public spectacles, such as the 1891 Naval Exhibition. Ruger's work shows the broad appeal of naval spectacles in late nineteenth-century Britain, and the popularity of the navy among working-class Britons. Ruger recognizes that, "while interpreting the cult of the navy as a public theatre, with its own rules and rhetoric, the book is keenly aware of the politics involved, both domestically and internationally."¹¹² Ruger's work is focused on the last years of the nineteenth century, and spends most of its time in the post-1900 'Fisher Era' when the Anglo-German rivalry was reaching its pre-First World War crescendo. This dissertation will expand where Ruger begins, by looking at the origins of popular navalism in the 1880s, which laid the foundations for more elaborate official public relations programmes in the twentieth century. For instance, Ruger argues that Government planning for naval reviews began with the 1887 Jubilee review; the present work will show that the willingness of the Admiralty and the Government to engage in public relations was driven by the political experience of the naval scares, which had highlighted the value of channeling public opinion.

Naval scares were constructed events. Thinkers were working very hard to *predict* the needs of the navy, because they believed that war could be rapid and decisive and therefore a practical war-fighting force had to be planned and constructed in peacetime. Inevitably these predictions were proven wrong or overly pessimistic, which critics of the

¹¹² Ruger, *The Great Naval Game*, 6-7.

navalist movement insisted at the time. W.E. Gladstone will recur in this study as a voice of staunch opposition to naval spending, insisting on the sufficiency of the Royal Navy.

This perspective is adopted by John Beeler, whose *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era* expertly rehabilitates a neglected period of naval history.

Navalists in the lengthy agitation of the 1880s and 90s looked back to the late 1860s and 70s as the period when the navy was left to decline, and Beeler provides a far more detailed and accurate picture of the relative strength of the Royal Navy. He turns this rationale to the naval scares, concluding that, “So far from being responses to legitimate threats to British maritime supremacy, the naval scares of 1884–85 and 1888–89 were internally generated and based on illusions that could have been refuted at the time.”¹¹³

Thus, Beeler continues, Britain was itself responsible for the escalating naval arms race and ensuing international tension although he does not deny that there were real sources of conflict, just that they were not naval in nature. Beeler's case is accurate and well-argued. In the objectivity of hindsight the situation was never as dire as the navalists of the 1880s portrayed, but policy decisions are not made with the benefit of hindsight. The question of the objective reality of the state of the navy has a place in historical study, but it is not the most important aspect of the understanding of naval politics — perception and interpretation have real significance in the ongoing policy-making process. Using private papers to contextualize the public discourses has not indicated any solid evidence of cynical conspiracies, either of armaments industries or professional naval cabals.

¹¹³John Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-80*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 276; John Beeler, “Review Article: The Theatre of Navalism in Germany and Britain,” *The International History Review*, 30:2, (June 2008), 332-42. He based the article on Ruger's *The Great Naval Game* and R. Mullins unpublished dissertation *Sharpening the Trident*.

Historians might find in hindsight that there was inaccuracy or a consistent pessimism in the arguments of navalists, but this critique was part of the contemporary discourse.

The study of late nineteenth-century naval scares needs to adopt the perspective of Matthew Seligmann to understand the actual place and role of the events. Seligmann concludes that in the famous 1909 ‘We want eight and we won’t wait’ naval panic the Admiralty case was based on genuine intelligence information and professional analysis which indicated a real possibility of a dramatic German buildup.¹¹⁴ The public received similar information to the Admiralty, confirming fears that Germany was accelerating its naval construction by anticipating orders. Seligmann paints a favourable picture of British intelligence gathering, in contrast to the usual derision of British naval intellectual establishments, although there was a significant strain of paranoia and Teutophobia. Seligmann’s approach tries to reify the scare, to base it upon a sincere opinion based on solid evidence, and he successfully defends the Admiralty’s integrity. If the 1909 Navy Scare, which occurred after decades of political navalism, was not the product of conspiracy or manipulation, there is little reason to think that naval thinkers in the 1880s and 90s were any less sincere in their belief that the navy required improvement.

The importance of evaluating the naval scares in their distinct intellectual context is confirmed by Steven R.B. Smith’s excellent article, “Public Opinion, the Navy, and the City of London: The Drive for British Naval Expansion in the Late Nineteenth Century.”¹¹⁵ Smith makes a powerful argument for the importance of British businessmen

¹¹⁴Matthew Seligmann, “Intelligence Information and the 1909 Naval Scare: the secret foundations of a public panic,” *War in History*, 17:1, (Jan 2010). The intelligence reports are contained in Matthew Seligmann, Ed., *Naval Intelligence from Germany: The Reports of the British Naval Attachés in Berlin, 1906-1914*. (Ashgate: Navy Records Society, 2007).

¹¹⁵Steven R.B. Smith, “Public Opinion, the Navy, and the City of London: The Drive for British Naval Expansion in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *War and Society*, 9 (1991), 29-50. Included in Andrew Lambert, *Naval History 1850-Present, Vol I*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 273-94.

in driving naval expansion, particularly acting through the London Chamber of Commerce (LCC) which united these forces with important naval officers, like Admiral Hornby. He suggests that there was an economic rationale to the scares in which “a continuous, rolling programme of shipbuilding was achieved.”¹¹⁶ Smith’s work is valuable in drawing the connections between naval and business interests. As defence against invasion became less important compared to the protection of international commerce, the role of mercantile interests increased. He shows how different elements could coalesce in a cooperative movement that could combine political clout with the credibility of expert advice.

This dissertation will argue along the lines of Seligmann that navalist agitators were arguing from a perspective of honest and genuine concerns, which took a worst-case scenario approach to their discussion of naval policy. With so much uncertainty in the technology and force structure of the navy, it is much easier in hindsight to compare the real fighting power deployed by rival powers. Contemporaries found it easy to overestimate the competency and power of foreign Navies, and there was also an idealistic tendency to constantly seek progress in naval armaments. John Beeler’s criticisms about how naval comparisons misstated the real strength of the navy were fully reflected in the contemporary discourse on the state of the navy — the ideas were presented, discussed and ultimately did not ‘dispel the illusions.’ In late nineteenth-century Britain, the state of the navy was very difficult to define, even with official standards like the Two-Power Standard, and there were no certainties about the forces that would be necessary to protect the enormous vulnerabilities of British trade and

¹¹⁶Smith, “Public Opinion, the Navy, and the City of London,” 273. Smith argues that the LCC was able to influence government policy in two areas, the expansion of Empire and the expansion of the Navy, beginning in 1884.

imperial possessions. Only a thorough and sympathetic study of the actual discourse, the process of thought and debate which led to specific policies, can we understand the history of the Royal Navy.

This study is constrained by the reality that public opinion was always represented — by political speeches, newspaper articles, letters and petitions — by a minority speaking for the majority. Naval scares were driven by the public discourses created by politicians, naval officers, journalists and civilian thinkers in the forums provided by serious periodicals aimed at a range of educated and largely professional audiences. The public referred to in this study was restricted both by the state of the franchise, which was not fully democratic and notably excluded women, and by the self-selection of audience members who defined their own reading habits and areas of interest. In nineteenth-century Britain, the challenges of engaging with the complex plurality of public opinion were justified by the political rewards for possessing a credible claim to represent the relevant public opinion. When contemporaries discussed the opinion of the ‘man in the street,’ it was in practice limited to the opinion of the ‘gentleman in the street.’

For this study, the importance is not on any particular journal, but on how groups of journals provided a valuable function as a public forum outside of Government or Admiralty control. These newspapers and periodicals all referenced each other, and a significant article would be summarized and commented on elsewhere in the press. The constant self-referencing boosted the credibility of the navalist case, since there was never a lack of authoritative, or authoritative-sounding, sources to form the foundation of a multitude of arguments. The new ‘expert’ spoke across the normal boundaries of press affiliation, writing to many journals with similar messages to disseminate views as

widely as possible, and journals competed to get credible ‘experts’ to use their pages as a forum. Personal papers are especially valuable for tracing some of the links between press, Service and Parliament, although there are many gaps in preservation. The links described in this dissertation serve to exemplify the processes of applying public opinion to official and political policy decisions.

The story of naval scares is not one of great men or visionary thinkers, but of dozens or even hundreds of individuals contributing to the creation of a common-sense understanding of Britain’s worldwide strategic needs based on a blue-water navy and mobile defence. John Keegan exhorted military historians to keep battle at the forefront of analysis, to constantly remember that armed forces exist to fight. The nineteenth century exhibits a great challenge to an armed force when the nature of warfare is changing faster than real experience can be gained. John Lynn’s proposed a methodology based around a mutual feedback loop between a ‘Discourse on War’ and a ‘Reality of War’ with several offshoots when the two elements were irreconcilable.¹¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century, naval officers increasingly involved themselves in a detailed technical and strategic discourse, while the Admiralty endeavoured to create an approximate ‘Reality of War’ through regular manoeuvres and experiments. The indistinct ‘Reality of War’ contributed to the co-existence of several different lines of strategic thought, which only gradually coalesced into a Two-Power Standard in battleships with an even greater superiority in cruisers and approximately one-power standard for torpedo-flotillas.

This dissertation begins with a cursory overview of important panics in the mid-nineteenth century that set important precedents for the civil-military relationship in

¹¹⁷John Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture, from Ancient Greece to Modern America*, (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2003).

1884–94. The intention is to reinforce the long-term evolution of the forces involved, and to prevent the over-estimation of the novelty of the 1884 Navy Scare. There was a conscious, creative element to public activities which was based on the experiences gained in the 1840s and 50s. This chapter also considers the lead-up to the 1884 Navy Scare, which was a period of growing navalist anxiety.

The main body consists of five chapters, with a chapter devoted to each of the three naval scares and two chapters dealing with the intervening years. The 1884 'Truth About the Navy' Scare is the first episode examined. W.T. Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette* crusaded on behalf of the navy in 1884, using innovative New Journalism tactics to popularize a pessimistic and alarmist picture of the inadequate state of the navy within a Radical Liberal civilian audience which had avoided exposure to such ideas. "The Truth About the Navy" brought together divergent strands of navalist discourse into a comprehensive picture of a navy that was systematically deficient for its duties due to a lack of funds. After a credible public movement was created, largely through the press and Parliament, Gladstone's Government was forced to promise a supplementary naval programme which addressed only the worst deficiencies. Even then, the Government probably intended to renege on its promises until a proper war scare with Russia erupted in 1885 over conflict in Central Asia. Subsequent scares benefitted tremendously from the legacy of the huge panic expenditure that followed, since it confirmed and deepened navalist concerns.

The third and fifth chapters are devoted to the two 'Interregnum' periods, in order to show the continuity of navalist agitation. Public discourses were not silenced by shipbuilding programmes, but they were somewhat muted while the Government took

real action to rectify the worst deficiencies. On several occasions, such as Randolph Churchill's 1886 resignation or the 1892 failed scare, individuals attempted to trigger public uproar for political purposes. These episodes are very enlightening, because they speak to the rationality and generally relaxed state of public agitation — people were kept fairly well informed, and a single factor was unlikely to raise the concerns of the public or inspire newspaper editors to attempt to create it. Even the conclusion of the majority of the NDA shipbuilding programme in 1892 was not sufficient to create a politically significant scare; a single-year programme filled the gap and postponed serious controversy until the completion of the NDA in 1893. These chapters focus on continuity and groundwork, because the focal points of public discourse would lay important foundations and guide agitation along specific lines.

The 1888 Navy Scare and its widely known consequence, the 1889 NDA, is the subject of the fourth chapter. Historians usually discuss the NDA in terms of its strategic and technological impact, particularly the formal articulation of the Two-Power Standard. Between this chapter and the fifth, it will become obvious that the Two-Power Standard did not offer any real certainty or even limitation on the forces that would be necessary to ensure victory in war. The NDA was specifically constituted as an Act of Parliament in response to previous years of critique of the capacity of the civilian Government to administer the navy. The NDA was meant to assure the nation that the navy would be provided with a numerically adequate naval force that could not be abandoned by any government of any party without recourse to full public Parliamentary action. The 1888 Navy Scare was a multi-stage process which shows how many factors were necessary before public agitation could achieve any decisive influence on policy.

The sixth chapter examines the 1893 Navy Scare, the last under the consideration of this study. The scare was more intense than its predecessors, directly causing the resignation of the indefatigable Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone. It also resulted in a shipbuilding programme comparable in its size and time frame to the NDA. In this case, however, Spencer chose specifically *not* to use an Act of Parliament, because the ongoing navalist critique blamed the publicity of the NDA for encouraging foreign rivalry. The programme was known in its general character, but each year would be voted separately and thus retained the flexibility to alter the programme to meet foreign activity. This also addressed the financial criticisms of the NDA, which had thrown part of the costs onto future years with the promise that it was a one-time measure to achieve a Two-Power Standard. The Spencer Programme recognized that the new level of peacetime expenditure had become the norm; the Chancellor of the Exchequer, W.V. Harcourt, would resort to a transformation of Death Duties to raise funds, with attendant consequences for the socioeconomic structure of society.

Chapter 2 — The Navy and the Public in the Nineteenth Century

This Tract is very scarce. it was printed at the Time when an Invasion was daily expected, but it was never published: for the author having been advised to communicate it to Government, almost at the moment it was ready to appear, the Ministry thought it might convey to the Enemy so much Information, that it would be better to suppress it, & accordingly a Sum of Money was given to prevent its publication: all the Copies were to be destroyed, & it is certain that very few were preserved. ¶ This was put into my Hands at the time it was sent to the First Minister & to the then Commander in Chief Lord Amherst.¹

Handwritten note inside Henry Lloyd, *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics; on the Projected Invasion, and the Means to Defeat It*, 1779

Henry Lloyd, a Welsh officer who served in every major European army during the numerous wars of the mid-eighteenth century, wrote *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics; on the Projected Invasion, and the Means to Defeat It* in response to French intervention in the American Revolution and the threat of a French invasion of England. Lloyd's work applied the Enlightenment's emphasis on rational and empirical thought in the development of concrete strategy and tactics for both belligerents during an invasion in the present time, unlike the post-Napoleonic work of Carl von Clausewitz that prioritized friction and uncertainty in a more general theory of the nature of warfare. Lloyd was an experienced soldier and the bulk of his book examines the military defences of southern England against a French force that was already landed. Nevertheless, he began with a solidly blue-water strategic understanding by criticizing

¹Inscription in Henry Lloyd, *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics; on the Projected Invasion, and the Means to Defeat It. Illustrated with Plans, on three copper plates. By —, a Chelsea Pensioner*, (London: W. Faden, 1779). This copy kept at the University of Victoria Special Collections.

the Government for allowing the Royal Navy to fall into disrepair after the Seven Years' War, and admonishing his readers that "*A powerful fleet and thirty thousand marines... will save us from destruction, and nothing else.*"² He described the method of defeating an invasion that had landed, but Lloyd infinitely preferred to prevent an invasion from landing in the first place. Lloyd's book was a commercial venture, although the intended audience was the political and military elite of Britain, such as Robert Clerk, Esq., Lieutenant-General of His Majesty's Forces to whom Lloyd had dedicated the book. The person who preserved this rare copy, kept at the University of Victoria, recounts how Lloyd's work was essentially bought by the Government in order to censor it. This was a temporary solution, and in the 1790s, during the long conflict with Revolutionary France, Lloyd's work was republished several times.

As the above anecdote relates, the Government was deeply concerned that the publication of detailed military plans, for both defenders and invaders, would compromise national security. This tension between the free exchange of ideas and the secrecy necessary for public safety has persisted to the present day (most obviously, Wikileaks), and it was an important element in episodic character of nineteenth-century naval scares. Public engagement with national defence policy was dependent on the type and quality of information that was available, and scares were the result of new technologies and associated strategic theories, which evolved in professional circles, being rapidly disseminated through the media to the public. This chapter briefly examines the series of naval scares in mid-nineteenth-century Britain that established the character of popular navalism as a system of punctuated equilibrium, where public apathy was jolted into action by periodic naval scares before subsiding again.

²Lloyd's own emphasis, Lloyd, *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics*, 14-5.

The possibility of an invasion was renewed when the French Revolutionary Wars began. Britain was the most determined opponent of the Revolution, and it was perhaps inevitable that invasion would be attempted. One force was gathered in the Low Countries in 1798. These events were reported in the British press; the *Caledonian Mercury*, for example, published the French emigré General Dumouriez's analysis that a large invading force would have too great a likelihood of encountering British naval forces to be attempted. Dumouriez favoured landing numerous forces of about 10,000 men which could establish beachheads for follow-up operations, but were insignificant losses for the mass army mobilized by the French state.³ The distinction between invasion and raids would remain important for the nineteenth century.

The French threat inspired a patriotic response in Britain. Some historians have emphasized resistance to the state in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but Linda Colley convincingly argues that the majority of people responded patriotically, although this was tempered by healthy self interest.⁴ William Pitt the Younger's call for volunteers in 1797 received an enthusiastic response, because of incipient nationalism and because the force was exempt from overseas service and the press gang. One example of this nationalist culture was John Tweed's "The Invasion; or, England's Glory: A drama, as it is intended to be acted in 1798," which invoked loyalty to Church, monarch and nation "since justly War excites Alarms,/ To rouse each Briton to the use of Arms...."⁵ In what would become the British pattern, Tweed recognized that the navy was

³"Invasion of England," *Caledonian Mercury*, (May 5, 1798), 5.

⁴See Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*.

⁵John Tweed, "The Invasion: or, England's Glory. A drama, as it is intended to be acted in 1798." Bocking, 1798.

the first line of defence but also considered that smaller landings, such as Dumouriez planned, could only be defeated or deterred by local military forces.

The rise of Napoleon made invasion even more plausible. Napoleon assembled his Grande Armée at Boulogne during the 1802–3 Peace of Amiens and trained it for a full-scale invasion. Even before the French fleet was defeated at Trafalgar on its way to join the forces at Brest, Napoleon changed his mind and marched into Europe to decisively defeat Austria and Russia at Ulm and Austerlitz in 1805, and then Prussia at Jena-Auerstadt in 1806. Naval security did not prevent public anxiety over the ability of Napoleon's Empire to strike at Britain. H.F.B. Wheeler and A.M. Broadley, writing during the naval history boom of the pre-WWI period, described how the fear of an invasion by Napoleon

seeped into the public consciousness, dominating conversation in every home and tavern in the country, while pamphleteers and caricaturists conveyed the mood through illustrations of the daring and outlandish methods by which such an invasion might be carried out.⁶

The actual likelihood of invasion between 1798 and 1805 was probably low, but Napoleon's preparations were dramatic and the threat seemed very real to the people of Britain. Nelson's victory at Trafalgar did not end Napoleon's hopes for invasion, but restored British confidence in the navy's ability to defeat such attempts.

When Napoleon was finally defeated, the Royal Navy held worldwide naval supremacy, and was unchallenged for almost half a century. The success of the United States Navy's large frigates during the War of 1812 was concerning, but this was quickly whitewashed by British propaganda into an 'honourable draw.'⁷ At home, the Industrial

⁶H.F.B. Wheeler and A.M. Broadley, *Napoleon and the Invasion of England: The Story of the Great Terror*, (Nonsuch Publishing, 2007), 8. Original edition 1908.

⁷Humble, *Before the Dreadnought*, 12.

Revolution increased its pace and drove both commercial and then imperial expansion in search of raw materials and new markets. Paul Kennedy observes that there was a triangular relationship between trade, colonies and the navy, and the expansion of one side of the triangle, in this case trade, forced the expansion of the other two.⁸ Britain acquired key strategic real estate, like the Cape, the Falkland Islands, Aden and Singapore. Where other diplomatic historians emphasize the importance of balance-of-power politics in keeping stability in Europe, explaining that the European powers were exhausted and British naval power was presented in acceptable enough terms to prevent any challengers, Rebecca Matzke argues that it was Britain's ability to mobilize naval power, backed by economic and financial resources, that upheld the Concert of Europe and thus the peacefulness of Europe.⁹ The deterrent effect of the Royal Navy was keenly felt in international politics, and contributed to the relative peacefulness of the nineteenth century compared to both the eighteenth and twentieth.

In 1815 the Royal Navy possessed 214 ships of the line and 792 cruisers of various classes, but in peacetime Parliament and the public expected that the navy would be severely reduced. The Whig Government of Earl Grey and his First Lord of the Admiralty Sir James Graham pursued a rigorous policy of retrenchment at the Admiralty that included reducing the Royal Dockyards, abolishing the Navy Board, clarifying the duties of Board members, and making the professional advisers subordinate to the First Lord.¹⁰ In an 1833 letter to a colleague, Sir Robert Peel puzzled over how to create "a

⁸Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 153-4.

⁹Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 4-7. For more on the early nineteenth century Congress international system see Tim Chapman, *The Congress of Vienna: Origins, Processes and Results*, (London: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁰David Evans, "Chapter 3: Retrenchment in the Name of Reform," *Building the Steam Navy: Dockyard Technology and the Creation of the Victorian Battle Fleet, 1830-1905*, (Conway Maritime Press, 2004), 26-31; C.I. Hamilton, "Chapter 3: Decision-Making at the Admiralty, 1806-1830," "Ch. 4: Admiralty

short, popular answer” to the seemingly miraculous ability of the Graham Board to reduced expenditure by £1,200,000 while increasing active forces and the quantity of stores.¹¹ Incidentally, the Graham Board also began the practice of relying on temporary committees of investigation which did not challenge the Board's authority. The Admiralty wanted to retain 100 ships of the line, mostly laid up in reserve, and 160 cruisers, which would constitute “a force which would provide adequate security against any two other naval powers,” but the warships deteriorated and the battlefleet dropped to 80 in 1817, 68 in 1828 and 58 in 1835.¹² Lack of funds meant the navy placed proportionately greater emphasis on manning and maintaining the small ships required for imperial policing. Even the Duke of Wellington reduced defence spending during his Ministry due to the clamour of public opinion for retrenchment, although the electorate wanted more cuts.¹³

Late nineteenth-century naval historians defined the Admiralty's attitude to new technology, like steam, as one of staunch conservatism and a general inability to appreciate and evaluate new innovations. This attitude had more to do with the time in which they were writing, when external agitations had been struggling to impose radical change on a resistant officialdom. New research has shown that the Admiralty had a very progressive attitude towards technology, and in cases where a new invention was of particular value to the navy, such as the 1819 development of chain cables, were willing to actively drive technological advancement.¹⁴ The screw propeller was actively

Administration and Decision-Making, c. 1830-68, The Graham Admiralty.” *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making, 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 80-115.

¹¹Sir Robert Peel to Sir George Clerk, Apr 4, 1833 in John B. Hattendorf, ed. *British Naval Documents, 1204-1960*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press for the Navy Records Society, 1993), 576.

¹²Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 156; Peter Padfield, *Rule Britannia: The Victorian and Edwardian navy*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 5.

¹³Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 55-6, 65-71.

¹⁴Evans, “The Birth of the Steam Navy,” *Building the Steam Navy*, 15-9.

developed by the navy because it allowed steam warships to dispense with the cumbersome paddlewheels which restricted the placement and firing angles of the guns.¹⁵ In 1824 Melville, the First Lord of the Admiralty, prepared a memorandum for the Duke of Wellington on “Steam Ships and the Danger of Invasion” which concluded that small-scale fortifications would be necessary to prevent a sudden descent by steam ships which could evade the sailing battlefleet.¹⁶ At the same time, Melville initiated the construction of new experimental steam engines in the 1820s.¹⁷ Subsequent First Lords were equally progressive; Graham laid down four of the new paddle steamers in 1831 in spite of the ongoing emphasis on economy.¹⁸ The Admiralty was intent on never falling behind the technology of other naval powers.

Naval and invasion scares, which were synonymous in the early part of the century, tended to coincide with the frequent periods of political instability in France, Britain's traditional enemy. French political life cycled through the Restoration Monarchy (1815–1830), the Orleans 'July' Monarchy (1830–48), Second Republic (1848–52), Second Empire (1852–70), Paris Commune (1870–1) and Third Republic (1870–1940). In 1830 France embarked on a new round of expansionist imperialism with Charles X's conquest of Algeria; this would provide enough tension alone, but it was immediately followed by a revolutionary wave in Europe which in France replaced Charles X with Louis Philippe.¹⁹ There was a brief furor in 1831 when Louis Philippe exerted French

¹⁵Christine Macleod, Jeremy Stein, Jennifer Tann and James Andrew, “Making waves: The Royal Navy's management of invention and innovation in steam shipping, 1815-1832,” *History and Technology*, 16:4, (Jan 2000): 307-33; Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Steam, Politics and Patronage: The Transformation of the Navy, 1815-54*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1994).

¹⁶Lord Melville to Duke of Wellington, Jul 3, 1824 in *British Naval Documents*, 574-5.

¹⁷C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 90-1.

¹⁸Greenhill and Giffard, *Steam. Politics and Patronage*, 50-1.

¹⁹See Clive H. Church, *Europe in 1830: Revolution and Political Change*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).

influence in Portugal and Belgium, but Palmerston preferred an accommodation with France and downplayed the conflict.²⁰ Russia began the century as a relatively insignificant part of British strategic thinking, but by mid-century the eastward expansion of Russia combined with Britain's conquest of India to create a diplomatic 'Great Game' in Central Asia as these two colossi contested spheres of influence and security. In November 1836 Russia seized a British merchant ship in the Black Sea, and while Palmerston encouraged Parliament to protect British commercial interests he insisted that public alarm over a war with Russia was unfounded.²¹ This crisis also passed in a few months. British naval expenditure began to rise in response to these tensions, from £4,200,000 in 1831 to £8,000,000 in 1847, while France increased from £3,000,000 to £5,000,000 in the same period. By 1836–37 substantial investments were being made at the first steam factory at Woolwich, since it was discovered that private industry was an unreliable supplier due to ongoing labour issues.²² Britain's naval primacy was generally accepted by European states at this time because it was relatively inoffensive and preferable to the financial and industrial effort required to build a competitive fleet.²³

The Admiralty was well aware of the benefits of cultivating a favourable public opinion, after the good work of the British propaganda in the Napoleonic wars. John W. Croker, the politically appointed First Secretary of the Admiralty, used his influence in dockyard towns to sway elections, and usurped the Treasury's role of providing

²⁰“Speech by the Earl of Aberdeen in the House of Lords.” Jul 26, 1831; and “Speech by the Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston, in the House of Commons defending closer ties with France over Belgium,” Mar 26, 1832 in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire, 1689-1971, a documentary history*, Joel H. Wiener, ed. (New York: Chelsea House, 1972), 352-7.

²¹“The Secret of Free Commerce,” “Increase of the Russian Fleet,” “Mr. T. Attwood and the war alarmists of 1837,” and “Largeness of the Russian Fleet in the Baltic,” *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston: as minister, diplomatist, and statesman, during more than forty years of public life*, George Henry Francis, ed., (London: Colburn, 1852), 334-5, 356-64,

²²Evans, “Chapter 4: Woolwich and the First Steam Factory,” *Building the Steam Navy*, 32-41.

²³Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 158-9.

information to the press by writing himself to Tory periodicals, like the *Quarterly Review*. The press cooperated because the supply of official information from the Treasury was scanty, and Croker was willing to pay for naval advertisements as an unofficial subsidy for favourable press organs.²⁴ The naval profession recognized that public and political favour was the key to supporting itself, although these relationships took most of the century to build up into an effective political movement.

Public interest combined with the growing professional identity of naval officers combined in the 1830s to support the founding of educational associations and publications. Naval officers worked diligently to gain knowledge and experience of new technology, for instance in courses offered by the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. The Royal United Service Institution (RUSI), founded in 1837, combined army and navy officers and was an important establishment for the development of strategic, tactical and technical knowledge in the armed forces. Its lectures and deliberations, as well as foreign articles of interest, were presented through a monthly *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. On the public, commercial side of the question, *Colburn's United Service Magazine* was founded in 1837, with the express intention of acting as a conduit between the Services and the country and keeping the public informed about the armed forces. These journals were part of a rapid expansion of newspapers and periodicals following the 1836 reduction of newspaper stamp duties to a penny.

The renewed international challenge in the late 1830s prompted leading statesmen to consider the strategic needs of the country. In spite of his later association with the massive fortifications of the 1860's "Palmerston's Follies," in 1839 Palmerston was defending blue-water strategic principles embodied in the Government's decision to keep

²⁴C.I. Hamilton, *Naval Administration*, 97-100.

ships in mobile fleets, including the Mediterranean, rather than dispersing them as portguard vessels along the British coast.²⁵ He explained to the House of Commons that in wartime a fleet would have to be deployed in the Mediterranean and a new fleet created in Home waters anyway, so there should be a peacetime Mediterranean fleet. Such overseas service provided qualitative benefits by giving superior training and experience for officers and sailors. In the 1830s the number and extent of these overseas squadrons was still moderate, but the demands would only increase with the rapid growth in colonial possessions and international trade.

Sir Robert Peel formed a new government in 1841 with an intention to pursue mutual armaments reduction in order to reduce the burden on the people of both Britain and France. This hope was thwarted by foreign affairs, particularly the 1840 rupture when France supported the Egyptian ruler Mohammed Ali's campaign against his nominal overlords, the Ottomans, who were in turn supported by the Quadruple Alliance of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia. France retreated from conflict with the coalition and, after a short conflict, Ali's power was limited to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire preserved. The possibility of a conflict involving France reinforced the Admiralty's concerns over Mediterranean security and the expanding French navy.²⁶ Concerns were raised over the extensive development taking place at the French naval port of Cherbourg, and by 1843 the Royal Navy was pushing to improve the facilities at Portsmouth, which began in 1846, and in 1843–44 the steam factory at Woolwich was

²⁵ Commons, "The best employment of our Naval Force," Mar 11, 1839, in *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 403-7.

²⁶ Earl of Minto to Viscount Melbourne, Jan 15, 1840 in *British Naval Documents*, 578-9. In response to the 1840 war scare, Minto wanted four new ships commissioned for the Mediterranean to make a total of fourteen British warships against eighteen French and ten Egyptian, although he noted that this was the maximum effort possible for France.

expanded.²⁷ It would become a pattern in later scares for British navalists to assume that French infrastructure and organization was superior.

The First Scare: 1844–45

The 1844–45 Navy Scare began with a pamphlet by the French Prince François F.P.L.M.O. Joinville that argued, philosophically, that the construction of steam warships would enable the French Navy to match the Royal Navy and pursue invasion or commerce destruction in wartime.²⁸ The pamphlet was popularized in an abbreviated form through the French newspaper *La Presse*, achieving a broad circulation in the French media. From the British perspective, the threat was magnified because Joinville was the son of the French king and might be expressing official policy. The French annexation of Tahiti and the ongoing conflict over the Eastern Question offered external verification of Joinville's aggression. Joinville's work was less threatening than it first appeared. It clearly recognized French naval weakness, and recommended a concentration of force in home waters and investment in steam ships. To Joinville, steam power reduced the importance of trained sailors, and would enable France to bring its military might to bear in naval conflict. The naval historian C.I. Hamilton describes how the British response to Joinville's pamphlet was highly selective, ignoring the descriptions of French naval weaknesses and focusing on Joinville's ambitious and aggressive plans for the future.

²⁷Evans, *Building the Steam Navy*, 61-5.

²⁸Prince François Ferdinand Philippe Louis Marie d'Orléans Joinville, *Note sur l'état des forces navales de la France*, (Paris: Béthune et Plon, [1844?]).

Hamilton argues that the public clamour in France surrounding the pamphlet was critical to “bring the question of naval expansion to the political forefront” by educating the French civilian public about new technology, which led to a substantial naval programme to satisfy public opinion.²⁹ Hamilton’s work shows that panics were not usually based on new arguments, but in disseminating established ideas to previously unaware audiences. Joinville's recommendations were powerful because they had the credibility of professional backing. The pamphlet was interpreted as a “condemnation of the pusillanimity of French naval policy,” so the King tried to suppress it, while the French Naval Minister tried writing directly to the press discounting the pamphlet as a partisan manipulation.³⁰ These measures totally failed to calm the scare. A new French naval programme was passed, and Joinville was given command of French forces in Morocco to placate public opinion.

The scare in Britain prompted the Admiralty to initiate an expansion and modernization of the fleet. In 1844 a Commission was appointed to investigate British port and coast defences, which concluded that there were serious deficiencies. The Duke of Wellington had become concerned with the state of British defences, writing to the Prime Minister, Peel, to advocate a system of coastal fortifications. Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary, argued against this course because Britain could quickly assemble an overwhelming force if provoked, but “without any such justification... [commissioning warships] would be almost equivalent to a declaration of war.”³¹ Peel remained more concerned with the Anti-Corn Law League and the Chartist movement, so Lord Aberdeen

²⁹C.I. Hamilton, “The Diplomatic and Naval Effects,” 675-87.

³⁰C.I. Hamilton, “The Diplomatic and Naval Effects,” 677.

³¹Earl of Aberdeen to Sir Robert Peel, Aug 22, 1844 in *British Naval Documents*, 579-81; Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 18-9.

resigned from the Government in protest over the scare. He admitted the navy had been heavily reduced, but that there was no prospect of war. In Aberdeen's opinion, war "will be brought upon us chiefly by the press of the two countries. I trust we shall not play into the hands of these firebrands."³² The idea that the press was the source of international tension would become a regular motif of nineteenth-century thought. Queen Victoria, who tended toward a pro-French perspective, preferred to emphasize Joinville's statements of the Royal Navy's power.³³ Palmerston initially maintained a similar position that, "Even under the present Government, this country is still powerful enough to make any other nation pause before they enter into a war with England."³⁴ On the other hand the Home Secretary, Graham, wrote to Peel supporting Wellington's proposals for a new system of signals and a programme of steam manoeuvres.³⁵ Rebecca Matzke astutely observes that politicians were willing to use the passions generated by a war scare to provide funding for naval forces, such as steamships, which they were quite aware could be used as easily for offensive or deterrence operations as for home defence. In this period it was easier for governments to initiate new naval expenditure using credit, at least on a minor scale, without prior Parliamentary approval.³⁶

The Admiralty took advantage of public concerns to initiate internal reforms. A memorandum was produced by the First Secretary to the Admiralty in September 1844 describing the current state of steamships built and building, the need to invest in dockyard facilities, and to increase the Royal Marine Artillery.³⁷ An 1844 special

³²Earl of Aberdeen to Sir Robert Peel, Aug 22, 1844 in *British Naval Documents*, 579-81.

³³C.I. Hamilton, "Diplomatic and Naval Effects," 678; Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 25.

³⁴Aug 7, 1844, *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 458-9.

³⁵Sir J. Graham to Sir R. Peel, Aug 22, 1844, in *British Naval Documents*, 628-9.

³⁶Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 43-5; 58-9. Parliament usually sanctioned the expenditure, and "between 1815 and 1850 no Parliament ever rejected a government's request for naval funding."(60).

³⁷Memorandum by the Hon. Sidney Herbert, Sep 4, 1844, in *British Naval Documents*, 682-8.

commission chaired by Captain Thomas Hastings investigated naval technology and recommended increasing the number of steam screw-battleships. Hamilton concludes that Joinville's essay resulted in locking the French into paddle steamers, while Britain transitioned to screw-powered ships.³⁸ In February 1845, the First Lord of the Admiralty Earl Haddington produced a plan for a mandatory retirement scheme for naval officers with the rationale that, "The public press goes on discussing the question, and it is more than probable that the subject will soon be mentioned in Parliament and pressed on the government."³⁹ Later administrators would share the desire to forestall public or political interference in professional matters by acting in advance of the changing political wind.

The scare was reinvigorated in 1845 after the French Government responded to the tension by adopting a new plan to increase naval expenditure and develop the base at Toulon. Palmerston changed his position and now argued that the British Government had reduced the navy too much and more spending was necessary because naval power would prevent invasion as well as protect commerce and the Empire.⁴⁰ By July Palmerston was claiming that France had achieved naval parity, and, even worse, "the Channel is no longer a barrier. Steam-navigation has rendered that which was before impassable by a military force nothing more than a river passable by a steam bridge...."⁴¹ He emphasized that only permanent fortifications could defend against steam fleets, and that, while the country had let itself fall into a defenceless condition, the nation's prosperity and resources gave the means of remedying the problem.⁴² When Lord

³⁸C.I. Hamilton, "Diplomatic and Naval Effects," 685.

³⁹Minute by the Earl of Haddington, Feb 27, 1845 in *British Naval Documents*, 707-8.

⁴⁰Commons, "Effects of 'conciliatory' foreign policy – Necessity of strengthening the Naval force," Mar 31, 1845, *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 459-60.

⁴¹Commons, "Necessity for Government National Defences – Increased power of France," Jul 30, 1845, *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 461-2,

⁴²Commons, "The National Defences – Facility of approach for a French armament," Jul 30, 1845,

Ellenborough was appointed First Lord for a short time in 1846, he was keen to follow through on Palmerston's desire to reform and expand the Royal Navy.⁴³ Once the war scare had passed, Peel rejected additional naval expenditure, preferring a diplomatic approach to tensions with the United States rather than risk deficits in what he saw as a futile search for perfect security.⁴⁴

The 1844–45 Navy Scare in Britain was the first large-scale manifestation of public fears that technology could eradicate Britain's naval supremacy. Roger Parkinson identifies this as the turning point towards the prioritization of fixed defences, both ashore and afloat, which persisted until the rise of popular blue-water navalism in the 1880s.⁴⁵ It would not be the last time that vocal elements of the public raised alarms about the state of British national and imperial defences. Newspapers and the expansion of the franchise were changing the conduct of British politics, and the amorphous concept of 'public opinion' would only increase in the significance attached to it by decision-makers. British armaments were beginning to increase. In 1825 the Royal Navy comprised 167 ships and 26,500 men which increased to 256 ships and 43,000 men in 1848, with a substantial proportion of the expansion remaining in European waters.

Richard Cobden identified the first of his 'Three Panics' in 1847–48, the year of the great European revolutionary wave, which in Britain manifested as the working-class movement called Chartism, after the People's Charter signed in 1838. To Cobden, the scare was rooted in the public statements of Joinville and Wellington which inflamed public opinion, and which was verified by real French naval preparations at Toulon and

Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston, 462-4; "The National Defences – The Peel Government exhorted to be less apathetic on the subject," Jul 30, 1845, 465-7.

⁴³Matzke, *Deterrence through Strength*, 18.

⁴⁴Sir Robert Peel to Earl of Ellenborough, Mar 17, 1846 in *British Naval Documents*, 581-2.

⁴⁵Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 11.

the crisis in Syria.⁴⁶ The trigger was the chaos in Europe in 1848. In France, the Orleans Monarchy was replaced by a Second Republic, which evoked memories of the 'Great War' that followed the last French Revolution. Austria was wracked by a full-scale revolt of the Hungarians which was only defeated with the military assistance of Russia. In Germany, federalists attempted to create a unified Germany along liberal lines, but the King of Prussia refused to take the crown on those terms. In this climate, Chartism took on a menacing appearance even though it was a constitutional movement for specific political reforms, notably manhood suffrage.

Wellington took a leading role in catalyzing a renewed scare. He responded to his comrade Major-General Sir John Burgoyne's concerns over the state of British defences with an alarmist letter in January 1847, which subsequently received wide publicity when it was reprinted in morning papers in January 1848.⁴⁷ Wellington argued that steam had made it easier and faster for France to cross the Channel, while the Royal Navy was too weak to guarantee the command of the sea and there were insufficient men to garrison key naval installations due to politically motivated retrenchment; he recommended improving the militia, rebuilding stocks of armaments and stores, and carefully examining the state of the armed forces. The *Times* was not as alarmed as Wellington. Its article argued he had exaggerated the ease of a French landing on the southern English coast, and more importantly had not given sufficient credit to the power of the navy, which the *Times* felt had not been nullified by steam power.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, improving

⁴⁶*Burden of Armaments*, 16.

⁴⁷"The National Defences: The Duke of Wellington's letter, (From the *Morning Chronicle*)," *Times*, 19751 (Jan 5, 1848), 5.

⁴⁸Leading article, *Times*, 19751 (Jan 5, 1848), 4.

the militia was accepted as an admirable and necessary endeavour. The renewed naval scare was due to the apprehensions associated with the strategic impact of steam power.

The Admiralty continued to sharpen the distinction that was being drawn between full scale invasions and small raiding attacks. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Auckland, wrote to Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, on January 17, 1848 on the subject of invasion. He argued that, “Steam will no doubt give facilities for partial and marauding expeditions of some strength, but the conveyance of a perfectly equipped and organized army is another matter.”⁴⁹ Small-scale raids would prove to be a credible justification for strengthening the second line of defence. The Surveyor of the Navy, Sir Baldwin Walker, recommended a large programme of screw battleship construction in order to maintain Britain's lead in the face of new French efforts in this class of warship.⁵⁰

Russell's Government took action with a proposal to reorganize and expand the militia along the lines Wellington had described. This would require raising the income tax by fivepence, to a total of a shilling in the pound, and the political opposition to a large tax increase quickly sapped the strength of agitators. Peel, in Opposition, pointed out the core dilemma,

If in time of peace you will have every garrison in every one of our colonial possessions in a state of complete efficiency – if you will have all our fortifications in every part of the world kept in a state of perfect repair... no amount of annual revenue would be sufficient to meet such demands.⁵¹

It was the role of the political administration to determine the appropriate level to prevent crippling taxation, since naval and military men would always desire more perfect

⁴⁹Letter from Auckland to Lord J. Russell, Jan 17, 1848, in *British Naval Documents*, 582-4.

⁵⁰C.I. Hamilton, *Naval Administration*, 135.

⁵¹Peel quoted in *The Burden of Armaments*, 21.

defences. Peel had no desire to engage in an economically disastrous arms race with Europe. Peel nevertheless indicated his willingness to remedy serious defects, particularly in shipbuilding or ordnance which took longer to correct.

The period of panic in 1848 was very short lived. Free trade continued to extend its reach with the 1849 repeal of the Navigations Acts, which had forced British trade to travel in British ships. Some thinkers, like Richard Cobden, believed that free trade would ensure peace, although others, including Gladstone, were not so sure and intended to maintain suitable naval forces.⁵² The choice of fiscal economy over national defences would be a significant lesson for Gladstone, who in later scares would have a hard time understanding that defence spending could be popular. In the aftermath of the scare, Palmerston remained a supporter of moderate armaments as a prudent measure of security against an invasion, although useless expenditure had to be avoided.⁵³

The Second Panic: 1852

Cobden's Second Panic was again related to political upheaval in Britain's chief rival, France. Louis Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte who had been elected as President of the Second Republic in 1848, successfully launched a *coup d'état* rather than relinquish power at the end of his four-year term. On December 2, 1852, he was crowned Napoleon III, in a deliberate reference to his uncle. The attitude in Britain was one of understandable alarm, particularly with Napoleon III's nationalist appeal, and raised concerns over a possible invasion.

⁵²Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Volume I, Peel's Inheritor, 1809-1865*, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1982), 208.

⁵³Commons, "Precautions against Foreign Attacks," Jun 12, 1849, *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 480.

The defeat of Russell's Militia Bill led to the fall of his Government. A new Ministry under Lord Derby tried to salve public fears while simultaneously augmenting British defences. In the House of Lords, Derby's first speech clearly stated that "our naval forces were never in a better or more effective condition than at this moment" for all necessary duties including the home, imperial and commerce defence.⁵⁴ Lord Malmesbury, the new Foreign Secretary, assured the Lords of Napoleon III's pacific intentions and the mutual desire for peaceful Anglo-French relations. The Cobdenite analysis concluded that public alarm was unfounded, noting that Napoleon III had reduced defence expenditure.⁵⁵

The new Government, with Palmerston's support, passed its own Militia Bill, which added 80,000 men to that force, and added 6,500 personnel to the navy. The Secretary to the Admiralty advised Parliament that the two most necessary measures were strengthening of Britain's Channel defences and increasing naval personnel. The threat of France was at the forefront of everyone's thoughts, but for diplomatic reasons the Government avoided specifying that the preparations were directed at France. Nevertheless, in November 1852 security restrictions were imposed on foreign visitors' access to dockyards, ships, machinery and personnel.⁵⁶ Cobden spoke against popular fears, claiming that French ports were no more threatening than British ports. Palmerston disagreed; in his view this understated both the threat posed by Cherbourg and the meagre defences of British ports.⁵⁷ Palmerston was leaning towards land defences rather than naval forces to prevent invasion.

⁵⁴Lord Derby quoted in *Burden of Armaments*, 24.

⁵⁵*Burden of Armaments*, 23-5.

⁵⁶Evans, *Building the Steam Navy*, 150.

⁵⁷"Facilities for French invasion," Jul 15, 1851 in *Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston*, 499-500.

The turn towards land defences demonstrates the impact of technological change. Land defences were comprehensible and reliable in a way that the new steam technology was not. Steam had proven itself sufficiently reliable to pose a credible threat, but not so reliable that British national security could depend on it. For the navy, the most important outcome of the 1852 scare was the inauguration of long service for the navy. A Manning Committee under Lord Derby recommended that sailors be recruited in a permanent fashion, rather than for the individual commission of a warship. Michael Lewis points out that the Admiralty had to devise a way to retain the valuable seamen-gunners coming out of HMS *Excellent* rather than lose them to the merchant service.⁵⁸ Reforms to personnel also included significant improvements in pay, living conditions and food, while a rudimentary pension system was established for career sailors. In the long term, this led to increasing 'non-effective' charges on the Navy Estimates, which put pressure on the artificial ceiling imposed on navy expenditure.

Cobden's Second Panic was quickly overshadowed by the Crimean War in 1854–56, when Britain and France supported the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansionism. British interests were threatened by Russia's desire for a warm-water Mediterranean port that could change the balance of naval power. The trigger for war was provided by the Russian destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinope using modern shell-firing ordnance against wooden warships. In Britain the attack was portrayed as a massacre to provoke public outrage, but it was a legitimate action of war according to Winfried Baumgart.⁵⁹ William E. Gladstone, serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer,

⁵⁸“Admiralty Circular No. 121,” Jun 14, 1853 in *British Naval Documents*, 708-14; for more see Lewis, *Navy in Transition*.

⁵⁹Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 1853-1856*, (New York: Arnold, 1999), 15. For the diplomatic events see “The Crimean War Crisis, 1853-1854,” James Richardson, *Crisis Diplomacy: the great*

tried to impose strict principles of economy on Britain's war effort and raised taxes in an attempt to pay for the war out of ordinary revenue, although he was later forced to resort to loans.⁶⁰ Gladstone's attitude to military spending during his multiple terms as Prime Minister were influenced by his experience as a champion of peace and economy.

For historians, the Crimean War has been misleadingly named. Recent work treats the war as a global conflict and explores overlooked theatres of operations, like the Pacific.⁶¹ This approach emphasizes the important question of how a world war was avoided in the mid-nineteenth century, which Baumgart argues was due to the continuous activity of international diplomacy that limited the scope and duration of the conflict.⁶² Andrew Lambert argues that the war was decided in the Baltic, after the navy developed the capacity to attack the fortress of Cronstadt which guarded St. Petersburg.⁶³ The shallow-draft steam flotillas that were necessary for coast attack in the Baltic were built by the Admiralty, but in the meantime Admiral Sir Charles Napier proceeded to blockade Russian commerce and bottle up the fleet.⁶⁴ The press criticized Napier for not winning a decisive battle or capturing major Russian naval bases, demonstrating the difficulty of educating public opinion about strategic realities. Once the right force was ready, the Russians sued for peace. For the British it was not a satisfying peace, because "Great exertions had been made to continue the war in 1856...." with hundreds of gunboats and a large army and they were not given the chance to deal a lasting setback to Russian

powers since the mid-nineteenth century, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶⁰Eugenio F. Biagini, *Gladstone*, (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 35-6.

⁶¹See John D. Grainger, *The First Pacific War: Britain and Russia, 1854-1856*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008)

⁶²Baumgart, *Crimean War*, 1-14.

⁶³Andrew Lambert, *The Crimean War: British grand strategy against Russia, 1853-56*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

⁶⁴C.I. Hamilton, *Naval Administration*, 135.

expansion.⁶⁵ The early peace denied the Royal Navy the opportunity to win fame and recognition for its services in battle, and its critical strategic role was easily buried beneath the wealth of reporting on the land warfare in the Crimea.

Napier and the Baltic fleet competed with a profusion of British war correspondents and artists reporting from the Crimea. The long despatches of famous journalists like the *Times* special correspondent William Howard Russell were supplemented by a telegraph line laid between Allied headquarters and London and Paris during the war to transmit rapid news. Russell played a leading role in publicizing the poor living conditions and medical care of the soldiers, and in popularizing the work of Florence Nightingale and the Sanitary Commission to reform the army medical system. Historian Mike Hinton is very forgiving to the British army and administration, arguing that the system was crippled in the first half of the war by a cholera pandemic and a hurricane in the Black Sea and the subsequent reforms to the medical system were undertaken by the responsible officers, particularly the much-maligned Principal Medical Officer Dr. John Hall.⁶⁶ Russell himself admitted to Admiral Sir John Dalrymple Hay that his interpretation had been skewed by the need to publish quickly, but claimed the public did not care about retractions.⁶⁷ Russell continued to take an interest in defence issues, and in 1860 he founded the *Army & Navy Gazette*, which would become a mainstay of navalist discourse. Russell's activities ushered in a new type of journalism, that of the war correspondent, which would be a feature of almost every future conflict

⁶⁵Baumgart, *Crimean War*, 215.

⁶⁶Mike Hinton, "Reporting the Crimean War: Misinformation and Misinterpretation," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 20 (May 2015).

⁶⁷Admiral the Right Hon. Sir John C. Dalrymple Hay, *Lines from my Log-Books*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1898), 196.

and set the tone for long-standing tension between the military and the media.⁶⁸ A.L. Berridge concludes that the most important legacy of the work of Russell and other correspondents was to give faces and humanity to the British soldiers, which led to popular patriotic efforts to support the troops.⁶⁹ War reporting was part of the sensational and human interest focus of New Journalism, and it would be one of the more obvious ways in which these popular techniques were emulated in the quality press.⁷⁰

Russell's descriptions of the terrible living conditions of the British soldiers in the winter of 1854–55 brought severe criticism of the Government's conduct of the war from a public bursting with patriotic concern. In January, Lord John Russell left Aberdeen's government, precipitating its collapse and replacement by a ministry under Lord Palmerston. Gladstone was included in this Government, showing how the party political system had not yet solidified, but resigned after Palmerston accepted a motion by J.A. Roebuck for an inquiry into Aberdeen's handling of the Crimean War.⁷¹ Gladstone was criticized for being unpatriotic in abandoning the Ministry in wartime. It was at this point that Gladstone was moving closer to the Manchester School of Radical liberalism because of common adherence to liberal financial orthodoxy.

⁶⁸Hooper, *The Military and the Media*, 6-7; Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The war correspondent as hero, propagandist, and myth maker*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 15-6.

⁶⁹A.L. Berridge, "Off the Chart: The Crimean War in British Public Consciousness," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 20 (May 2015).

⁷⁰See Richard D. Fulton, "Sensational War Reporting and the Quality Press in Late Victorian Britain and America," in Joel Wiener and Mark Hampton, *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 9-31.

⁷¹John A. Roebuck, "Motion for Inquiry into the Conduct of the War and the Army," Jan 26, 1855 and Sidney Herbert, "Speeches on the Conduct of the War and the Condition of the Army," in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 2395-408.

After the Crimean War, naval and military expenditure remained high compared to pre-war budgets.⁷² Before the war the navy was receiving about £6,500,000 annually, which increased to £19,000,000 in 1855 at the height of the war. Peacetime reduced expenditure to £10,000,000 that would remain the effective ceiling of naval expenditure until the 1880s. There was an attempt to reduce defence expenditure in 1857, led by a coalition of Benjamin Disraeli, Gladstone, Russell and Cobden. They reasoned that the state of general peace, in spite of local conflicts, warranted a reconsideration of national expenditure and taxation. Russell argued that seemingly inadequate establishments had always proven sufficient in war, and that the cost of armaments had driven France into debt. Russell used what would become a common argument, that financial strength had been a great British asset in war, enabling the support of allies and lengthy conflicts without endangering national prosperity.

The 1856 naval review in the Solent, organized by Palmerston to demonstrate British naval strength, included 140 gunboats. Small vessels had increased disproportionately in number due to the requirements for a Baltic campaign and for imperial policing. Palmerston claimed that this force “far exceeded anything that the French Government could produce, and was proof of what England could do in increasing its naval forces when emergency should arise.”⁷³ The cadet-training ship, HMS *Britannia*, was established in 1857 and its education programme was made compulsory for new officers. Joinville, whose 1844 pamphlet had been at the heart of a scare, noted in 1865 that the Crimean War had disproven his argument that steam would

⁷² For the Treaty of Paris, which included neutralizing the Black Sea and the right of the Ottoman Empire to bar passage of the Dardanelles to all warships, see “Treaty of Paris,” Mar 30, 1856 in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 2431-6.

⁷³ *Burden of Armaments*, 31.

reduce the importance of seamanship, and by extension France's ability to gain more from the transition to steam than Britain.⁷⁴ The *Journal* of the RUSI was founded the same year, another indication of the importance of print media for circulating important professional information.

The Crimean War was also an important impetus behind the development of the military-industrial complex, which would accelerate technological innovation, and hence increase the expense of national defences. William Armstrong read newspaper reports of the cumbersome weight of British artillery, and resolved to engineer a better gun.⁷⁵ In this case, the Admiralty offered pecuniary rewards to inventors, which led Armstrong to team up with engineers James Nasmyth and Isambard Kingdom Brunel to solve the technical challenge of breech design. Marshall J. Bastable argues that Armstrong's true genius was in creating a new contractual relationship with the British government. Instead of selling the patents, he gave them to the government as well as promising not to sell the new guns overseas; in return he received guarantees on the capital invested in the ordnance plant at Elswick and government funding for new research.⁷⁶ The Armstrong breech-loader was abandoned after reports from the 1863 bombardment of Kagoshima indicated breech defects and excessive recoil. Hogg and Batchelor point out that the breech problem was easily remedied, and the recoil was simply due to the larger projectile weight, but the navy had lost confidence and opted to return to muzzle-loading rifled guns for almost two decades.⁷⁷ The navy lost control over the production of its weapons after the naval Board

⁷⁴C.I. Hamilton, *Naval Administration*, 686.

⁷⁵Ian Hogg and John Batchelor, *Naval Gun*, (Poole Dorset: Blandford Press, 1978), 67-8.

⁷⁶Bastable, "From Breechloaders to Monster Guns: Sir William Armstrong and the Invention of Modern Artillery," 216-8.

⁷⁷Hogg and Batchelor, *Naval Gun*, 67-9.

of Ordnance was abolished as part of the administrative streamlining and the War Office took over the administration, design, construction and supply of naval ordnance.

Ironclads and Follies: the Ironclad Scare of 1859–60

The 1859–60 Ironclad Scare, the third panic identified by Cobden, is the best known of the mid-century scares. It resulted in the building of the first armoured, all-iron construction warship, HMS *Warrior*, which happens to be the only surviving British battleship of the mechanical navy and now resides at the Royal Dockyard in Portsmouth. The scare also led to the erection of a series of massive, expensive fortifications known as ‘Palmerston’s Follies,’ one of which is located above Portsmouth. The scare occurred because technological advances, particularly effective steam propulsion systems, created doubts about the capacity of the Royal Navy to prevent an enemy invasion. International affairs provided credibility for fears of imminent war. In 1857 the Bengal regiments of the British Indian army mutinied, straining military resources at the same time that forces were fighting in the Second Opium War in China.⁷⁸ In this case, steam technology posed a sufficiently credible threat for the Government and the public to support massive investment in fortifications in order to defend naval bases.

The French initially applied iron armour to floating siege batteries in the Crimean War, and in hindsight the decision to apply armour to warships is a natural evolution. The French navy had been increasing since the mid-1850s as a result of the expanded wartime programme and investment in new ship designs. On August 11, 1855 a French

⁷⁸The Opium Wars were not Britain’s finest moment. New research shows that the British public realized that opium was an addictive and dangerous drug that was being introduced into China by force. P.E. Caquet, “Notions of Addiction in the time of the First Opium War,” *The Historical Journal*, 58:4 (Dec 2015): 1009-29.

shipbuilding programme was presented consisting of 40 line-of-battle ships with 70-90 guns and screw propulsion, 20 frigates, 30 corvettes, 60 despatch-vessels, one ram, and transports for 32,000 men for a total cost of 272,440,000 francs.⁷⁹ Ironclads could be substituted for the line-of-battle ships in the programme. The wooden-hulled and iron-armoured *Gloire* and *Invincible* were ordered in March 1858, with iron-hulled ships following when the skilled metal workers were available.

Foreign affairs made the danger posed by French naval activity seem more credible. Napoleon III aided Piedmont in the cause of Italian Unification in the 1859 war with Austria. Tensions were exacerbated by an assassination attempt on Napoleon III by Orsini, whose conspiracy had been organized in England. The outburst of anglophobia in France generated a counter-reaction of paranoia in Britain, which raised tensions for several years. The anti-militarist Cobdenite polemic held that between France's exhaustion after the 1859 war, the friendly gestures of joint operations in China in 1859 and the free passage of British troops through French territory to suppress the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the panic in Britain in 1859–60 was completely unfounded.⁸⁰ Whether this was true or not, the British government was not willing to let national defences decline into a truly perilous state. Naval historian Stanley Sandler writes that, “This challenge by foreign powers... was doubtless exaggerated by nervous Admiralty officials and by popular opinion...” because Britain possessed the industrial capacity to easily out-build rivals.⁸¹ Historians frequently deny the validity of public fears because, in hindsight, threats did not materialize in the manner or degree that contemporaries

⁷⁹Stanley Sandler, *The Emergence of the Modern Capital Ship*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1979), 92-3.

⁸⁰*Burden of Armaments*, 32-3.

⁸¹Sandler, *Emergence of the Modern Capital Ship*, 52.

predicted. Political decisions often lack complete information, and are presented with a range of possible options based on which factors are prioritized — one naval example is whether the material of a ship’s hull (iron or wood) was more important in qualitative comparisons than the modernity of its armament.

French efforts catalyzed Admiralty action before the public became agitated.

Rear-Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker, the Surveyor of the Navy, argued in 1858 that Britain had to make the switch to iron and steam. Walker's explanation is worth quoting in full, as an important expression of British policy:

Although as I have frequently stated it is not to the interest of Great Britain possessing as she does so large a navy to adopt any important change in the construction of ships of war which might have the effect of rendering necessary the introduction of a new class of very costly vessels until such a course is forced upon her by the adoption by Foreign Powers of formidable ships of a novel character requiring similar ships to cope with them, yet it then becomes a matter not only of expediency but of absolute necessity.⁸²

Sir John Pakington convinced the Cabinet of the necessity for converting sailing ships to steam, and ordered the construction of two advanced all-iron warships armed with powerful modern Armstrong rifled muzzle-loading guns that would out-class *Gloire* and *Invincible*.⁸³ Bastable observes that the choice of rifled muzzle loaders was not a reactionary decision, since they provided real advantages that the current breech-loading guns were still too delicate to satisfy. In 1859, technological change was a precursor rather than the core of the public outcry. The Admiralty quickly and effectively dealt with the challenge posed by French technological innovation. The public would become involved when the discourse turned to contemplate invasion. The core of a naval panic would naturally tend to focus on proving that foreign powers had achieved some sort of

⁸²Walker quoted in Sandler, *Emergence of the Modern Capital Ship*, 117.

⁸³Bastable, “Invention of Modern Artillery,” 230.

advantage over the Royal Navy, and in 1858–59 would prove to be valuable in driving the transition to steam ironclads.

The panic began with official admissions of the weakness of the navy in 1859. Pakington, the First Lord of the Admiralty, argued in Parliament that France had achieved naval parity with Britain at a current twenty-nine battleships, which would rise to a superiority of forty against thirty-six by the end of 1859. To remedy these defects, he requested £1,200,000 for shipbuilding and an additional 7,000 men for the fleet to rectify the completely inadequate state of the navy which he had inherited. These claims were disputed by the opposition, who pointed out that Pakington included French ships that were still under construction and excluded the nine British battleships posted as port blockships. Charles Wood stated the real figures were fifty-nine British battleships against forty French, implying that Pakington's figures had underestimated British strength rather than overstating the French. More importantly, he concluded, in a very Cobdenite vein, that France's overall expenditure and the number of personnel remained approximately half that of Britain's.⁸⁴ In this case, there was no challenge to British naval supremacy, and thus no cause for a round of panic expenditure.

The House of Lords was the setting for a series of incendiary speeches that played an important role in developing the public agitation. Lord Lyndhurst began with the established fear that, "steam had converted the Channel into a river, and had thrown a bridge across it," enabling an army to be landed in mere hours.⁸⁵ To bolster his credibility, Lyndhurst claimed that France was constructing transports specifically for this purpose. At the heart of Lyndhurst's argument was that Britain should not exist at the

⁸⁴*Burden of Armaments*, 32-4.

⁸⁵Quoted in *Burden of Armaments*, 34.

sufferance of any other Power — meaning that Britain should possess sufficient forces to repel any possible enemy.

Public fears were being riled up in leading national periodicals. John Blackwood, editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, presented a series of articles on world navies. The entry for England argued that, “A return to the old stand-point of our navy — the assured possession of a force equal to the united marine of the world — can alone allay this suspicion [of national vulnerability], and establish a confidence undisturbed by periodic alarms and panics.”⁸⁶ The occurrence of a public panic became a reason in itself for an increasing scale of defences, and this rationale would recur in every later scare. The article accused the Admiralty of being slow to recognize and adopt important innovations, like the rifled Armstrong gun, although Britain's substantial industrial superiority could easily ensure unquestioned naval supremacy. The Board was actually thinking that the possibility of France and Russia combining against Britain had to be considered, which Admiral Walker confirmed in his own November 13, 1858 statement, which emphasized the Franco-Russian rapprochement.⁸⁷ The British Admiralty was receiving reports of extensive French naval infrastructure at Cherbourg and Toulon, which Hans Busk's 1859 *The Navies of the World* heavily emphasized to the wider public. Concerns over French superiority inspired the expansion of British facilities, particularly the dockyard at Chatham which was set up in the early 1860s to build ironclad warships. Plans were made to develop and expand the Portsmouth yard, but these were gradually dropped as retrenchment reasserted itself in the late 1860s.⁸⁸

⁸⁶“Fleets and Navies – England – Part II,” *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 86:527 (Sep 1859), 324-39.

⁸⁷Sandler, *Emergence of the Modern Capital Ship*, 120; ADM 3/266; Bastable, “Invention of Modern Artillery,” 227-8.

⁸⁸Evans, *Building the Steam Navy*, 182, 189-91.

Palmerston's Government appointed a Royal Commission on the Defence of the United Kingdom which began its investigations on November 3, 1859. The purpose of the Commission was straightforward, to examine the state of coastal defences and make proposals for setting these defences in the proper condition, in particular the land and sea defences of principal ports and arsenals. To this end, leading authorities on siege work and bombardment were consulted, like Inspector-General of Fortifications General John Fox Burgoyne and the armaments manufacturer Sir William Armstrong. Significantly, the Chairman was Major-General Sir Henry David Jones, CB, an army rather than a navy officer. Three other army officers were included, as well as the architect James Fergusson, Esquire, while the navy was represented by Rear-Admiral George Augustus Eliot and Captain Astley Cooper Key. Major William Jervois of the Royal Engineers was appointed Secretary, and had significant influence over the deliberations of the Committee.⁸⁹ The Commission favoured land fortifications around naval bases because of their belief that a military force could be landed during the temporary absence of the fleet and then capture the ports required for naval forces in home waters.

Palmerston's Government faced a complex choice on how to deal with the perceived insecurity of Britain. Naval expenditure had been given a tremendous boost. Before the Crimean War the Navy Estimates provided £6,500,000 and 44,900 men, while in 1860 it had grown to £13,331,000 and 85,000 men. Sidney Herbert, the Secretary of State for War, believed that a conflict with France was imminent and strong measures

⁸⁹Timothy Crick, *Ramparts of Empire: The Fortifications of Sir William Jervois, Royal Engineer 1821-1897*, (University of Exeter Press, 2012). Fergusson had written several books in previous decades examining the question of fortifications, with his 1852 work entitled *The Peril of Portsmouth: or, French Fleets and English Forts* and its 1856 sequel, *Portsmouth Protected: a Sequel to the Peril of Portsmouth*. It was these works that appear to have given him the credentials to be appointed to the Commission, pointing to the importance of public statements in shaping government decision-making.

were urgently necessary to improve national defences. More importantly, he took a line from the Royal Commission and argued that Britain had lost its insularity and could no longer rely on the Channel and the navy for national security.⁹⁰ The Cabinet was not unanimous in its fear of a conflict with France. Gladstone and Cobden worked hard to convince their colleagues that war was not imminent. Gladstone claimed that if France had aggressive intentions, then conflict would have broken out when Britain was distracted by the Indian Mutiny, not when the Empire had regained its stability.⁹¹ Gladstone and Cobden cooperated to outmanoeuvre the war party's demands for expensive fortifications and armaments by using the rhetoric of free trade, although this proved to be of limited success.⁹²

In July 1860, Palmerston proposed an £11,000,000 programme of defensive fortifications at British ports in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. These forts would be armed with new patterns of heavy guns that were still in the progress of development at Armstrong's Elswick works; the first guns were delivered in 1862.⁹³ The navy was not even mentioned as a possible defence against invasion, showing how wholeheartedly people had accepted the argument that the navy could be bypassed by a steam-powered invasion force. Gladstone felt betrayed by Palmerston, since he had been under the impression that future years would not be bound to the scheme of expenditure but Palmerston insisted that the entire programme had to be carried out. Bastable argues that 'Palmerston's Follies' were related to the current state of British ordnance, rather than being rooted in strategic ignorance. Cutting-edge rifled

⁹⁰Bastable, "Invention of Modern Artillery, 1854-1880," 231.

⁹¹Quoted in *Burden of Armaments*, 36-7.

⁹²Biagini, *Gladstone*, 39.

⁹³Bastable, "Invention of Modern Artillery," 231.

muzzle-loading guns were too large to be mounted on the current generation of warships, and gave the tactical advantage in ordnance to fortifications.⁹⁴ The scare also resulted in the formation of the Volunteers as a manifestation of both public fear and patriotism, harkening back to the volunteer movements of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The Volunteers would exist until the creation of the Territorial Force in 1907.⁹⁵

The neglect of the navy was not allowed to pass unnoticed by the Admiralty or naval officers in the House of Commons. Admiral Sir John Dalrymple Hay, Fourth Naval Lord, and Admiral G. Henry Seymour, Third Naval Lord, argued that the previous Ministry's investment in ironclad shipbuilding was inadequate, and spoke in Parliament criticizing Palmerston's decision to invest in fortifications. Hay claimed that, "an armour-clad ship was a moveable fort, and costs less than the field forts at Spithead; that the ship could pursue a beaten enemy, while the fort could not prevent the enemy from withdrawing from the action or afterwards attacking unfortified [towns] or merchant vessels."⁹⁶ In his memoirs, Hay claimed that his speech was the first time that comparative naval statistics were deployed in Parliamentary debate. He was rebuked by Palmerston for potentially creating a diplomatic incident with France. There would be a persistent tension between the desirability of frank Parliamentary discussion and the importance of maintaining friendly diplomatic relations. Hay was given a committee, with himself as the sole naval member, to investigate the technical aspects of armour.⁹⁷

As the scare quieted down in 1860, more objective periodicals began to evaluate the course of events. The *Saturday Review*, which would become one of the few civilian

⁹⁴Bastable, "Invention of Modern Artillery,"

⁹⁵See Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, *The Army and Victorian Society*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

⁹⁶Hay, *Lines from my Log-Book*, 240.

⁹⁷The Committee included Colonel W. Henderson, R.A., Major Drummond Jervois, R.E., W. Fairbaird, F.R.S., Dr. Percy, F.R.S., W. Pole, C.E., F.R.S., and Captain H.S. Dyer as secretary.

newspapers regularly reporting on naval policy, responded to the ongoing French attempts to calm British fears. The Frenchman M. Cucheval Clarigny argued that naval growth had been triggered by technological change, but he attributed the recent panicked expenditure to years of British delay over naval investment, rather than to any intention of France to force the pace of naval development. Clarigny was part of a new round of French efforts to placate British public opinion by giving concrete comparisons which emphasized French inferiority, rather than by emphasizing platitudes about Napoleon III's peaceful intentions. The *Review* thought that Clarigny's soothing analysis was based on two false assumptions: that the quality of British ships was comparable to France's and that naval equality was an acceptable situation for the British.⁹⁸

Richard Cobden's defining 1862 work, *The Three Panics*, was intended to calm public fears by showing how public panic had distorted the true facts of British security and produced greater expense and international tension to little valuable effect. As discussed in the introduction, Cobden argued that the real comparative strength of Britain and France had remained fairly constant, at a ratio of about double that of France, rendering attempts to increase spending unproductive. At present, he claimed that the navy was in a better state than it had been in previous scares. F.W. Hirst and the Cobdenite radicals of the early twentieth century argued that it was Cobden's work that seriously undermined the alarmist case, ensuring that retrenchment and economy dominated naval policy for the next twenty years and paving the way for the counter-reaction in the 1880s.⁹⁹ The *Saturday Review* thought that Cobden had greatly understated the possibility of war with France, with his reasoning based largely on

⁹⁸“The French and English Navies,” *Saturday Review*, 10:251, Aug 18, 1860, 199-200.

⁹⁹*Burden of Armaments*, 6.

hindsight which treated the wars in the Crimea and Italy as more likely than a conflict with France.¹⁰⁰ To the *Review*, fear had been a rational response to world events — in 1848 to revolutionary movements and warfare across Europe, in 1852 to the return of despotic government to France, and in 1859 by French and Italian plans for war against Austria. Readers were reminded that the greatest increase in expenditure had resulted from the Crimean War, not the panics. The article concluded that moderation was the most important attitude, to provide necessary expenditure without extravagance or inefficiency, but not neglecting proper precautions until the actual outbreak of war. Thus, the present large expenditure was justified.

The 1861 Navy Estimates were faced with the challenging question of shipbuilding policy. The *Times* advocated complete commitment to the new ironclad technology, while the *Saturday Review* was more cautious, suggesting that fast, nimble wooden frigates should be built alongside the new iron ships.¹⁰¹ The *Times* perspective carried the day, and a Parliamentary motion on April 11, 1861 prohibited the construction of new wooden vessels. The public was becoming more involved through the submission of private inventions to the Admiralty, from six in 1857, twenty-one in 1858, fifty in 1859, to a glut of five hundred and ninety between May 1, 1859 and May 1, 1862.¹⁰² The burst of shipbuilding activity in 1859–60 created additional pressure on the personnel of the fleet. The 1861 Navy Estimates were criticized for not providing sufficient seamen to man the growing number of ships. The *Saturday Review* admitted that reserve forces were more cost effective, but there were only 54,000 active force sailors which were not

¹⁰⁰“Mr. Cobden's *Three Panics*,” *Saturday Review*, 13:340, May 3, 1862, 484-5.

¹⁰¹“The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 11:278, Feb 23, 1861, 186-7.

¹⁰²Sandler, *Introduction of the Ironclad Warship*, 117.

enough to ensure the efficiency of the navy on the outbreak of war.¹⁰³ The drive to enhance naval efficiency led, in 1863, to Palmerston granting a Committee to Inquire into Promotion and Retirement in the Navy which suggested incentives should be given for voluntary retirement to reduce the number of overage, unemployable officers.

For the remainder of the 1860s, Gladstone continued to work to reduce the Army and Navy Estimates. In 1861 there was an £800,000 reduction in the Navy Estimates, and by 1865 combined defence expenditure had been cut by £7,000,000 to a total of £31,000,000. Armstrong's contracts for his revolutionary breech-loading guns were cancelled in 1863, and this retrenchment would encourage Armstrong and other manufacturers to reach out to an international export market, furthering the creation of the military-industrial complex.¹⁰⁴ Other leading politicians, like Benjamin Disraeli, cooperated in this effort by pressing for a political accommodation with France to reduce the naval arms race.¹⁰⁵ There were pro-navy members of Parliament, for instance Admiral Hay, who was re-elected in March 1862 with the express "hope to do something to increase and strengthen the navy."¹⁰⁶ He was appointed Chairman of a Committee of Inquiry into the navy, which included notable naval officers like Admiral Sir George Eliot and Captain Astley Cooper Key, and was later entrusted to Sir James Elphinstone, MP for the dockyard constituency of Portsmouth. The pro-navy group in Parliament was not strong enough at this point to prevent a bipartisan effort to retrench defence spending to pre-Crimean War levels.

¹⁰³“The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 11:278, Feb 23, 1861, 186-7.

¹⁰⁴Marshall J. Bastable, *Arms and the State: Sir William Armstrong and the Remaking of British Naval Power, 1854-1914*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); reviewed by Kurt Hackemer in *Technology and Culture*, 46:3 (Jul 2005), 652-4.

¹⁰⁵*Burden of Armaments*, 39.

¹⁰⁶Admiral J.D. Hay, *Lines from my Log-Books*, 234-5.

The Turn to Economy: 1868–83

In some ways the turn towards economy is surprising because of the frequent conflicts elsewhere in the world in the following decade. The wars of German Unification fought by Prussia against Austria in 1866 and France in 1870 were decided on land, but had important implications for naval development. These wars hinged on decisive land battles, at Koniggratz, Sedan and Metz, and gave the impression that modern wars were decided by rapid mobilization and deployment, followed by Napoleonic-style battle.¹⁰⁷ In France, the difficulty of achieving victory against a determined enemy was demonstrated by the extended Siege of Paris which followed the decisive field battles, while France was able to rebuild her armies. These lessons are more evident in hindsight than they were to contemporaries, who took the lessons of decisiveness and instant war to heart. On the naval front, the Battle of Lissa was particularly informative, although the lessons were equally deceptive. Conditions at Lissa were confusing, and in the circumstances several ships were rammed and sunk. To observers, it indicated that the ram could be the primary, and most decisive, weapon in future naval combat. Admiral Eliott would be one of the staunchest adherents to this point of view, and for the next several decades a ram was a standard design feature on battleships.

The 1864–66 American Civil War threatened to involve Britain, on the side of the cotton-exporting Southern Confederacy, particularly after the CSS *Alabama* was built and deployed from Britain to raid commerce. In September 1872, international arbitration awarded the United States £15,500,000 in damages. The famous battle between the ironclads, USS *Monitor* and CSS *Merrimac*, confirmed the value of armoured warships.

¹⁰⁷For a reappraisal of Austria's fighting power, see Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Captain Cowper Coles of the Royal Navy used the evidence of this battle to press for experimentation with turret-ships, and he was able to amass enough publicity and political support to impose his design on the Admiralty. The result was the disastrous *Captain*, which capsized and sank on its first voyage due to a poor distribution of the weight of turrets and masts. To the *Saturday Review*, a great deal of uncertainty remained over the value of turrets, just as the war had not finally settled the choice between fortifications and ironclads, but admitted that the technology deserved consideration.¹⁰⁸

The Civil War was well reported in Great Britain, more so than in the rest of Europe. While Britain had an economic bias towards the South, because of the dependence of the Lancashire textile manufacturers on Southern cotton, recent research has shown the complexity of press attitudes towards the war. There was a nuanced spectrum of opinion incorporating economic aspects as well as the moral aspects of slavery, rather than a strict division between economy and morality.¹⁰⁹ The trend to regular war reporting continued in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war.

The 1868 General Election introduced a series of retrenchment-minded governments, both Liberal and Conservative, that dominated naval policy until the mid-1880s. W.E. Gladstone's first administration began with the intention of reducing naval expenditure by a flat ten percent, which would impact both the fleet and the Royal Dockyards. The dockyards were the focus of particular attack, because *laissez-faire* political economy held that such government-run facilities must be corrupt and wasteful. Hugh C.E. Childers, the new First Lord of the Admiralty, supervised an extensive naval reform and retrenchment programme, including the concentration of the fleet, the

¹⁰⁸“Naval Armaments,” *Saturday Review*, 16:412, (Sep 19, 1863), 381-2.

¹⁰⁹Michael de Nie, “The London Press and the American Civil War,” in Wiener and Hampton, *Anglo-American Media Interactions*, 129-54.

reduction of overseas stations and the streamlining of administration. An infamous 1869 Order-in-Council defined the duties of each Naval Lord of the Admiralty in an effort to increase personal responsibility, but in many cases the burden of work was just shifted around without being reduced.¹¹⁰ Technological change and the growth of the state had increased the scope and detail of the Admiralty's jobs, which included questions as varied as coast and port development as well as complex political relationships. The Controller was returned to the Board to replace the Surveyor's role. The primacy of the First Lord over the professional Naval Lords was specified — as C.I. Hamilton points out, this was not a change in Admiralty practice, but it raised the ire of naval officers. Admiral Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key, and Admiral Beauchamp Seymour were so disillusioned with the political treatment of the Admiralty in 1875–7 that they vowed to refuse the position of First Naval Lord unless there was a full inquiry into Admiralty administration and additional naval expenditure.¹¹¹

Gladstone's Administration reduced naval expenditure from eleven million in 1868 to ten in 1869 and nine and a half in 1870, leaving ten million as the approximate ceiling of annual naval expenditure for the 1870s. The 1870 war scare triggered an additional two million for national defence, but this was a one-time policy measure rather than a regular increase. After Childers resigned due to the death of his son on the *Captain*, George Joachim Goschen was appointed First Lord. Gladstone hoped that Goschen's financial background would enable him to control the demands of the Admirals, but Goschen actually supported his naval advisers, arguing to the Cabinet that

¹¹⁰C.I. Hamilton, "Chapter 5," *Naval Administration*, 149-59.

¹¹¹"Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby," *Dictionary of National Biography*.

there was no fat left to cut after Childers' reforms.¹¹² Retrenchment was non-partisan, and continued equally under Disraeli's Conservative government.

The discourse on national defence continued to develop in spite of official neglect. The Franco-Prussian War spurred Captain John Colomb to begin developing his theories of imperial defence, which he published in pamphlets, newspapers and periodical articles.¹¹³ Two *Times* letters laid out the basic principle that the security of Britain relied on the navy, not the army. The spectre of invasion had led to an over-emphasis on fortifications and soldiers, which were incapable of protecting British commerce and overseas possessions, although he noted with dismay the overly combative relationship between the two services. One month's worth of British trade, he noted, was greater than the entire annual cost of the navy, and the destruction or interdiction of this trade would be as effective as invasion at defeating Britain.¹¹⁴ Economy was to be achieved by good organization and distribution, with non-strategic territories, like Canada, left to defend themselves within the overall umbrella of naval protection and the promise of support. Nevertheless, there were sixteen key strategic points which he considered to be inadequately defended.

Imperial defence was given official consideration in the 1870s, although there was little involvement of the public in this question when there was no specific international threat to drive fear. J.L.A. Simmons and Colonel W. Jervois examined the defence of mercantile ports and coaling stations in 1875–6, but there was no action taken until the

¹¹²Spinner, *Goschen*, 35, 42; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44161, ff. 177-82, W.E. Gladstone to G.J. Goschen, Sep 1871.

¹¹³Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, 20-6. Colomb's first notable work was an anonymous 1867 pamphlet, *The Protection of British Commerce and Distribution of Our Forces Considered*.

¹¹⁴See "Imperial Strategy," *Times*, 26903, (Nov 9, 1870, 4; "Colonial Defences," *Times*, 26926, (Dec 6, 1870), 4.

war scare of 1878. This inquiry began developing the information and theories that would guide later investigations. Commerce protection and the control of maritime communications were the primary objective, and the scale of defences was based on single-ship raids. Such works were seen as long-term investments which could be paid for out of loans, which would complete the work quickly without misbalancing the annual naval estimates.

The 1878–79 Russian War Scare was an important moment in reviving public concerns over national defence. After Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, citing mistreatment of Christians, it seemed to contemporaries that Britain might become involved in supporting the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, as had happened in the Crimean War. It was certainly plausible after the Beaconsfield's government had supported the Ottomans in spite of the reports of Bulgarian atrocities. Britain, along with other world Powers, sent observers to report on the lessons of the war, while the course of the war was reported very accurately by telegraph by the commercial newspaper correspondents. The lessons were military rather than naval, although they were clouded by a cultural bias to attribute battlefield failure to defects in the officer corps or national character rather than to the challenges posed by modern warfare.¹¹⁵

Probably the best-known manifestation of public clamour was G.H. MacDermott's patriotic 'By Jingo,' which confidently proclaimed, "We don't want to fight,/ But by Jingo if we do/ We've got the ships, we've got the men/ We've got the money too!." John MacKenzie argues that the patriotic response was localized to the middle and upper

¹¹⁵Maureen P. O'Connor, "The Vision of Soldiers: Britain, France, Germany and the United States Observe the Russo-Turkish War," *War in History*, 4:3 (1997): 264-95.

classes, but these were the classes that defined public and political debates.¹¹⁶ For naval historians, like Marder or Parkinson, the war scare was the tipping point leading towards greater expenditure, even though there was a temporary return to moderate Estimates. Marder observes that there was a real strategic shift as well, since France had almost equalled Britain in naval expenditure which would only change after the public outcry in 1884 and the Northbrook expansion programme.¹¹⁷

The Government responded to the 1878-79 Russian War Scare with official inquiries into national defences. A Colonial Defence Committee (CDC) was appointed under Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, Sir Henry Barkly, General Sir Lintorn Simmons, RE. The CDC was mandated to examine the state of defences of important imperial ports, communications and undersea cables and produce recommendations for temporary works necessary to forestall or defeat raids. Permanent works on a more substantial scale would be necessary to resist an attack by an ironclad fleet, and the possibility of a combination of enemies had to be considered. The CDC discovered serious deficiencies in the defences of almost every overseas naval station and military port, and, while there were some forty artillery pieces that could be easily despatched, over £400,000 was needed.¹¹⁸ The Admiralty did not share public or political fears. The Board resisted efforts to deploy armour-clad ships for local or port defence, and in the case of the Bahamas even withdrew gunboats against the protests of the Governor.¹¹⁹ There was an absolute shortage of the torpedo craft, torpedoes and other supplies necessary for a desirable scale

¹¹⁶MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 59.

¹¹⁷Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 120.

¹¹⁸NA, CAB 7/1, Reports and Correspondence of the Colonial Defence Committee, 1878-79.

¹¹⁹NA, Colonial Defence Committee, and Committee of Imperial Defence, Colonial Defence Committee later Oversea Defence Committee: Minutes, Reports and Correspondence, CAB/7/1/35D, "Correspondence between the Colonial Defence Committee, the Secretary of the Admiralty, and the Under-Secretary of State for War, Apr 1878"; No. 35E, "Further Correspondence respecting the Defence of the Colonies," Feb 1879, no. 190-91.

of defence. These recommendations were not implemented once the scare had died down. £6,000,000 were allocated to national defence as a temporary additional measure to meet the danger of war, but the annual Estimates returned to normal.

The most important outcome was the appointment of a “Royal Commission to Inquire into the Defence of British Possessions Abroad,” chaired by Lord Carnarvon and including Milne, Lord Brassey, the Rt. Hon. H.C.E. Childers, Sir Henry Barkly, Sir Lintorn Simmons, Sir Henry Holland and R. Hamilton.¹²⁰ Some important thinkers, like Sir John Colomb and General Jervois were excluded from the Commission, the former in spite of his own repeated requests for an appointment.¹²¹ Colomb was actually excluded because he had been too active writing to the newspapers.¹²² The Commission started meeting on November 25, 1879 and met regularly in 1880. Ship owners, colonial officials (both British and dominion), representatives of mercantile houses, Board of Trade, and civil servants were invited to give evidence. The Commission examined issues of ordnance, port defence, imperial communications, auxiliary merchant warships, and the specific fortification of imperial stations. It took a long time to collect all the information; in April 1881 the War Office was explicitly criticized by the Commission for delays in providing data. By 1881, the questions of the size and geographical extent of British trade had been established, and the Commission turned to plans for the defence of naval stations. General Sir Lintorn Simmons was particularly influential, and his November 1881 memorandum dominated discussion until the Third and Final Report was submitted

¹²⁰See NA, Colonial Defence Committee: Reports and correspondence, CAB/7/7, Minute Book of the Imperial Defence Committee. After the 1880 General Election Brassey and Childers resigned because they were part of the new Government, and they were replaced by the Earl of Camperdown and J. Whitbread, Esq. MP.

¹²¹Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 23.

¹²²Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, 32.

on July 14, 1882. The challenge facing the British people was the extreme secrecy of these findings. Throughout the proceedings, instructions to the Commission's secretary show how important it was to members that any evidence or opinions given to the Commission remain confidential. In the future, it would be difficult to reassure the public that suitable action had been taken on the Commission's recommendations, and opened the Government to the accusation that the recommendations were being deliberately withheld from the nation for partisan reasons.

Gladstone had retired after the defeat of his Government in 1874, but was quickly tempted back into politics. Newspapers were critical for spreading reports from their correspondents in Turkey about ongoing atrocities, and in fuelling public clamour over events in Bulgaria.¹²³ Public meetings were organized to support the cause of persecuted minorities in the Ottoman Empire. Gladstone became very critical of the conduct of the British government, because the Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, continued to support the Ottomans for strategic reasons, and began to organize political opposition. In 1880 he conducted the first modern democratic political campaign in the Edinburgh riding of Midlothian. It was a significant effort and advanced the methods of democratic politics “by making a series of connected speeches, developing a coherent series of themes, over a period of two weeks and under conditions of maximum publicity.”¹²⁴ Gladstone's criticism of 'Beaconsfieldism' emphasized its lack of morality in foreign affairs, as well as criticizing its financial and domestic policy. This position would make it very difficult for Gladstone's Second Administration to deal with the challenges of long-term intervention in Egypt and the domestic 1884 Navy Scare.

¹²³Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire*, 99-100. For Gladstone's speech on the Bulgarian atrocities on September 9, 1876, see *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 2442-51.

¹²⁴Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire*, 110.

Foreign affairs in the early 1880s were full of rising international tension, particularly the imperial rivalries during what historians have termed the New Imperialism. As discussed in the introduction, this focused on colonial rivalry with France and the 'Great Game' with Russia in Central Asia. The Navy Estimates had remained under an effective ceiling of £11,000,000 while non-effective charges like pensions had increased, leading to a long-term deficit of spending that made a crisis somewhat inevitable. The New Imperialism was very popular, and in 1884 led to public meetings and writings in support of Colonial Federation under an Imperial Parliament.¹²⁵ Britain's economic and strategic dependence on the Empire was becoming a matter of 'common knowledge.' Since the navy was the backbone of the Empire, popular imperialism tended to reinforce navalism.

The situation in Egypt was particularly important. Disraeli had bought up shares in the Suez Canal in 1876, with help from the *Times* in convincing the nation, which gave Britain a stake in Egypt. The Khedive continued to rack up debts, and in 1882 the rebellion of the Egyptian nationalist Arabi Pasha led to a Franco-British response, although it was the British alone that bombarded Alexandria and landed troops. The Bombardment of Alexandria was a rare moment for the navy to fire their guns in anger, and made the reputation of officers like Admiral Sir Beauchamp Seymour, created Lord Alcester for these services, and Captain Lord Charles Beresford, who courageously took his small ship, HMS Condor, close in to silence the forts. Egypt quickly fell, and although the details of governance were hotly debated among the European Great Powers, Britain would maintain its dominance of Egypt until the mid-twentieth century. Some public officials thought that the public agitation for intervention in Egypt was

¹²⁵See *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Vol II, 662-3, Jul 30, 1884.

being manufactured in the press at the instigation of British financial interests which held Egyptian bonds.¹²⁶

Naval officers were almost unanimous in their belief that new efforts were necessary. The well-known naval officer and intellectual Sir Cyprian Bridge commented in an 1881 letter to the better-known naval historian, Sir John Knox Laughton,

We are stronger and in a better state for war than any other power, and comparisons of the naval strength of France with ours – when made absolutely – are ridiculous, tho' France is gaining on us now. But no note has been taken of the enormous growth of our maritime interests and we are positively in a worse position than formerly considering what we have to defend. The distribution of our forces is altogether obsolete, and so is the condition of our distant squadrons.¹²⁷

Bridge expressed the sentiments of his generation of naval officers. They were looking to the future, anticipating future needs. As Parkinson's work indicates, they were primarily concerned with the protection of commerce, which was the most demanding duty facing the late nineteenth-century Royal Navy. In a new technological age, the navy was also faced with an unprecedented growth in maritime commerce.

Fleet structure was being adapted to the new conditions, through a growing emphasis on a composite group of specialist warships. Captain R.H. Harris, in an 1882 lecture at the Royal United Service Institution, "The Necessity of Supplementing Armour-Clad Ships by Vessels of Other Types," argued that a due proportion of 'other vessels' would increase a squadron's power by more than an additional ironclad or two.¹²⁸ Harris represents the nuanced stance of many naval officers, who recognized that the nature of naval combat had changed but did not believe it was completely uncertain. New

¹²⁶See *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol 2, 592-3.

¹²⁷*Letters and Papers of J.K. Laughton*, 26-9, C.A.G. Bridge to J.K. Laughton, Jul 26, 1880, Oct 23, 1881.

¹²⁸Captain R.H. Harris, R.N., "The Necessity of Supplementing Armour-Clad Ships by Vessels of Other Types," *JRUSI*, 27:119 (Jan 1, 1883): 25-38. Delivered Jun 21, 1882.

technology had a role, but this did not mean that longstanding principles of naval combat could be abandoned wholesale. The movement to develop the study of naval history was in a large part motivated by the desire to extract the basic strategic principles which remained constant in spite of changing technology. In the long run, the changing ideas of fleet composition combined with the belief in instant war served to provide a convincing argument that all of the war requirements of a fighting fleet had to be collected and organized in peacetime.

The history of mid-nineteenth-century naval scares provides a number of patterns which underpin scares in the 1880s and 90s. These public events were not solely confined to the end of the century because the foundational processes of democratization and the creation of the mass media had created the necessary precondition of a literal political public by the early nineteenth century. The scares show that popular activism played a significant but inconsistent role in the political struggles surrounding the discussion of the appropriate size and technological investment of the navy. In budgetary conflict, public support was a valuable political tool, in the same way that public apathy supported political efforts to retrench defence spending. Effective scares required a combination of domestic and foreign factors to assemble the political capital and credibility necessary for large funding programmes. In the early 1880s the stage had been set for a new round of enhanced naval scares. Naval spending had been cut to the bone during the 1870s and deficiencies were accumulating, which provided vital credibility for navalist agitators.

Chapter 3 — 'What is the Truth About the Navy': the 1884

Navy Scare

Why has the state of the Navy taken such a hold of the public mind at the present moment? It is said that we have been needlessly alarmed as to the condition of our naval defence. The question would not have attracted so much notice at the present time if there had not been brought within the last year or two, and with increasing force, to the public mind, the question of the new development of French Colonial interests, which involved a danger of possible rupture with this country.... The public may well be alarmed, for the Navy of Great Britain has been allowed to dwindle into a serious position of comparative inferiority, unequal to the protection of commerce and of our honour, and out of all proportion to the Fleets of Foreign Powers.¹

Sir Donald Currie, House of Commons, December 2, 1884.

Sir Donald Currie's parliamentary speech above was only one produced by a number of notable Members of Parliament, including other naval experts like former Chief Constructor Sir Edward Reed, MP, in support of a dramatic 1884 proposal by William Gladstone's Government to provide a £5,000,000 Supplementary Estimate for naval shipbuilding. Currie could be expected to know his subject, being a ship owner himself as well as having lectured at the Royal United Service Institution (RUSI) and giving testimony to the Carnarvon Commission, but his words were echoes reinforcing the nationwide message of the previous September when the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, William T. Stead, shocked the nation with revelations of British naval weakness. Currie's statements showcased the impact of foreign affairs in guiding and reinforcing

¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 478.

domestic paranoia that the navy was no longer sufficient to ensure the worldwide protection of British trade and possessions. By December 2, the Liberal Government had accepted that the clamour aroused by the *Pall Mall*'s "The Truth about the Navy" articles was too entrenched to ignore, and the navalists claimed their first victory.

In September and October 1884, the notorious journalist, editor and public crusader William T. Stead published a series of articles in the *Pall Mall* about "The Truth about the Navy." These articles catalysed a new type of naval scare, which achieved the desired object of an immediate and massive naval expansion. Stead's fellow editor J.L. Garvin of the *Observer* said that the campaign led "to what was little less than a renaissance of British sea power..." although modern journalism historians have not felt that the episode warrants attention.² Democratization and the development of mass media, discussed in the introduction, were part of the foundational change in society that permitted this new type of 'newspaper panic.' What the *Pall Mall* achieved with its articles was not new information, but the presentation of well-developed ideas to a Radical Liberal audience that had hitherto been very complacent about the strategic position of the country. It was not that these men did not support naval power; they believed just as strongly as Cobden that a 'hundred millions' must be spent if it was necessary, but for the two decades preceding 1884 the state of national defence was deemed entirely satisfactory. Thinkers, like Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster or Admiral Sir Thomas Symonds, were actively trying to change public and political opinion, but they needed to penetrate new audiences, and this was what Stead was able to provide through

²Garvin quoted in Frederick Whyte, *The Life of W.T. Stead*, vol I, (NY and London: Garland Publishing, 1971), 106. A recent compilation by Laurel Brake et al does not even include a chapter on the 1884 Scare, and the episode is only briefly mentioned on the chronology of events.

the *Pall Mall*. The thoroughly Liberal *Pall Mall*'s accusations could not be dismissed as a Tory plot, or pure professional naval alarmism.

Stead's article series employed the innovative methods of New Journalism, many of these techniques being learned from the American press. Bold headlines were the most obvious technique, along with illustrations — these had not been widely used in the 'quality press' in Britain, and were seen as low-brow devices. Interviews and investigative journalism were more sophisticated techniques that increased the independence of journalists and the political impact of the information they revealed publicly. Correspondence columns gave space for the public to contribute to press discourses, although these were not guaranteed to be faithful reflections of the full range of opinions received by newspapers. Articles during events like the 1884 Navy Scare were carefully timed to build suspense and enhance their effect. These methods became staples of the newspaper and periodical press, and were employed in Stead's later journalistic crusades, most notably in his 1885 "Maidenhead Tribute of Modern Babylon" which revealed the ease of child-procurement to an incredulous audience.

The *Pall Mall*'s campaign was supported by an emerging chorus of expert thinkers, hitherto largely restricted to the narrow audiences of specialist and professional periodicals, who seized the opportunity to present their ideas in mainstream civilian publications. Navalism was oriented to a broad audience, and in its comprehensiveness did very constructive work in giving the entire nation a selection of reasons to support naval supremacy. In this fashion it laid the groundwork of future agitations. Instead of invasion, which was a highly dubious prospect for expert naval professionals, by the 1880s the emphasis was on the broader consideration of 'command of the sea' as it was

being popularized by the Colomb brothers. Thinkers were very concerned about the vulnerability of trade to hordes of small commerce raiders, and recognized that Britain's dependence on imports meant that the stoppage of trade would lead to starvation and defeat. The 1884 Navy Scare was an important part of spreading strategic awareness through the country, and turning the public away from military defences to support a sea-going, blockading fleet. As the public gained interest in the navy, they were being taught to evaluate naval power not just against the numerical strength of rival fleets, but against the magnitude and variety of tasks that the navy could anticipate being called on to perform in peace and war.

Stead himself created the most durable and influential interpretation of the events of the 1884 Navy Scare, publishing his account of the scare in the July 1897 issue of the *Review of Reviews*, which he had founded in 1890. Stead attributed the initial impulse to a meeting with Arnold-Forster, whose activities in rousing public opinion had met with indifference (even Stead was unaware of his articles), after which he conducted extensive investigation and interviews to verify the accusations. Stead described finding absolute pessimism among naval officers through to enlisted men, quoting the First Naval Lord, Sir Astley Cooper Key as saying:

We have all done everything short of resigning our offices to awaken the Government to a sense of the deadly peril in which we stand. But it is of no use. Mr. Gladstone thinks of nothing but Ireland and home affairs, and we can get nothing for the Navy: not a penny.³

Stead's account takes two important positions: he defended himself from charges of sensationalism or manipulation by describing his extensive investigative journalism to confirm the reports he had received from credible witnesses, and he constructed the

³Whyte, *The Life of W.T. Stead*, I, 149. Whyte's account is lengthy quotes and paraphrasing of Stead.

Government's opposition in such a manner that a journalistic crusade would provide the best solution to the issue — by forcing Gladstone's attention. As this analysis will show, it took more political force than simple attention to make Gladstone accept a large, ostensibly one-time, investment in the navy.

For the first historians of the late nineteenth-century Royal Navy, Stead's viewpoint has been contagious, particularly because it meshes cleanly with the narrative of relative British economic decline and the rise of European militarism and imperialism.⁴ Historians have accepted the 1880s as a turning point in public attitudes towards the navy, after many years of apathy.⁵ Bernard Semmel attributed the transition in public attitudes to the articles written by Gabriel Charmes in 1884–85 describing the 'jeune école' theory of naval war which emphasized the attack on British commerce and turned mercantile interests towards navalism.⁶ Mark Hamilton's account of British navalism gives only a few pages to the 1884 Navy Scare, paraphrasing Stead and Marder's description of the initial meeting with Arnold-Forster and then emphasizing that Stead was fed insider information from Captain John Fisher, probably acting under the unofficial instructions of his superior, Admiral Hornby.⁷ This group of thinkers accepted a degree of validity to the alarmist case, although they were certainly aware of the spectrum of exaggeration which marked the discourse.

John Beeler has made a powerful argument that the alarmists before and during the 1884 Navy Scare totally mischaracterized the relative power of the navy in the 1870s

⁴A well-referenced event was Professor J.R. Seeley's 1883 lecture "Outlining the Expansion of Empire and Rejecting the view that Colonies should be abandoned," in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 2501-9.

⁵Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 45.

⁶Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, 89-90.

⁷M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 45-8.

and 80s. Beeler and Parkinson both argue that the Royal Navy of the period was strong in relation to the actual threats it faced, and that in the navalist writings “French strength was overstated and British naval weakness taken for granted.”⁸ Even then, Beeler and Parkinson recognize that the events of 1884 were an important transition in how foreign policy was formed, even if the cause was groundless. Parkinson explains that, “This campaign was a marker for the future. It showed that press sensationalism could change public perceptions. The idea of naval weakness was now firmly established in the (literate) public mind.”⁹ This line of argument gives more credit to men like Northbrook, who claimed at the time that they were always attending to their duty to ensure the sufficiency and efficiency of the navy. The emphasis in this chapter will not be upon whether the fears expressed were objectively real, but to take contemporary views of the strategic sufficiency and efficiency of the navy as meaningful elements of the policy-making process. All historians seem to agree that the situation transformed in 1884, but the details of the new navalist political economy are lacking from historical accounts. It makes a suitable end-point or beginning, but the 1880s have not been a favoured period of study.

The 1884 Navy Scare was not the first panic in the British public over the state of the navy. In this case, the increasingly democratic political climate and the activity of the mass media altered the Government's capacity to ignore public fears. 1884 stands out as a new type of public engagement which actually achieved critical political mass and forced the Government to abandon ordinary financial policy and respond to public concerns with a major naval construction scheme. For later scares, the most important element of the

⁸Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 89.

⁹Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 92.

1884–85 events was that the fears revealed in the scare were solidly confirmed by the experience of the 1885 war scare. Even greater expenditure was required to prepare the fleet for war, verifying the current state of unpreparedness which alarmists had identified. When the war scare died down, the assembled fleet was deployed under Admiral Hornby to conduct exercises and experiments. These practical consequences are dealt with in the next chapter, as the navy strove to generate more concrete data to guide naval policy.

Narrative of Events, 1883–85

Following the period of naval starvation after 1868, Gladstone's 1880 Ministry showed no signs of reversing the trend. Gladstone declared that he fully supported maintaining British naval supremacy, although it does not appear that he gave this more than lip-service and certainly did not believe that greater spending was necessary to maintain this supremacy. Lord Northbrook was not appointed to First Lord of the Admiralty because of his skill or experience in naval affairs, but for his "inside working knowledge of a particular department," the India Office, and his connections with key officials in the Empire, including Lord Ripon, the Viceroy of India, and Major Evelyn Baring, the British Resident in Egypt.¹⁰ Naval officers were becoming more concerned with the state of the navy, and there were some early rumblings in 1883 that presaged the future scare. The 1884 Navy Scare was a response to the combination of democratic reform and longstanding naval neglect, but it required a suitable climate of international tension and a domestic catalyst to engage and direct public energies.

¹⁰See Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George: Earl of Northbrook, G.C.S.I., a memoir*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 150-1.

While the roots of the 1884 Navy Scare are intertwined with several preceding public events, the agitation that arose in 1883 was a catalyst for navalist energies. There was no scare in 1883 because these elements, discussed in greater detail below, were uncoordinated attempts by individuals to push action in different spheres of society. The MP Lord Henry Lennox worked hard in Parliament to further the cause of the navy, repeating his views in pamphlets and letters to newspaper editors, while retired naval officers added their voices to the growing clamour. In 1883 a clear division opened up between 'alarmists' and 'official optimists,' and a discourse was created in public forums about the appropriate state of national defences. Navalists and politicians alike realized that public opinion could be politically decisive, if enough people were convinced of the necessity of naval expenditure. Public agitation was growing, but in this period was still limited to certain groups who had insider knowledge about current conditions. In 1884 the growing involvement of newspapers would help to coordinate and extend the agitation until the scare could achieve critical mass.

Naval agitators maintained their momentum into 1884 through the service press, accompanied by right-leaning mainstream allies like the *Morning Post* and *Saturday Review*. Naval officers were becoming more comfortable with bypassing the politically controlled Admiralty to make concerted appeals to the public, although in this period they preferred anonymous articles or writing through proxies. The *Saturday Review* accepted the necessity of political activism, explaining that, "To attacks made outside the House of Commons an official or semi-official reply is rarely given, whatever the position and authority of the assailant may be... any nonsense is thought good enough for an answer to

a naval critic.”¹¹ Admiral of the Fleet Sir Thomas Symonds was a leading public activist in the 1880s, although his influence is debatable because he was so easily dismissed as an inveterate alarmist. His work verified the claims of the civilian press, arguing in detail that the ships of the Royal Navy had become qualitatively inferior to those of the French, while the merchant marine was a source of weakness rather than strength.¹² Symonds quoted Nathaniel Barnaby, the Chief Constructor in 1880, that merchant ships lacked speed and protection to serve as warships, explaining to readers that the merchant marine, commonly claimed to be the ‘backbone of the navy,’ could not spare ships or men from vital supply routes, nor were merchant seamen interchangeable with bluejackets.¹³ The war risks facing the country had constantly increased, while the means of defence had actually decreased. Symonds provided a constant stream of expert activism, and was a prime example of the thinkers who received the epithet, ‘alarmist.’

‘Official optimists’ continued the work they had begun in 1883 in placating public concerns. A semi-official letter was published in the *Times* on January 2, 1884 comparing the current state of the navy with its position during the war scare in 1879, since at that point the navy was agreed to be satisfactory and the international tension was running even higher. At the moment there were 16,000 sailors available to man all the necessary ships, with more men on foreign stations than at home, leading the article to conclude that the forces protecting British commerce were “beyond question more powerful than that of any similar force afloat employed by any other Power.”¹⁴ The *Saturday Review*

¹¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 57:1474, (Jan 26, 1884), 109.

¹²“Editorial Notes,” *United Service Magazine*, 159 (Sep 1883), 340. The magazine argued that if Symonds was wrong then the Admiralty should publicly refute him, otherwise greater efforts were needed.

¹³Admiral Sir Thomas Symonds, “Letter to the Editor: The Navy,” *Broad Arrow*, 32:811 (Jan 12, 1884). Symonds was responding specifically to the confident New Year assessment of state of the Navy by the *Times* of Jan 2, 1884.

¹⁴“The Navy in 1883,” *Times*, 31019 (Jan 2, 1884), 2.

thought the article was playing partisan politics, and insisted that in 1879 the Conservative Government had left the navy as weak as at present.¹⁵ The *Review* rejected the comforting conclusions that the size of the British merchant marine and private shipbuilding capacity would compensate for naval weakness, because merchant seamen did not have the necessary training in gunnery and there would be no time to fix problems after the outbreak of war.

In early 1884, Gladstone's correspondence reveals a preoccupation with the Army Estimates, which were faced with increasing demands due to the ongoing conflict in Egypt and the expeditionary forces deployed along the Nile and at Suakim.¹⁶ There were persistent hopes that the costs of the unending Egyptian intervention would decrease, but this was not fulfilled.¹⁷ Gladstone was intent on minimizing or reversing this upward trend in state expenditure. He took a strong stand in a Cabinet meeting on January 24, 1884, and was able to “knock off the Army and Navy Estimates some ... 2 millions, and thus to make the increase to the expenditure for next year inappreciable.”¹⁸ Gladstone was pleased that the Admiralty demands were squashed. As he explained to Childers, it was important for the Government to avoid being “compelled to present an augmentation of expenditure without being clearly able to refer the whole of it either to causes unforeseen or to causes wholly beyond our control.”¹⁹ This attitude explains how the 1884 scare could be so effective, because a large enough public agitation would provide

¹⁵“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 57:1474 (Jan 26, 1884), 109-10.

¹⁶See for example, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44547, f. 32, H.C.E. Childers to W.E. Gladstone; or H.C.E. Childers to Hartington in *The Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers, 1827-1896*, vol 2, Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Childers, Ed. (London: John Murray, 1901), 156-7, 165.

¹⁷See for example, Parliamentary Paper, 1884 (96), “Explanations of Differences.” Mar 12, 1884.

¹⁸*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, Dudley W.R. Bahlman, Ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 547-8.

¹⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44547, f. 34, W.E. Gladstone to H.C.E. Childers, Jan 25, 1884.

the necessary 'unforeseen' excuse without the Government having to come to terms with a higher level of ordinary Estimates.

The Navy Estimates for 1884–85 showed consistent minor decreases across all major categories of personnel along with small increases for shipbuilding, dockyards, administration and naval works, the single largest increase being just over fifty thousand pounds.²⁰ Facing continued criticism from outside of Parliament and the Service, the Admiralty chose to engage with these alarmists. In March 1884 the Admiralty issued a “Statement of the Fighting and Sea-going Ships” which was intended as an authoritative response to silence criticism and debate over the relative fighting strength of the Royal Navy. The report listed 62 armoured ships, with 28 in commission, 27 in reserve and 7 building or ordered, as well as 221 unarmoured ships, with 122 in commission, 85 in reserve and 14 building or ordered, and finally 74 torpedo boats, including 19 first-class boats.²¹ Details were given about each warship's size and the dates of launch, installation of boilers and completion. Tonnage was the primary measure of shipbuilding progress and of dockyard efficiency, which in practice was often misleading. The report was rendered ineffective because it did not include official Admiralty analysis to guide the thoughts of Parliamentary or public audiences, thus leaving the field to the alarmists.

The Admiralty statement on the current state of the fleet provided a new avenue of attack for Parliamentary critics. Sir John Hay disputed the accuracy of the Admiralty Return, arguing that it withheld important information about the condition of individual ships. He claimed that several vessels listed as 'in commission' were in desperate need of

²⁰See Parliamentary Paper, 1884 (96), “Navy: Explanations of Differences,” Mar 12, 1884.

²¹Parliamentary Paper, 1884 (101), “Navy (fighting and sea-going ships). Copy of statement of the fighting and sea-going ships of Her Majesty's Navy on 1 January 1884, together with statements explanatory of the shipbuilding and repairing programme for 1884-85,” Mar 14, 1884.

repairs, while other ships were so unseaworthy as to defy inclusion in a list of sea-going warships; the list of armoured ships should only be 24 in commission and 7 in reserves. Hay believed that the Admiralty return, when unfit warships were removed, showed that Britain possessed 40 ironclads compared with 34 French and a dozen Italian vessels, a very dangerous situation. Gorst backed this concern, noting the recent French investment in new weapons technology in comparison to persistent deficiencies in the supply of British ordnance and in the number of cruisers.²² Lennox, Hay and Bruce proposed a Select Committee with a wide mandate to inquire into the sufficiency of the navy and the designs of its warships.²³ The intention was for the Committee to investigate and be able to give the House a better sense of the direction of professional opinion, such as that of the First Naval Lord, Admiral Sir Astley Cooper Key. In this debate there were the first hints of the Two-Power Standard, although it was not official policy. James Bruce stated that the navy “ought to be stronger, at least, than any two other Navies.”²⁴ Brassey's response on behalf of the Government was the pinnacle of official intransigence. He insisted that the Government was satisfied with the state of naval provision, and claimed that it would be impolitic “to propose those sensational Estimates which some critics of their policy seemed to demand.”²⁵ He argued that real expenditure had risen by almost a million annually since 1879–80, which included doubling the ordnance budget to half a million pounds and increasing shipbuilding expenditure to a total of almost four million. Brassey's defence was supported by Jenkins, who suggested that rapid technological change meant that only the bare minimum of ships should be built, since extra vessels

²²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 350-2.

²³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 336-61.

²⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 348-9.

²⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 344-7.

would be superfluous and rapidly obsolescent.²⁶ Campbell-Bannerman closed for the Government, defending the condition of the navy and rejecting claims that the professional advisers had too much influence over government policy. He refused to appoint a Committee “because that would be taking the matter out of the hands of the Government and of the Admiralty...” and would constitute a Vote of Censure.²⁷ The response of Gladstone's Ministry was to insist on normal Parliamentary procedure, and treat navalist activity as a partisan attack on the Government.

The Government's response was completely inadequate in quelling public concerns. The *Saturday Review* concluded that, “Alarmists may cease from troubling when officials admit that they did well in sounding the alarm, and that there is excellent ground for the misgivings which they have expressed, and practically this is now admitted.”²⁸ The *Review* thought Lennox had made valid points about the navy's reliance on obsolete, incomplete or broken ships, proving that the Royal Navy was not capable of matching potential enemies. To the *Review*, the problem was not a particular Government or party, but a chronic non-partisan insufficiency in the Navy Estimates that dated back to the 1860s. The point here was that the Government should feel confident that it could change the long-standing policy of naval economy and spend what was necessary without political repercussions.

The Government lost major ground on naval affairs in April and May in the House of Commons, especially on issues of shipbuilding in the Royal Dockyards. Conservative critics, including members of the 'Fourth Party' like Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and Lord Randolph Churchill as well as leading party members like W.H. Smith,

²⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 347-8.

²⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 357.

²⁸“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 57:1483 (Mar 29, 1884), 407.

drew attention to the lengthy delays in construction due to frequent design changes, both of which led to greater expense and wastefulness. Private shipyards were able to turn warships out for foreign navies in under three years, compared to five years for the Royal Dockyards. Campbell-Bannerman was forced to admit that the whole system of calculating construction based on tonnage was faulty and being reconsidered, and that France was building 150,000 tons to Britain's 100,000. Most importantly, he admitted that frequent design changes could result in the main design features of a warship being obsolete before it had even been launched. For the next decade, any investigation of Admiralty administration would touch on responsibility and chain of command for the design and building of warships, because faults in this process were consistently held responsible for inefficiency and expense.

The *Saturday Review* gave the Government credit for honesty, restating for its readers the admissions of the Liberal ministry over the problems in shipbuilding. The *Review* thought that the Parliamentary debates were very enlightening, “owing to the fact that officials have been so much more candid; it is difficult to believe that the public will refuse to believe what, against their interests, its own servants tell it.”²⁹ As before, the *Review* was not interested in casting blame, and recognized that the Government could not come out directly and contradict its statements during the previous debates on the Navy Estimates. It was the Admiralty's silence that was the admission of truth.

In this heated climate, Northbrook tried to counter his external critics by explaining that their advocacy of a large naval programme was based on a faulty premise. He stated that, “The great difficulty the Admiralty would have to contend with, if they were granted three or four millions tomorrow for the purpose referred to [large ironclads],

²⁹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 57:1490 (May 17, 1884), 644-5.

would be to decide how they should spend the money.”³⁰ Contemporaries interpreted this statement to mean that no more money was wanted and the Government was satisfied with the strength of the navy. In hindsight biographers and historians accept Northbrook’s own explanation that he was solely referring to large ironclads, and not (as his critics claimed) about the entire navy, and that on this point rapid technological change meant that a large programme would be a waste of money. Perhaps, given the state of opinion at the time, Northbrook should have realized how an alarmed public would interpret his phrasing.

Northbrook's colleagues were waffling under public scrutiny. Some continued to resist 'unproductive expenditure' but other leading Liberals were accommodating to the demands for greater security. Edward Hamilton noted regretfully that Sir Hugh Childers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, “appears to be wholly lacking in backbone” to resist the demands of Chamberlain, Harcourt and others to reduce the Treasury's control.³¹ Hamilton attributed this to bad habits learned from his service in the 'great spending departments' — the War Office and Admiralty. The conundrum facing the Liberals was that they believed in naval supremacy as well as fiscal retrenchment, and peacetime navies were under intense and expensive pressure to be prepared for rapid, decisive wars.

On August 1, the slow progress of Parliament meant that Gladstone proposed to devote the rest of the session to Supply. One MP, Newdegate, whose concern had been sparked after reading a letter to the *Times* by Admiral Symonds, took the opportunity to draw “attention to one of the gravest subjects, the defensive power of the Royal Navy”

³⁰Northbrook quoted in Mallet, *Earl of Northbrook*, 200-1 and in Marder, *Anatomy*, 125.

³¹*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 597.

but he was cut off by the Speaker for being off-topic.³² On August 9, using a letter by Symonds provided by the Editor of *The Naval Engineer*, Newdegate presented the Admiral's views on the growing divide between the personnel of the navy and the Mercantile Marine. Private shipyards would be busy with merchant shipbuilding in wartime and would not have spare capacity, or the time, for expanding the fleet. Campbell-Bannerman assured the House that the Admiralty carefully considered anything a high ranking officer like Symonds said when making policy. Instead, he suggested that,

Admiral Symonds is in the habit of writing letters; he writes many letters, and one of these, either by reason of its appearing in one of the public prints or in some other way, has fallen into the hand of the hon. Member, who seems to have been greatly struck by it.³³

A newspaper article could trigger a Parliamentary response, but being overly vocal could count against a writer's credibility, demeaning the concerns as a 'habit' rather than a reasoned position. Both Smith and Campbell-Bannerman's speeches were reprinted as pamphlets, in order to give their respective 'alarmism' and 'official optimism' wider circulation.³⁴ Edward Hamilton noted in his diary that these Supply debates were "wholly wasteful discussion" with the simple purpose of allowing the MPs to "blow off steam."³⁵ The depth of public and professional concerns manifesting in the press were not yet taken seriously by political Liberals, and this underestimation only increased the political effectiveness of the coming navalist revelations.

Simultaneously to the public and Parliamentary discourse, foreign affairs lent substantial credibility to navalist agitators. A relief expedition under Wolseley was sent

³²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:291, (Aug 1, 1884), c. 1367-9.

³³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:292, (Aug 9, 1884), c. 401-5.

³⁴"Notes," *Broad Arrow*, 33:841 (Aug 9, 1884), 184.

³⁵*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 668.

to rescue General Gordon in Khartoum, but it arrived too late. The backlash against official dawdling raised concerns about the ability of Gladstone's administration to deal with defence issues.³⁶ The French moved to attack Siam in the Far East, leading Admiral Cooper Key to make three recommendations, that an ironclad should be added to the British China squadron that would be stronger than any French ship in the region, that a joint declaration be made with Germany, Italy and the United States to 'request' France leave certain treaty ports alone, and that all blockading operations should be monitored by British personnel.³⁷ Northbrook agreed to despatch the ship, but was initially unsure about using resources to monitor the blockade until Key explained that if British ships were captured, British officers would be able to "give evidence on many points such as the effectiveness of the blockade and other matters vital to the decision of the case."³⁸ The effectiveness of a blockade under modern conditions was a great strategic quandary, and any experience would provide useful insights into the rights of merchant ships and on the ability of naval forces to seal up ports.

The First Lord of the Admiralty was sent to Egypt in August to report on the financial and political situation. This meant that he was out of the country while the Government was faced with the political fallout from the long delay in taking action to relieve Gordon. Gladstone insisted that the Board could adequately administer the navy in Northbrook's absence, since decisions were always made under the authority of the Board.³⁹ According to C.I. Hamilton, the First Lord in practice was always responsible

³⁶Denis Judd, "Gordon of Khartoum: The making of an imperial martyr," *History Today*, 35:1 (Jan 1985): 19-25.

³⁷NA, PRO/30/29/139, Cabinet Papers of Earl of Northbrook, Memorandum "Sir Cooper Key's suggestions," Aug 18, 1884.

³⁸NA, Cabinet Papers of Earl of Northbrook, PRO/30/29/139, Northbrook to Granville, Aug 23, 1884; Northbrook to Granville, Aug 20, 1884.

³⁹Parliamentary debates reported in "Notes," *Broad Arrow*, 32:841, (Aug 9, 1884), 182.

for the Admiralty and possessed significant power over decision-making, concealed under the fiction of collective Board authority. When the Admiralty was faced with a powerful political agitation backed by a public scare, Northbrook's absence was noticed.

Over the course of a few September days, the political position of the navy was radically altered as inchoate navalist energies were catalyzed by the press. On September 15 the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a Radical Liberal daily evening newspaper under the editorship of the renowned crusader W.T. Stead, posed a question for the nation - "What is the Truth About the Navy?" The answer came three days later, and it was not optimistic.⁴⁰ 'One who knows the Facts' described a dire state of affairs, with no part of the navy or its supporting infrastructure receiving full approval. The only partial admission of adequacy was in the current relative numerical strength of the battlefleet, but even that was tempered by the argument that it could easily disappear in the future. The articles compared the current situation with that of 1868, the last government before the 1867 Reform Act expanded the franchise. Democracy was responsible for Ministries from both parties pursuing a popular but unwise policy of radical economy in defence expenditure. A sequel set of articles examined the subsidiary question of coaling stations in more detail, capitalizing on the confidential recommendations of the Carnarvon Commission. Over the course of almost two months, the *Pall Mall Gazette* made more headway in the cause of navalism than all of the disparate writers of the previous two years. The *Pall Mall Gazette's* campaign is dealt with in more detail below, because it employed innovative 'New Journalism' methods to rouse public clamour, and forms an important stage in the development of newspaper activism.

⁴⁰“What is The Truth About the Navy?,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6089 (Sep 15, 1884), 1; ‘One Who Knows the Facts,’ “The Truth About the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6092 (Sep 18, 1884), 1.

The significance of the “Truth About the Navy” was not in the novelty of its arguments. What it did was provide an unusually comprehensive and pessimistic portrait of the state of the navy, to a Radical Liberal audience which had hitherto complacently assumed that Britain was supreme at sea. Radicals believed in the importance of naval power, and with such compelling evidence that the Royal Navy was not adequate the core supporters of the 'official optimists' were no longer so optimistic. If the problem was democracy, then democracy also offered the solution. If the public were made aware of the situation, and informed about the importance of the navy to their well-being, from financiers and merchants to industrial workers, then the navy would be assured of proper funding. The significance of the article was not lost on one prominent naval commentator, who said it “differs so completely in the breadth of its view and in the general fairness of its detailed statements from the letters one is accustomed to on the navy that it may compel the attention of statesmen.”⁴¹ After the *Pall Mall* articles, the question of the navy was no longer about whether a problem existed, but on how much money needed to be spent and what it needed to be spent on. Moderate commentators realized that impervious security for Britain and the Empire would not only be ruinously expensive to attempt, but was in fact impossible to attain.

Journalists and editors seized the opportunity to publish popular articles on the navy, and politicians stepped up their attacks on the Government's naval policy. Naturally the primary voices of navalism wanted their share of the credit. The *Saturday Review* traced the current scare back to Brassey's 1883 speeches, whose exaggerated optimism had driven a hyper-critical response which had been the real trigger for the scare.⁴²

⁴¹“The Truth About the Navy: the testimony of the Service,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 1.

⁴²*Saturday Review* quoted in “This Day's Papers,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6094 (Sep 20, 1884), 11.

Perhaps the *Review* had the prescience to realize that history would remember the catalyst, not the foundations, of the scare.

Politicians were quick to see the opportunity that the public controversy offered. The Conservative MP W.H. Smith, a former First Lord of the Admiralty, appealed in the morning papers for the Government to launch a full and impartial inquiry into the state of the navy. Not only did the situation demand it, he argued, but it would be justified to set the public mind at ease. The *Pall Mall Gazette* quoted the long-suffering *Saturday Review's* argument that, "the Prime Minister should at once undertake, with the aid of all the most competent and trustworthy naval authorities, a full and impartial, but not necessarily prolonged, examination of the facts of the case as to the condition of our defensive forces."⁴³ The danger was that a committee or commission would be appointed and the public would lose interest in the question, and then the report would be buried and ignored just as the Carnarvon Commission's had been. The *Review* recognized that Gladstone was the keystone of the opposition to naval expenditure.

Government resistance weakened in the face of the largely unified public opinion presented by the *Pall Mall* and other navalist organs. Edward Hamilton and Campbell-Bannerman accepted that the Government could not simply ignore the question with the current excitement and anxiety in the country, and Hamilton felt that the Government should grant Smith's proposal for an impartial inquiry into the navy.⁴⁴ He noted that "there are many Radicals, though deadly opposed to increased armaments, who would submit to a good deal for the sake of the Navy if the alarmists can prove their case."⁴⁵

⁴³*Saturday Review* quoted in "What is Wanted," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 1.

⁴⁴*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, Sep 23, 1884, 687; Campbell-Bannerman on Oct 2, 1884, quoted in Marder, *Anatomy*, 122.

⁴⁵*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 688-70, Sep 25, 1884.

Hamilton realized that the navy was the weak point in the Radical position on the armaments issue, and that they would be unable to abandon their fundamental belief in the necessity of British naval supremacy when the alarmist case had been proved so eloquently by the *Pall Mall*. Campbell-Bannerman, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, said in an October 17 speech that he welcomed the actions of Smith and the press in drawing public attention to the navy, and hoped the public would feel assured that national and imperial interests were being properly considered.⁴⁶

Political figures were rapidly adjusting to the new naval politics, particularly those involved or experienced in army or navy administration. Hugh Childers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and former First Lord of the Admiralty, recognized that “The *Pall Mall Gazette's* furious demand for more Naval expenditure has been received with considerable approval...”⁴⁷ Childers warned Gladstone in October that the deficit for 1884–85 was going to be about £1,500,000, not including any sum required to meet “the heavy onslaught on the Treasury which is now being organized in connection with the Navy,” nor could this be determined with Northbrook absent in Egypt.⁴⁸ At this stage in October, Childers predicted that the issue of coaling stations would be added to the agitation, and that the War Office would not resist these demands.

Direct personal correspondence was helping to provide the confirmation of the *Pall Mall's* perspective. After his figures were criticized in the press, Admiral Symonds wrote an extremely long and detailed letter directly to Northbrook to insist on the validity

⁴⁶“This Evening's News, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P., on the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6118, (Oct 18, 1884), 7.

⁴⁷*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 189, H.C.E. Childers to J. Adye, Sep 26, 1884.

⁴⁸*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 166-7, H.C.E. Childers to W.E. Gladstone, Oct 1, 1884.

of his main point. The unarmoured ends of battleships (the bow and stern that were not covered by the armoured ‘citadel’ protecting the guns and engines) cast doubt on their combat ability, there was a shortage of personnel and issues with training that meant the merchant marine was no longer a reserve of seamen for the fleet, and military forces across the empire received three times the £11,000,000 annually voted for the navy. The active navy was the only defence for the Empire, and since “a blow can be struck in a moment” it was very important to immediately rectify French naval parity.⁴⁹ The navy had to be able to command the Mediterranean, with a strong reserve in case the French were victorious in that sea. Stead acted in a similar capacity in personal correspondence with Gladstone, dealt with below.

Lord Northbrook returned from Egypt to find a full-blown naval scare. Much to Northbrook's disappointment, “the newspapers were more eager to hear Lord Northbrook's justification of his naval policy than to examine the somewhat intricate details of his proposals about Egyptian finance.”⁵⁰ Even though close political colleagues warned him about the damage that the *Pall Mall* attacks were doing, there was little chance of placating navalists.⁵¹ Perhaps it made Northbrook a little more willing to accept the personal recommendations of men like Symonds. The First Naval Lord, Admiral Key, advised in his “Remarks on the Navy Estimates for 1885–6” that the supremacy of the navy should be “beyond question of comparison... I do not consider it is possible to maintain this supremacy with the amount now annually voted for the Navy....”⁵² Leading naval authorities shared the views of naval agitators, and the combination of internal and

⁴⁹BL, Martin Papers, Add MS 41413, ff. 253-9, T. Symonds to Northbrook, late Sep or early Oct, 1884.

⁵⁰Mallet, *Earl of Northbrook*, 193.

⁵¹Mallet, *Earl of Northbrook*, 199.

⁵²A.C. Key, “Remarks on the Navy Estimates for 1885-6,” Oct 23, 1884 in *British Naval Documents*, 607-9.

external activism gave political substance to the scare. Parkinson's history concludes that the new programme was undertaken "entirely as a result of the press campaign,"⁵³ but it was naval officers who provided critical credibility in public and political discourse.

Bolder Parliamentary action in late October singled out Gladstone. On October 23, Smith pointedly asked Gladstone, rather than the Admiralty's parliamentary representatives, "Whether the Government contemplate taking any measures to relieve the anxiety which prevails in the public mind as to the state of the Navy, and particularly as to its sufficiency for the protection of the trade and commerce of the country in the event of war?"⁵⁴ Gladstone responded that the Admiralty was giving the navy broad consideration, that papers on coaling stations were almost prepared and that a statement would be made early in the next month, although this ended up being delayed until December 2. Gladstone was in a very difficult position, and he attempted to mitigate, trivialize and delay the progress of naval discussion as much as possible in the hope that this would mitigate the demands. These efforts are dealt with in more detail below, but in short they were unsuccessful. The endurance of navalists prevailed and it became more politically expedient to attempt a positive action than to continue resistance.

The late October and November developments within Parliament and the press show a significant degree of discontent with the normal Parliamentary procedure. Navalists demanded some answer from the Government, and were not put off by protestations from Gladstone's Ministry that the normal Estimates would provide answers. Commentators realized that naval discussions had the most relevance in the autumn when the main lines of the Estimates were being settled. The discussions took the

⁵³Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 92.

⁵⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Oct 23, 1884), c. 58.

same line as the *Pall Mall's* definition of the problem, with a heavy emphasis on the defences of imperial ports and coaling stations. One example was Gourley using a question about the quantity and design of cruisers and torpedo craft to segway into restating the demand for a Select Committee to inquire into the state of the navy.⁵⁵

In late 1884, private British shipbuilding yards had been going through a normal slump in the business cycle, reducing prices. When Brassey had presented the initial Admiralty proposals for a modest increase at the beginning of November, he suggested that putting more of the shipbuilding money into private contracts would appeal to the House.⁵⁶ In the November 22 debates the navy's need for additional warships was used as a possible solution to the distress of workers in Northern shipbuilding towns. The MP Norwood, endorsed by Admiral Hay and Stewart MacLiver, explained,

that additions to the strength of the Navy were necessary, and that this was the moment... for building vessels at the lowest possible price – it was worth the consideration of the Government whether they ought not to take steps to improve the condition of the Navy, and at the same time, assist our working populations.⁵⁷

Gourley thought that the £1,000,000 proposed for aid to Egypt should instead be spent on ships and the profitable employment of Britons. At this point, the need for a naval expansion programme was simply assumed as a basic premise of the debate, but the Government's answer continued to be delayed until the general statement.

The Government programme took longer to develop than anticipated, and was only presented to Cabinet at the end of November. Childers' memorandum outlined a Supplementary Estimate of £10,725,000 for both services to be spent over a five year period. Just £4,300,000 of this sum was for the Navy directly, with two-thirds devoted to

⁵⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Nov 17, 1884), c. 1841.

⁵⁶*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 169, Brassey to H.C.E. Childers, Nov 1884.

⁵⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Nov 22, 1884), c. 208-11.

shipbuilding and the remainder to naval works. The army would receive the lion's share at £6,425,000, but this sum included the production of naval ordnance, and the defences of coaling stations, commercial harbours and military ports. Childers' memorandum provided the full amount of £825,000 which the Adjutant-General of Fortifications and the Carnarvon Commission had desired.

A Cabinet meeting was held on December 2, before the evening presentation of the Government programme, to discuss these proposals. Gladstone accepted that “Now, or in the Estimates, 1885–6, something must be done” but he intended to keep the demands to a minimum.⁵⁸ Save for Childers and Hartington, the programme’s supporters quickly fell into line, including Harcourt, Dilke and Chamberlain who claimed that they had thought they were following Gladstone. Gladstone thought that Childers had agreed to support the smaller programme, and felt betrayed by his silence since it had encouraged the opposition of the other Cabinet members.⁵⁹ Childers was equally offended at the insinuation that he had not been working hard for years to reduce naval and military expenditure. After the Northbrook programme had been published, Childers reminded Gladstone that, “You will have read a strong article in the *Times*, saying that our proposals are altogether inadequate. This appears to be the general sentiment of the Liberal Press, both town and country, except perhaps the *Daily News*.”⁶⁰ The provincial press's attitude was particularly important, since it was seen as a more accurate representation of national opinion than the London-based papers.

⁵⁸Cabinet Notes, Dec 2, 1884, in *The Diaries of William Gladstone*, M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew, Eds., (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex Corporation, 2002).

⁵⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44547, f. 149, W.E. Gladstone to H. Childers, Dec 16, 1884.

⁶⁰*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 170.

Gladstone succeeded in having all the money for naval works, commercial harbours, military ports and ordnance plant for Woolwich were struck from the list, leaving a lean programme of £5,525,000 for shipbuilding and the protection of coaling stations.⁶¹ Not surprisingly, these were the two aspects of the naval question which had drawn the greatest public and political attention and amassed the political weight to justify large expenditure. While expenditure had been reduced, Edward Hamilton noted with dissatisfaction that if the programme was needed, “it is an admission of great weakness and wrong on the part of the Government and a surrender to the scare got up in the *Pall Mall Gazette*..... If it is not wanted, it cannot be justified.”⁶²

The new programme was presented to Parliament in the evening of December 2, and subjected to intense debate. Brassey began by recognizing the power of the scare,

In the present anxiety out-of-doors, it was the obvious duty of the Government to give to the House an opportunity of discussing the subject.... We feel our great responsibility for the maintenance of the naval power of this country, and we know that much of the criticism to which we have been subjected is due to imperfect acquaintance on the part of the public both with what we have done and what we propose to do in the future.⁶³

Brassey was working very hard to minimize the effect of the previous weeks of delay and obstruction, to gain the maximum political benefit for the Government's actions.

Brassey's speech defended the current Admiralty Board, arguing that the British fleet compared favourably with that of France — his figures for battleships were 5:3 first-class, 18:9 second-class, and 14:12 in obsolete third-class plus a decisive British supremacy in cruisers. Brassey employed a one-power standard to analyse the relative strength of the Royal Navy, but the substance of his speech presenting the Supplementary

⁶¹NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/13/47, “Additional Naval and Military Expenditure,” Nov 28, 1884.

⁶²*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 746-7, Dec 3, 1884.

⁶³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 448-66.

Estimate effectively conceded that the concerns expressed by thinkers during the 1884 Navy Scare were rational and legitimate concerns.

The Northbrook Programme consisted of approximately £3,000,000 for shipbuilding, £1,500,000 for naval ordnance and £1,000,000 for the defences of coaling stations, with spending spread over five years. The construction programme included, in addition to the regular Estimates, an additional four first-class ironclads, five belted cruisers, two torpedo-rams, ten scouts and thirty first-class torpedo boats, all of which would be the most modern, best equipped ships possible. As planned, almost half of the ironclads and many smaller ships would be contracted to private yards in the beginning of a shift in advanced warship construction away from the Royal Dockyards to the developing 'military-industrial complex,' although the dockyards were never as disposable as polemicists argued. Naval ordnance was a particular bottleneck, but the focus was on sufficient expenditure rather than its administration by the War Office at this point. The money for coaling stations finally reflected the main recommendations of the Carnarvon Commission, indicating the growing acceptance that infrastructure was of vital necessity for practical wartime operations. The navy was turning to strategic planning, including the FIC, in order to decide questions like the degree of fortification, and thus expenditure, necessary at the multitude of strategic locations across the world.

The Liberal Party was having a hard time adjusting to the new politics of defence. Many MPs made general statements about the importance of the navy, but Edward Hamilton noted critically that the attendance at the House of Commons was very thin, in spite of all the work that had been done to raise public and parliamentary attention to the state of the navy. Hamilton recounted that Gladstone's report to the Queen expressed his

regret that, “These spending proclivities form one of the worst characteristics of democracy or radicalism.”⁶⁴ Both Gladstone and 'One Who Knows the Facts' were critical of the ability of a popular democracy to handle difficult technical questions in a consistent and responsible fashion. Childers admitted to his son that the programme was “not a very clear record for us,” with the party as a whole neither fully supporting nor consistently opposed to the scheme.⁶⁵

During the Parliamentary debates the size of the programme was criticized for its inadequacy rather than its largess. Admiral Hay argued that the programme did not go far enough because British ships were even worse, comparatively, than Brassey had implied, but then Hay had been asking for an additional thirty second-class ironclads in 1883.⁶⁶ Smith led the main Conservative attack, focusing on details like the four months of needless delay, and the dispersal of the scheme over five years when private shipyards could build ships in less than half that time.⁶⁷ Gladstone thought Smith's speech was “nothing short of 'scandalous,' not from a party, but from a national, point of view,” and hoped Smith would never again hold government office.⁶⁸ Sir Donald Currie wanted to make explicit the implication that the Government was only acting because of the public agitation generated by the press. Currie argued that the fortifications at Hong Kong had been recommended by Carnarvon but were only commenced after the *Pall Mall's* September revelations, and a low-ranking Liberal tried ineffectively to deny these accusations and attribute the delay to careful consideration.⁶⁹ E.J. Reed concurred with

⁶⁴*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 746, Dec 2, 1884.

⁶⁵*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 190-1.

⁶⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 486-90.

⁶⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 466-77.

⁶⁸Quoted in *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 746-7, Dec 3, 1884.

⁶⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 477-87; c. 490-3.

Currie, but clarified that the panic had occurred because the facts of British national defences were stated openly. He was also quick to puff his own ego by pointing out that he had previously argued that £6,300,000 over three years was needed for a naval programme, very close to the actual sum.⁷⁰

In response to the debate, a return was ordered outlining the ships built or building for the Royal Navy during the last four years. The analysis indicated an inconsistent level of spending on unarmoured and armoured classes of warships in the 1870s, with a low point across the board in the 1879–80 years, and a slow but steady rise in the 1880s to almost the level of the panic expenditure of 1878–79.⁷¹ The return was probably intended as a partisan defence of the Liberal Party by showing that the current Ministry had been consistently increasing the navy, and was not responding solely because of public outrage.

With Liberal opinion in the country favouring a naval programme, Childers predicted a renewed battle over the Estimates in the spring. Gladstone suggested that the production of the Estimates be delayed as long as possible, so that the Egyptian crisis, which he blamed for the national uneasiness, could simmer down and reduce the demand for funds.⁷² Gladstone did not want to admit that the panic was the result of a genuine national concern, and thought the solution would be as simple as waiting out public agitation on a specific issue. He was more concerned with the partisan consequences of government extravagance, comparing it to the situation in 1866–68, when “we [the

⁷⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Dec 2, 1884), c. 499-505.

⁷¹Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (43), “Navy (Ships) Return respecting the ships built and building for Her Majesty's Navy during the last four years.” Dec 6, 1884. Armoured shipbuilding peaked in 1869-70 and 1877-8, and dropped furthest in 1878-9; unarmoured shipbuilding peaked in 1869-70 and 1875-6, with large drops in 1867-8 and 1877-8, although the latter was compensated with purchased ships.

⁷²Childers MS 5/163, Dec 21, 1884, W.E. Gladstone to H. Childers in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

Liberals] used to say *they* [the Conservatives] were playing our game by increasing expenditure.”⁷³ Gladstone assumed that the electorate demanded retrenchment, but in the new political climate spending could be very popular, and many socioeconomic groups would benefit from naval orders, including workmen and industrialists.

The Northbrook programme did not succeed in silencing criticism. A Constitutional Club dinner in mid-December was attended by many prominent businessmen and naval officers and passed an unopposed resolution that the Government's proposals were inadequate and demanding an immediate expansion in the building programme, a revised form for the Navy Estimates, the reorganization of dockyard spending, improved ship designs and better fortifications for coaling stations and commercial ports.⁷⁴ The *Army & Navy Gazette* added that Arnold-Forster had been able to carry a resolution in January at the Westminster Debating Society calling for the dismissal of Lord Northbrook as First Lord of the Admiralty.⁷⁵ Lord Henry Lennox explained that the Parliamentary consensus had shifted to favour an increase in the navy, due to the vastness of British commerce. Lennox claimed that naval spending had declined dramatically since his own tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1867–8, although the return provided by the Admiralty on December 6 contradicts this claim. Lennox and other speakers favoured the shipbuilding and manning programme of Reed, since it considered personnel as well as materiel needs.

As the monthly periodicals began presenting lengthy articles in 1885 examining the new naval programme, they followed the same general line of accepting the Northbrook programme as a minimum effort, while remaining hesitant to trust the

⁷³Add MS 44547, f. 161, Jan 9, 1885, W.E. Gladstone to H. Childers, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

⁷⁴“Lord Henry Lennox on the Navy,” *Broad Arrow*, 32:860 (Dec 20, 1884), 800.

⁷⁵“Navy Notes,” *Army and Navy Gazette*, (Jan 3, 1885), 3.

Government's ability to prioritize national interests. These articles frequently criticized irrational public fear, but defended the recent agitation as a rational response to real problems. The role of this analysis in developing public opinion is dealt with in more detail in the subsequent thematic section.

The Government's position declined markedly in 1885. Britain and France were in the middle of tense negotiations over the political future of Egypt, and routine orders to the Channel Fleet in early January excited alarm in the press. Edward Hamilton ruefully observed, "It is extraordinary in these days of newsmongering how easily the Press is hoaxed. The harm which these *canards* do is incalculable. It is one of the dangers of democracy."⁷⁶ On January 26, two days before the relief expedition under General Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived, Khartoum was taken and General Charles 'Chinese' Gordon was killed. The news was received with shock and grief, which turned quickly to anger at the Government for delaying a rescue mission. These accusations increased the credibility of the navalist critique of the ability of the Government to handle important naval and military decisions.

The Navy Estimates were discussed at length in a February 9, 1885 Cabinet meeting, and Gladstone accepted that "These large demands are required for the strengthening of the navy and the improvement of our ordnance stores."⁷⁷ It was the Army Estimates which Gladstone found more startling.⁷⁸ The Navy Estimates were announced on February 19, 1885, and showed a total increase of £1,415,129 excluding

⁷⁶*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 762-3, Jan 5, 1885.

⁷⁷*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Cabinet Notes, Feb 9, 1885; *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 792-3; Add MS 43913, f. 116, Dilke Papers, Feb 10, 1885. See also Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (45), "Navy: Supplementary Estimate of Her Majesty's Navy for the year 1884-5," Feb 19, 1885.

⁷⁸BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44547, f. 171, Jan 29, 1885, W.E. Gladstone to Childers, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

appropriations in aid and extra expenses of Egypt. Contract machinery, gun mountings and shipbuilding received the largest increase, at £876,600, while the Royal Dockyards' budget increased by over £200,000. Naval Works increased by £173,200, although overseas coaling stations were only eligible for £64,000.⁷⁹ The "Abstract of Tonnage" shows that the dockyards were maintaining their rate of construction, while private shipyards expanded from one armoured and nine unarmoured ships in 1884–85 to three armoured, five protected and thirty-two unarmoured ships in 1885–86. The emphasis on private shipyards was partly ideological and partly a recognition that the Royal Dockyards did not have the excess capacity to construct a large programme over a defined period of time.

Even after the Northbrook programme there was little confidence in Gladstone's Ministry. The *Saturday Review* warned its readers that promises could be easily broken if the Admiralty and the Government resumed their usual practice of "delay and wriggle out of the necessity of action..."⁸⁰ To the *Review*, there had been lots of debate and little practical action. Reed continued to criticize the Admiralty for its inaction on the pressing question of warship design, but to the *Review* it indicated that Reed had become more concerned with his own pet projects than with the core issue of shipbuilding policy, and his writings had lost credibility for their over-zealous style.⁸¹ When Reed put forward a motion in the Commons in early March stating that the navy was in an unsatisfactory state due to "defective administration" and extravagant expenditure, Gladstone hoped to use it as a means of escape for the Government from its promises. Edward Hamilton

⁷⁹See Abstract table, Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (44), "Navy Estimate for the Year 1885-86, with Appendix," Feb 19, 1885, 4-5.

⁸⁰"The Services," *Saturday Review*, 59:1531, (Feb 28, 1885), 267-8.

⁸¹"The Services," *Saturday Review*, 59:1531, (Feb 28, 1885), 267-8.

disapproved of Gladstone's proposal, noting ruefully that, "there seems to be a good deal too much of 'shilly-shallying' at the Admiralty. They ought to make up their minds, lay down a building programme, and 'snap their fingers at interested and prejudiced specialists like Reed.'"⁸² Hamilton recognized that a clear statement from the Admiralty about naval requirements would be the most credible answer to navalist critics.

The *Saturday Review* anticipated the kinds of delays and inaction that Gladstone would have preferred. Reed's motion had rightly identified the defective administration of the Admiralty and the extravagance of the Royal Dockyards which deserved censure, but the first priority was strengthening the navy and immediately beginning the new construction programme. Debates over administration would encourage the Admiralty's tendency to prevaricate and delay and might even lead to a Parliamentary committee which would result in even greater delay.⁸³ Two weeks later no progress had been made, proving that the Admiralty "holds as firmly as ever to the creed that its first duty is not to give the country an efficient navy, but to keep things sweet with the Treasury."⁸⁴ Brassey and Northbrook were assuring both Houses that work was being advanced, but the *Review* pointed out that Brassey had defended the policy of redesigning ships under construction, with the attendant delay in completion, and claimed that it was not possible to supply all of the navy's wants.

Official optimism was reviving, and there was good reason to think that the Government intended to back out of its promises on the navy after time had reduced public concerns. During the debates, the Admiralty was defended by a junior MP whose contradictory speech was used by agitators to prove their case. For example, he

⁸²*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 812-3.

⁸³"The Services," *Saturday Review*, 59:1532, (Mar 7, 1885), 299-300.

⁸⁴"The View of the Admiralty," *Saturday Review*, 59:1534, (Mar 21, 1885), 366-7.

deprecated comparisons with foreign fleets, and then proceeded to make those same comparisons which showed that at least four plausible Continental alliances would match Britain's naval forces.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, domestic criticism was not proving to be powerful enough to force the Government to act on its promises. The revised Navy Estimates in May showed minor decreases across a number of major categories which reduced the total net increase from £1,210,730 to £818,530.⁸⁶ It was the occurrence of another war scare with Russia in 1885 that tipped the balance to decisive action.

The 'Great Game' that was played in Central Asia by the British and Russian Empires triggered a war scare in the spring of 1885. In March Russian forces seized a piece of Afghan territory at Penjdeh, raising longstanding fears of Russian aggression against India although it was obvious that a war with Russia would involve conflict around the globe — as tensions rose Gladstone asked Northbrook about the strength of the Royal Navy in Chinese waters, which was “all right.”⁸⁷ Reginald Brett cautioned Rosebery that, “We are not better prepared now than were the French then [in 1870]; and we are altogether in the dark about Russia...” particularly whether the Tsar was “powerful enough to withstand apparent humiliation” in a diplomatic defeat.⁸⁸ Both sides offered diplomatic assurances that their outposts in Afghanistan would not advance, but this did not salve public fears.⁸⁹ Hartington advised Rosebery that it was impossible to fight Russia and continue the war in the Sudan, so Wolseley would have to be recalled, although he suggested delaying until the situation in Afghanistan was clearer so that the

⁸⁵“Navy and Public,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1539 (Apr 25, 1885), 534-5.

⁸⁶Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (184), “Navy (Revised Estimate, 1885-86,” May 8, 1885.

⁸⁷NA, Northbrook Papers, PRO/30/29/140, f. 183, W.E. Gladstone to Northbrook, Mar 10, 1885; see also “The Corean Question,” *Broad Arrow*, 33:861 (Dec 27, 1884), 825-6.

⁸⁸NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10006, ff. 23-4, R. Brett to Rosebery, Apr 5, 1885.

⁸⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44228, ff. 176-7, Kimberly to W.E. Gladstone, Mar 15, 1885.

Sudan would not be needlessly abandoned.⁹⁰ The Cabinet, save Harcourt, voted to continue in the Sudan the next day.⁹¹ For the sake of proportion, it is worth noting that the diary of a young naval officer, Bernard Currey, notes only “More warlike” for April 14, and “Not so warlike” on April 15.⁹² Events could have national significance without making a great deal of impact on the daily lives of people, even those professionally interested in the question.

Stead was kept informed about Russian sentiments by Madame Novikoff, and personally wrote to Gladstone and Rosebery insisting that the country was not prepared for a war and that Penjdeh did not signal Russian aggression.⁹³ Rosebery’s memorandum on “The Situation with Russia,” did not attach much significance to the *Pall Mall Gazette’s* information, because “The P.M.G. is told not what the Russians really think, but what they wish to appear in print.”⁹⁴ Rosebery politely declined to conduct correspondence about an ongoing diplomatic affair, but any solution “must involve a real frontier, fairness as between the Contracting parties, and no humiliation which would leave a rankling memory.” Edward Hamilton thought that without a clear delineation of the frontier war should be declared, but in practical political terms the Government would need a better cause than a diplomatic defeat over Penjdeh to justify war to the nation.⁹⁵ The power of the press had limits, and Stead’s direct involvement as a lobbyist for a cause was less effective than providing a national forum for a discourse of expert opinions.

⁹⁰NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10082, ff. 206-11, Hartington to Rosebery, Apr 11, 1885.

⁹¹NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10082, ff. 219-22, Granville to Rosebery, Apr 12, 1885.

⁹²NMM, Bernard Currey Papers, CRY/1, Currey’s Personal Diary, Apr 14, 1885.

⁹³BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, ff. 348-51, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, Apr 23, 1885; NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10082, ff. 243-4, W.T. Stead to Rosebery, Apr 23, 1885.

⁹⁴NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10132, ff. 38-41, Privy Seal Office, “The Situation with Russia,” Apr 26, 1885.

⁹⁵*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 843-4, Apr 22, 1885.

On April 8 news arrived in the City of London of another Russian attack on the Afghans, triggering a panic the next day on the London Stock Exchange. The first LCC meeting was held at the Cannon Street Hotel on April 13 to discuss the issue, which passed two resolutions. The first called for a stronger navy to protect the Empire and British commerce, and the second was an expression of willingness of the financial and commercial community represented by the LCC to pay the price of a stronger navy. The only caveat was a request that the Government provide insurance for war risks to British shipping. Roger Parkinson's analysis argues that it was the combination of the 1884 press campaign, the Russian Crisis and the stock crash that reinforced the LCC's intention "to improve the City's capacity to influence Government policy."⁹⁶ In later naval scares the support of the LCC would be frequent and valuable in mobilizing political pressure.

The LCC meeting a week later at the Cannon Street Hotel returned to the issue of naval affairs. These meetings were well attended by naval officers as well as businessmen, in a link that would prove particularly powerful in the 1888 Navy Scare. The *Saturday Review* informed readers of the high-minded and non-partisan character of the meeting, and of the value of businessmen becoming involved in a question of vital importance to their own well-being. There were no personal attacks, and even Reed avoided the minor issue of warship design and focused on the main problem of an insufficient number of warships. While the *Review* eschewed any "love for agitations and blatant meetings for the purpose of over-awing the Executive Government....," circumstances had also proven that external pressure on the Admiralty was vital for effective action.⁹⁷ What the *Review* realized very clearly was that "next to nothing would

⁹⁶Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 93.

⁹⁷"Navy and Public," *Saturday Review*, 59:1539 (Apr 25, 1885), 534-5.

have been done without the help of the pressure of fear of war.” With the 1884 Navy Scare justified so immediately and completely by events, later agitations would not have to work so hard to make the public believe in the importance of preparation and expenditure on the armed forces in peacetime.

On April 21, 1885 Gladstone moved for a £11,000,000 Vote of Credit for the army and navy. At the Cabinet meeting on April 26 the policy was confirmed.⁹⁸ The motion was passed on April 27 without significant opposition, much to the fury of Randolph Churchill, with both the Radicals and the Conservatives appearing to wait (vainly) for the other to initiate.⁹⁹ The navy received £3,000,000 of which £500,000 was for the costs of Egyptian and Sudan operations and the rest for war preparations, although Russia was not specified. Gladstone preferred to make special expenditure than to concede larger normal Estimates were normal, which probably increased the appeal of using this opportunity to provide sums for national defence that would placate professional interests. The result was a burst of activity at the dockyards, but as the *Saturday Review* noted, “it is not improbable the public may be misled as to the practical result of so much activity” because “Where the department is most busy, it is making up for its own neglect or is only making the real correspond better to the nominal fighting force of the fleet.”¹⁰⁰ The *Review* maintained that the new ships were seriously delayed and some classes, like torpedo boats, had not been ordered at all; but on a positive note it had proven possible to hire large merchantmen for conversion to auxiliary cruisers,

⁹⁸BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43913, f. 126, Dilke’s Cabinet notes, Apr 26, 1885.

⁹⁹Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 175-7; Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, (New York: Barnes, 1960), 166-8. This led to new political arrangements between Churchill and Salisbury to invigorate the Opposition.

¹⁰⁰“Navy and Public,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1539 (Apr 25, 1885), 534-5.

invalidating the arguments of Reed and other navalists for the importance of building large unarmoured ships.

One of the long-term results of the Russian War Scare was the creation of the Colonial Defence Committee (CDC) to consider issues of colonial defence directly, outside of the normal correspondence between the Colonial Office, War Office and the Admiralty. The first Chairman was the Inspector-General of Fortifications, Sir Andrew Clarke and Captain H. Jekyll was made Secretary. The CDC would take a very similar line to the Carnarvon Commission, retaining not only the same secretary but continuing its meeting notes in the same volume.¹⁰¹ Donald C. Gordon's analysis of the CDC traces its origin to the reaction against the decline of British national defences after a period of laissez-faire attitudes to imperial defence after the reduction of colonial garrisons with the Cardwell army reforms in 1870–71.¹⁰² After many years of technical reports and advice, however, it took the combination of the 1884 Navy Scare and the confirmation of fears provided by the Russian War Scare to catalyze political action on the question of imperial defence. The problem had taken time to build, but the solution would require a large short-term mobilization of political forces. The CDC would work to acquire and organize comprehensive information on the equipment and forces available for coast and port defences in the colonies, and provide guidelines for measure to be taken in the colonies on the outbreak of war, particularly the much-feared surprise attack.¹⁰³ Permanent institutions like the CDC improved the ability of professional experts to create strategies

¹⁰¹NA, Colonial Defence Committee...: Reports and Correspondence, CAB/7/7 "Minute Book" of the Royal Commission and the Colonial Defence Committee.

¹⁰²Donald C. Gordon, "The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration, 1885-1904," *Political Science Quarterly*, 77:4 (Dec 1962), 526-45.

¹⁰³Gordon, "Colonial Defence Committee," 529-30.

for developing naval power, but these organizations were limited in the political influence that they wielded and in this sphere public agitation remained vital.

In spite of the Government's newfound commitment to spending on imperial defence, Gladstone's Ministry collapsed in May. The likelihood of war with Russia was quickly dissipating, and the Government wanted to reduce unnecessary items from the £11,000,000 voted. Northbrook immediately informed the Treasury that the navy had spent all of the £2,800,000 (minus £200,000 for coaling stations). Childer's budget raised taxes on income and alcohol to pay for the increased defence expenditure, which combined with the lingering discontent over Egyptian policy to convince Joseph Chamberlain and Charles Dilke to tender their resignations.¹⁰⁴ On June 8 the budget was rejected by the House of Commons and the next day a minority Conservative government took power under Lord Salisbury, with Lord George Hamilton appointed to his first term as First Lord of the Admiralty. The Board of Admiralty was replaced, although this was one of the last times that the Board changed with the political leadership, with Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur W.A. Hood, KCB, serving as First Naval Lord and Vice-Admiral Sir Anthony Hiley Hoskins, KCB, as Second Naval Lord. Salisbury's Ministry appointed a Select Committee to examine if the Liberal Government had exceeded the Vote of Credit, which calculated the total overage at £953,000, although it blamed chaotic administrative and financial methods and overly sanguine estimates of savings rather than any malicious wrongdoing.¹⁰⁵

The new Ministry would continue with the previous administration's plans to deploy the newly mobilized fleet for exercises in the summer. Admiral Sir Geoffrey

¹⁰⁴NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10006, f. 28, R. Brett to Rosebery, May 20, 1885.

¹⁰⁵Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (311), "Report from the Select Committee on the Admiralty (expenditure and liabilities), Aug 3, 1885.

Phipps Hornby was given command of the Particular Service Squadron with orders to conduct tactical and strategic exercises and experiments. These involved important tactical questions, like the ability of ironclads to defend themselves against torpedo attack, which would influence the grand strategy of Britain in a major naval war. This experience is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, as the new information was worked into the evolving discourse on naval affairs, and became the pioneer for the annual naval mobilization and manoeuvres. They were the first systematic attempt to comprehend the nature of modern warfare by practical exercises in the most realistic manner possible – to create a 'Reality of War' to inform and direct the 'Discourse on War.'

Historians are right to draw attention to the role of the 1884 'Truth About the Navy' Scare in developing popular navalism in Britain, although this coverage has not appreciated the full complexity of the phenomenon. Government, the navy and various external lobby groups were involved in a public discourse on naval policy because of the political benefits that could be attained by having a positive public opinion. Naval scares were particularly valuable in expanding the navy, and only secondarily in supporting internal reforming movements. The panic was not a spontaneous outpouring of public energy, but neither was it the product of cynical manipulation. It was formed by a congregation of individuals who believed that the best method of ensuring national defence was to harness the energy of the press and vocal agitators to mobilize the democratic nation. Democracy was held responsible for the neglect of the armed forces, but it also offered the solution. The Liberal Government was bound by its own ideology to pay careful attention to public opinion, but this did not mean that it wanted to be seen as blindly following the outpourings of the newspapers.

'Official Optimism' versus 'Alarmism' in 1883

Important groundwork was laid in 1883 for the following mass agitation. Service and civilian commentators attempted to rouse the public about the poor condition of the navy. Much of this work was located in the newspapers that were labelled, and self-identified, as 'alarmist,' like the *Morning Post* and the *Saturday Review*, or in the Service press, such as the *Army and Navy Gazette* and the *United Service Magazine*. This part of the public was relatively easy for the Government to ignore because of the stigma attached to 'alarmism.' At this stage the scare was very shallow and unable to affect the parts of public opinion which could influence the Government, but there was a trickle-down effect which fertilized the soil of public opinion for later seeds to fall on.

The first article in the January 1883 issue of the *Nineteenth Century* was H.O. Arnold-Forster's "Our Position as a Naval Power," and this proved to be a prescient piece. The monthly general-interest magazine the *Nineteenth Century* recurs frequently in these pages due to its consistent willingness to give space to naval topics. This article set out to prove that Gladstone was not keeping his campaign promise of supporting the navy, and was grossly misstating the true strategic position of the country. Arnold-Forster insisted on looking beyond quibbles over individual ships to the grand strategic dilemma of the sufficiency of the navy, boldly stating that,

The very fact that argument and contention in the matter is possible, that the strength of the English and French navies should be so near an equality that any doubts as to the superiority of the former should be entertained for a moment, is in itself the strongest imaginable proof that the alarmists err, if anything, on the side of moderation.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶H.O. Arnold-Forster, "Our Position as a Naval Power," *Nineteenth Century*, 13:71 (Jan 1883), 3.

Arnold-Forster insisted that these conditions could be remedied if the public was fully informed of the situation, since history had shown that Parliament and the nation would accept “any additional outlay which was shown to be necessary to ensure the required degree of efficiency.” Arnold-Forster cited both alarmists and former 'official apologists' in support of his position. Admiral R.S. Robinson had reaffirmed the necessity for greater numbers of auxiliary ships to create real fighting fleets, while Admiral Sir Thomas Symonds had consistently warned the country about threatening increases in the French navy. Lord Brassey, the politically appointed Civil Lord of the Admiralty, had admitted the danger posed by France. Brassey provided vital trade statistics which demonstrated Britain's vulnerability to *guerre de course*, attacks on British trade and merchant shipping, while naval defences were dispersed and weak.

Parliamentary activity followed a parallel course, with rising concerns being generally ignored by a government distracted by Egyptian affairs. Reed, a former Chief Constructor who was very active in the ongoing discourse on warship design, became frustrated with his inability to carry his point in Parliament and turned to the *Times*. To Reed, the core problem was that the navy was being starved of funds by being kept under an artificial spending ceiling which did not take into account rising non-effective charges or increasing costs for repairs and construction. The *Saturday Review* “hoped that public attention may be drawn to [naval affairs] by Sir E. Reed's powerful letter,” because he could not be dismissed as an alarmist the way so many commentators, like Symonds, had been.¹⁰⁷ The key to getting the necessary funds for both repair and new construction was public attention, because “If the public is willing to remain in blissful ignorance, why should the Government bestir itself?”

¹⁰⁷“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1423 (Feb 3, 1883), 142-3.

The Conservative party was quick to seize the opportunity of using naval policy to criticize the Government. Lord Henry Lennox argued in Parliament that the French were increasing their shipbuilding activity and threatening Britain's naval supremacy, which the Liberal George Trevelyan was unable to convincingly refute. Lennox published his views in a pamphlet to ensure the widest possible circulation.¹⁰⁸ W.H. Smith developed a proposal for a Royal Commission to settle the relationship between the Admiralty and War Office in the matter of ordnance. Navalists wanted the public to stop evaluating the navy based on its size relative to its opponents, and use the much higher standard of its size relative to the duties it would have to perform.

The credibility of the alarmist case was strengthened by the professional discourse conducted under the auspices of the RUSI. These lectures were not avowedly political, but consistently supported the conclusion that the navy was being starved of essential supplies, equipment and training. For example, after his first term in Parliament, Beresford spoke at the RUSI promoting machine guns and rapid-firing artillery that would counter torpedo boats and other unarmoured vessels.¹⁰⁹ The post-lecture discussions show a widespread recognition of the importance of solving these technological dilemmas. As Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Culme Seymour opined, the real value of such lectures was in “drawing attention to one of the many points in which the Navy is starved.”¹¹⁰ Lennox himself attended the same meeting at the RUSI, and took the opportunity to defend his conduct and publicly declare his readiness to support W.H. Smith's proposal for a Royal Commission on the ordnance question. The professional

¹⁰⁸Reported in “The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1423 (Feb 3, 1883), 142-3.

¹⁰⁹C. Beresford, “Machine Guns,” *JRUSI*, 27 (1884), 601-28. See also R.S. Lowry, “On Coaling Ships or Squadrons on the Open Sea,” *JRUSI*, 27 (1884), 383-96. Delivered on Apr 13, 1883.

¹¹⁰Discussion of C. Beresford, “Machine Guns,” *JRUSI*, 27 (1884), 625.

discontent of naval officers would convince many of them to participate or cooperate in future agitation efforts.

'Official optimists' continued to reassure the public that the navy was fully capable of performing its duties and that additional expenditure was not required. During the presentation of the 1883–84 Navy Estimates, Henry Campbell-Bannerman told the House, “We have been invited... by writers of great authority to open up a new era of great naval expenditure. We are not disposed to follow that advice.”¹¹¹ After this, the *Saturday Review* was forced to concede defeat for the year, since the “public is, in so far as it troubles itself about the matter at all, perfectly satisfied with the naval policy of the present Government.”¹¹² The only consolation for the *Review* was that the French were as ignorant of the condition of the Royal Navy as were the English.¹¹³ The *Review* though both political parties were equally guilty of keeping the Estimates artificially low and neglecting necessary investment in order to gain political popularity, which was particularly damning since “a navy nowadays can only be got together after long preparation.”¹¹⁴ Naval disillusionment with partisan politics was widespread; Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton thought that the speeches in the Commons were too black and white, leaving the House ignorant of the truth.¹¹⁵

The problem that official optimists would run into was that they shared the same basic belief that the Royal Navy should be supreme at sea. The task of the alarmists was to shake the British public's complacent confidence that the Royal Navy was still supreme. Neither party would risk the responsibility, or the electoral consequences, of

¹¹¹Quoted in “The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1429 (Mar 17, 1883), 332-3.

¹¹²“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1432 (Apr 7, 1883), 435.

¹¹³“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 56:1445 (Jul 7, 1883), 4-5.

¹¹⁴“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1429 (Mar 17, 1883), 332-3.

¹¹⁵Discussion of C. Beresford, “Machine Guns,” *JRUSI*, 27 (1884), 620.

allowing the navy to fall from such a position. In May Lennox informed Parliament that the navy had seriously declined due to a broad trend of European naval expansion, and without immediate measures Britain could face a disaster worse than that which befell an over-confident France in 1870.¹¹⁶ Admiral Sir John Hay, MP, argued that the ordnance supply was totally inadequate, providing only 174 heavy guns per year when the fleet mounted 2,200 such pieces. In response, Brassey presented for the Government a classification system for battleships which would make the naval situation more comprehensible. The Government's conclusion was that Britain had a 10:3 ratio of superiority in first-class battleships in 1882 which would rise to 15:6 in 1885. The *Saturday Review* observed that Brassey's own five-volume work, *The British Navy*, did not support these figures, and that they underestimated the speed of French construction.

Alarmists seized on these figures, since it gave them an avenue of attack to dispute the Government's information and conclusions. The Conservative MP for Devonport, Captain George E. Price, wrote to the *Times* revising Brassey's figures to include as first-class warships all those with guns over 43 tons and eighteen inches of armour, and concluded that there were currently ten British and eighteen French ships. Second class battleships were almost evenly matched. Price counted all ships built and building and stated that the navy was not even superior to France alone.¹¹⁷ Admiral Symonds counted 45 French against 44 British battleships. The *Saturday Review* suggested to its readers that if the Admiralty was capable of defending itself it would have refuted the charges; silence was an admission of the truth.¹¹⁸ Britain currently had more ships afloat, but this was countered by the known defects of British designs and the

¹¹⁶Summarized in "The Debate on the Navy Estimates," *Saturday Review*, 55:1437 (May 12, 1883), 586-7.

¹¹⁷George E. Price, "Our Naval Strength," *Times*, 30823 (May 18, 1883), 6.

¹¹⁸"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 55:1441 (Jun 9, 1883), 727-8.

modernity of French ships. The Royal Navy was only slightly inferior, but “even a slight inferiority to France in naval power means in reality an inferiority in total offensive and defensive power so great as to render war with her next to impossible.....”¹¹⁹ The problem in the eyes of navalists was not that 'official optimists' were defending a policy of naval equality with France, but that instead they were lying to the public by falsely stating that naval superiority actually existed.¹²⁰

In spite of activity within Parliament and in the press, the Parliamentary session closed in October with little time devoted to naval affairs. Lennox wrote to the *Times* in frustration, this time focusing on the Admiralty's mismanagement of money. He explicitly denied that the navy was currently in a 'deplorable condition,' only that it was in danger of losing supremacy if France and Britain both maintained their current shipbuilding rates.¹²¹ Unfortunately for Lennox, the *Times* leading article discussing his letter called it 'unconvincing' and added that “his letter adds little to the arguments” that had been made in Parliament.¹²² The *Times* informed readers that the official explanations from Brassey and Campbell-Bannerman had been more convincing than those of Lennox. Concerns over the adequacy of the navy had been settled by Brassey's figures, which the *Times* preferred over Lennox's, showing that Britain was superior in completed ships with France's superiority confined to warships under construction. The *Times* felt that the Admiralty continued to deserve public confidence.

The *Saturday Review* offered a strong counter-point after a series of minor deficiencies were revealed at the end of November. Newspapers reported that the

¹¹⁹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 55:1441 (Jun 9, 1883), 728.

¹²⁰“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 56:1445 (Jul 7, 1883), 4-5.

¹²¹H.G. Lennox, “Our Ironclad Navy,” *Times*, 30941 (Oct 3, 1883), 3.

¹²²Leader, *Times*, 30941 (Oct 3, 1883), 9.

Sheerness Naval Barracks had insufficient personnel to re-commission a ship, and that British overseas squadrons were being outmatched by expanding foreign navies. The *Review* anticipated the criticisms of 'official optimists,' suggesting that the real question came down to, "Has England got a fleet largely superior to that of any other single nation, and a fair match for the combined fleets of any group of nations that reasonable possibility might bring against her?"¹²³ The *Saturday Review* had effectively advocated a Two-Power Standard, since a combination of two powers against Britain was plausible. The *Review* suggested that an Admiralty official might publish a general description of naval war plans in the monthly magazines, including operations and commerce protection. The public needed to be brought into the Admiralty's confidence. It would appear, from the events of 1884, that naval officers were greatly encouraged by the limited successes of 1883 and this prompted a greater degree of cooperation with political and journalist elements in a new and more comprehensive attempt to shift national policy.

W.T. Stead, New Journalism and the 1884 Navy Scare

More than any subsequent episode, the 1884 "Truth About the Navy" Scare depended on the efforts of a single editor, W.T. Stead, and his newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The importance of Stead should not discount the efforts of contemporary navalist writers and thinkers, because Stead's success was built on the foundations that had been laid both within and outside the naval service. Nevertheless, the *Pall Mall* was absolutely critical in applying the innovative commercial techniques of New Journalism to the cause of naval reform and expansion. A large part of the British public had been

¹²³"The State of the Navy," *Saturday Review*, 56:1466 (Dec 1, 1883), 689-90.

insulated from navalist discourses in the early 1880s that had been localized in the service press and poorly-attended Parliamentary discussions, and the navalist campaign begun in the *Pall Mall* resonated with these virgin audiences. This section examines the sustained effort that was made in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, supported by numerous correspondents and fellow publications, and argues that the effectiveness of the scare was built upon a credible description of naval deficiency backed by expert testimony.

“The Truth About the Navy” campaign needs to be put into context of the larger series of newspaper crusades conducted by Stead in the 1880s. Stead was a proponent of ‘Government by Newspaper,’ based on his belief that newspapers were the best representatives of public opinion and thus integral to the functioning of democracy. He was the mastermind behind the ill-fated appointment of General Gordon to the Sudan in early 1884, and would become notorious for his 1885 revelations of child procurement and prostitution in the ‘Maidenhead Tribute of Modern Babylon.’ The most recent biographical collection includes articles on Stead’s major crusades, but the 1884 Navy Scare is unmentioned except for the book’s chronology of events.¹²⁴ It is a strange contrast that such an important moment in naval history makes no appearance in a media history, in spite of Stead’s success in shaping Government policy. In later years Stead would be less influential, partly because his credibility was hurt by his spiritualist tendencies and partly because numerous other journalists and publications took up the cause of the navy.

New Journalism used innovative techniques made possible by developments in the technology of printing, often imported from America, to increase the circulation and

¹²⁴See Laurel Brake, Ed King, Roger Luckhurst, James Mussell, Eds, *W.T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary*, (London: British Library, 2012).

appeal of newspapers and periodicals. Dramatic increase in circulations lent credibility to the claims of newspaper editors to be the representatives of public opinion. Stead's belief in 'Government by Newspaper' incorporated the press into the political system by giving newspaper editors the role of representing the interests of the public at large, a large step from the press's previous role as the educator of the public. This belief would underpin Stead's willingness to tackle major social and political issues. Expert opinions also added to the credibility of newspaper articles. Cyprian Bridge, one of the most important naval writers in the pre-First World War period, was the naval contributor to the *Pall Mall Gazette* when it was under the editorship of John Morley.¹²⁵ Some people resisted the New Journalism. Edward Hamilton criticized Stead's leadership of the *Pall Mall*, saying that "It is becoming 'Jingo-ish' and losing caste by the innovation of illustrations, which is giving it the appearance of vulgarity."¹²⁶ Woodcut illustrations had been used by journals for decades, such as the *Illustrated London News*, but they were uncommon in the text-focused 'quality press' until New Journalism in the 1880s.

Roger Parkinson's excellent work tries to understand the justification for the scare. He argues that the strength of the French navy was consistently exaggerated in the press campaigns, largely through the inclusion of wooden-hulled battleships which were already being withdrawn from British service.¹²⁷ This seems unwarranted, since the discourse clearly based the estimate of the value of these warships on their powerful guns and thick armour, while the material of the hull was less critical. In hindsight, wooden-hulled armour-clad warships were quickly obsolete, but their true worth was not easily

¹²⁵*Letters and Papers of Professor John Knox Laughton, 1830-1915*, Andrew Lambert, Ed., (Aldershot: Ashgate and Navy Records Society, 2002), 27-9.

¹²⁶*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Vol II, 548.

¹²⁷Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 92.

determined at the time. There was no Naval War Staff deliberating and deciding on questions of strategy; instead it was left to volunteer efforts of officers and thinkers who worked through institutions and the press.

Part of the problem in the historiography is the over-emphasis on Stead. Stead was important, and was very outspoken — he had aided Gladstone during the Midlothian Campaign and clearly believed this entitled him to be straightforward with him.¹²⁸ The *Pall Mall* was innovative, but the impact of the scare cannot be simplified to one set of articles. Works from Marder to W. Mark Hamilton take the 1884 scare as a starting point, because “Although the gradual weakening of the navy, relatively speaking, was obvious to several keen observers, there was practically no interest displayed, official or unofficial, until well along in 1884.”¹²⁹ After the articles were published, Marder describes, “The first sea lord threw in his lot with the agitators.” Without a doubt the agitation was successful in shaping government policy, but the causal chain is much more complex on closer inspection.

The “Truth About the Navy” article series was the main catalyst for the energy that had been developed over several years by concerned navalists. It began by creating suspense, by posing a series of questions without answers to provoke its readers into thinking about the issue.¹³⁰ It is worth examining the questions in detail, because they set the parameters for decades of naval discourse and the language itself reveals how public opinion was guided to a desired conclusion. The first question stated “Our war risks have enormously increased” before asking “Has our navy, which is our national insurance, been correspondingly strengthened?” The conclusion, that the navy had not been

¹²⁸See BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, ff. 341-2, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, May 16, 1884.

¹²⁹Marder, *Anatomy*, 120.

¹³⁰“What is the Truth About the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6089 (Sep 15, 1884), 1.

strengthened, was obvious. Most of the questions focused on specific aspects, such as the sufficiency of torpedo craft, fast cruisers to protect commerce, sailors and infrastructure or the quality of warship designs and repairs, but the second point embodied an era-defining concept, the Two-Power Standard. It asked, “Can we or can we not demonstrate beyond all gainsaying our 'irresistible superiority' in armour, guns, speed, and coal-carrying capacity over any combination of fleets, when the ironclads now building are in commission?” The standard of strength being presented as natural common-sense to the British public was much higher than it would first appear.

This initial article laid important groundwork for the later agitation. It rejected any comparison between the numerical strength of the Royal Navy and foreign powers, nor was it “enough to prove that it is as good or better than it ever was....” The navy had to be maintained at a level equal to protecting Britain's enormous commerce and overseas possessions. The *Pall Mall* challenged, “If the Lords of the Admiralty can say that on all these points they are satisfied with the position in which they have placed the country it will be an easy matter for them to set forth in plain, broad outlines the salient features of the condition of affairs.”¹³¹ The *Pall Mall* insisted that if more money was needed, the country would spend whatever was necessary to set national defences in order. This was a direct challenge to the Admiralty, putting the onus of proof on the Government and naming silence as an admission of guilt. The credibility of the article was only strengthened by its reference to key discursive elements from 1883 and 1884, including explicitly denying any allegiance to either the 'official optimist' or 'alarmist' camps.

After a three-day pause to build suspense, and possibly to create the pretence that the Admiralty had the opportunity to respond to the charges, the questions were answered

¹³¹ “What is the Truth About the Navy?,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6089 (Sep 15, 1884), 1.

by 'One Who Knows the Facts.' The anonymous author's pseudonym assured readers that they were being given honest information that would penetrate the cloak of mystery surrounding the condition of the Royal Navy. The identity of the author was the subject of much speculation, and only fully revealed years afterward. In January 1885 the *Army and Navy Gazette* attributed it to H.O. Arnold-Forster, who had been so active in 1883.¹³² The actual genesis was more complicated. Arnold-Forster had contacted Stead during the summer of 1884, and convinced him of the dangerous state of the navy. Stead then proceeded to verify these claims by exhaustive research, including interviews with key naval officers such as Admiral Cooper Key and important politicians like Reginald Brett, who had inside information from the Carnarvon Commission.¹³³ Brett was particularly important in feeding insider political information to Stead, and organizing contacts with naval officers.¹³⁴ Captain J.A. Fisher, then serving at the gunnery school ship HMS *Excellent*, was an important source of information, most likely at the instigation of his superior officer, Admiral Sir G.P. Hornby, Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth.

The *Pall Mall's* answer to its own questions spanned five pages and dealt comprehensively point-by-point with each issue. Stead's introduction, in which he played the role of the impartial editor speaking to his readers, explained that the article was both nonpartisan, since no particular party or Board was more guilty, and accurate, relying on the same information that was used by 'official optimists.' The current danger was the result of long neglect of the navy while technological change and international competition had increased. In conclusion, "The salient feature of his striking exposition

¹³²"Navy Notes," *Army and Navy Gazette*, 26:1302 (Jan 3, 1885), 3.

¹³³Marder, *Anatomy*, 121; Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 90.

¹³⁴J.O. Baylen, "Politics and the 'New Journalism': Lord Esher's Use of the 'Pall Mall Gazette'," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 20:4 (Winter 1987): 126-41/

of the actual condition of our navy is the proof which he affords of the fact that we no longer hold that unquestioned supremacy over the fleet of other Powers which we enjoyed in 1868.”¹³⁵

The date of 1868 was significant. 'One Who Knows the Facts' attributed the recent decline of the Royal Navy not to any particular political ideology, but to the creation of modern democracy. After the 1867 Reform Act extended the franchise, the Navy Estimates of 1868–69 were “the last submitted to a House of Commons elected by a restricted suffrage.”¹³⁶ He argued that the increase in democracy had led to an enormous increase in national wealth and international and imperial commerce, but it had not been able to increase national and imperial defences in due proportion. The article took a non-partisan stance that explained how both Conservative and Liberal governments of the 1870s had been equally neglectful of the navy. Democracy was a contributing factor to the degradation of the navy, in the author’s opinion, which is very reminiscent of Henry Lloyd’s belief, discussed in the beginning of Chapter 2, that republics were incapable of effectively waging war.¹³⁷ For ‘One Who Knows,’ the unwritten implication was that democracy also offered a solution. The responsibility rested on the general electorate taking an educated interest in national defences, and supporting a reasonable level of expenditure. This faith in the public was related to the 1884 Third Reform Act’s extension of the franchise, which pushed the navy to fully engage with the public sphere.

'One Who Knows' did not take the most extreme alarmist perspective. He openly acknowledged Britain's current superiority in first-class ironclads, but focused on the

¹³⁵“A Startling Revelation,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6092 (Sep 18, 1884), 1.

¹³⁶'One Who Knows the Facts,' “The Truth About the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6092 (Sep 18, 1884), 1-6.

All quotes in the following two paragraphs are from this source.

¹³⁷Lloyd, *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics; on the Projected Invasion...*, 21-7.

serious deficiencies in second and third-class ironclads and in torpedo craft. He estimated that an additional £1,000,000 annually was necessary for an appropriate level of shipbuilding, since this would match the combined expenditure of all other major naval powers. British heavy naval ordnance was obsolete compared to the high quality guns produced by France and Italy, 'One Who Knows' described, and British production was grossly insufficient to equip the fleet with the weapons necessary to win battles. Fast cruisers were lacking, which was problematic considering that "No number of slow ships carrying guns of short range can touch a fast vessel with heavier metal that can lie out of range and pound her adversaries to pieces at long range." Torpedo craft were a glaring deficiency. He recounted recent experiments that had led an Admiral to conclude that "no search lights, or any other appliances with which the modern ironclad is furnished, could enable him to prevent a torpedo boat, which would, with infallible certainty, send her to the bottom." It is likely that Fisher was influenced by Hornby and other officers, and applied these old ideas in his 1900s reform programmes. 'One Who Knows' overstated the value of new technologies — experience in manoeuvres showed that the torpedo faced serious technical challenges to become an effective weapon — but this exaggeration was a deliberate attempt to shock the public into supporting naval investment. Imperial defence was in jeopardy. The French were superior in the economically valuable Chinese waters, while Britain had unquestioned superiority on only two minor stations, North America and Australia. 'One Who Knows' recognized that the comparison between the total naval strength of different powers had to be tempered with consideration of local power balances in key strategic areas — an idea that would underline the emphasis on Mediterranean forces for the next two decades. Ports and

coaling stations were vulnerable to raids. The reports of the Carnarvon Commission were kept secret, “Not, perhaps, without reason,” he theorized.

Stead chose to remind his readers of the validity and widespread support for his claims over several weeks, and to coordinate the multitude of statements from politicians, naval officers and journalists into a coherent political movement. Survey studies tend to brush over these techniques by describing the reception of the 'Truth About the Navy' articles as universally favourable.¹³⁸ The *Pall Mall Gazette's* revelations were reinforced by a series of follow-ups to the original article. The following day, September 19, letters were published from two naval politicians. Admiral Hay argued that thirty additional ironclads were required to keep pace with the increasing responsibilities of the navy, and Vice-Admiral the Hon. Francis Egerton argued for improved coast defences under naval control. Egerton admitted that the navy was “on the whole fairly adequate for its work in time of peace,” but would gladly see it stronger.¹³⁹ It was certainly a calculated move for Stead to immediately publish letters from two senior naval officers serving in Parliament. Admiral Symonds submitted a predictable letter, published on its own on September 22, arguing that France, unlike Britain, could deploy five ironclads overseas on short notice.¹⁴⁰ This issue did explain to readers that many “letters from the most eminent naval authorities” and politicians had been received and would be published on September 23; most importantly it argued that, based on the evidence, “whatever may be the case about details, the substantial accuracy of 'the startling revelations' would be confirmed by every

¹³⁸The tone was set by Marder, *Anatomy*, 121.

¹³⁹Admiral Sir John Hay, Bart., MP and Vice-Admiral the Hon. Francis Egerton, MP, “The Truth About the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6093 (Sep 19, 1884), 1-2.

¹⁴⁰Thomas Symonds, “Correspondence: The Truth About the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6095 (Sep 22, 1884), 2.

responsible authority in the country.”¹⁴¹ Stead ensured that readers were constantly reminded that the core issue was the overall state of the navy, and thus protected its arguments from quibbling over details that might undermine its case.

Besides publishing correspondence, the *Pall Mall* also kept close track of the opinions of contemporary newspapers and periodicals across a range of subjects. Newspaper extracts regarding “The Truth About the Navy” first appeared on September 20. One excerpt from the *Saturday Review* was edited to excise the part describing how similar information had been revealed by Admiral Symonds, Sir Henry Lennox and the *Engineer*, but kept the part that hoped the *Pall Mall's* article would “bring to the knowledge of a new public those painful truths respecting the strength of our navy to which the *Saturday Review* has during past years so often and so earnestly drawn attention.”¹⁴² The front-page article of the September 20 *Pall Mall* issue further reinforced the validity of the naval scare by describing “An Imperial Crisis” in South Africa and the likelihood of war in the immediate future.¹⁴³ The September 23 issue provided two pages of press excerpts, including both liberal and conservative publications, that almost universally affirmed the truthfulness and necessity of the *Pall Mall's* revelations, with many also insisting on the country's willingness to bear the financial burden of a strong and efficient Royal Navy. One solitary article criticized the agitation from a Cobdenite perspective, arguing that British vulnerability was due to an aggressive and greedy foreign policy and that Ireland and social issues were better uses

¹⁴¹“Occasional Notes,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6095 (Sep 22, 1884), 3.

¹⁴²“This Day's Papers,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6094 (Sep 20, 1884); “The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 58:1508 (Sep 20, 1884), 368.

¹⁴³“An Imperial Crisis,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6094 (Sep 20, 1884), 1.

for government money.¹⁴⁴ By including a solitary critical article, the *Pall Mall* created the impression of impartiality and balance, while guiding readers to the conclusion that all of the knowledgeable experts were in accord with the agitation. Later issues would continue to publish press excerpts that supported the portrayal of the *Pall Mall's* position as essentially true, with the newspaper discourse directed at component elements such as whether a parliamentary inquiry was necessary or desirable, and whether the Liberal Government could be trusted to handle the issue effectively.¹⁴⁵ The September 29 issue provided additional excerpts from European newspapers. While two journals accepted England's right to ensure the sufficiency of the Royal Navy, the majority of excerpts portrayed the agitation as a “well-known manoeuvre” created by newspapers to manipulate policy.¹⁴⁶

The September 23 issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* consolidated the agitation with six substantial letters, including three signed by Admirals. The *Pall Mall's* introduction clarified for readers that the naval service as a whole was in broad agreement with the essential characterization of naval weakness, although there were disagreements of detail about the relative capacity of the Royal Navy to the French navy. Admiral F.L. McClintock made a strong argument for a large fleet of torpedo boats, Admiral E. Gardiner Fishbourne focused on support infrastructure like docks, Vice-Admiral J.H. Selwyn argued for the rapid development of beneficial technologies like liquid fuel and General G.A. Schomberg, R.M.A., supported more torpedo boats and better defences for

¹⁴⁴“The Truth About the Navy: The Testimony of the Service,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 1.

¹⁴⁵“The Morning Papers: The State of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6097 (Sep 24, 1884), 12; “The Morning Papers: The 'Truth About the Navy,’” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6101 (Sep 29, 1884), 11-2.

¹⁴⁶“The Foreign Press on the English Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6101 (Sep 29, 1884), 12.

coaling stations.¹⁴⁷ Two letters, both published under pseudonyms, provided words of caution, one noting the current superiority of the Royal Navy and the lack of international conflict, and the other pointing out the domestic crisis in Ireland that was a better use of Government funds than concerns about “the inferiority of the navy to any possible combination.”¹⁴⁸ The *Pall Mall* was always willing to showcase opposing views while the moderating editorial contributions directed reader's towards the arguments that Stead preferred — a subtle propaganda based on emphasis rather than censorship.

The September 23 issue republished W.H. Smith's open letter to the press calling for a parliamentary inquiry along the line Sir John Hay had suggested in January 1884, in order to treat the navy in a nonpartisan fashion.¹⁴⁹ Press excerpts in support of Smith were also included to bolster the *Pall Mall*'s position that the concern was patriotic and national, rather than a partisan attack on the Government. To claims that the agitation was a partisan Tory plot, the *Pall Mall* observed that the Radical Liberal Henry Labouchere supported Smith's proposal for an inquiry into the navy.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the front-page article of September 23 disagreed with Smith's proposal for a parliamentary inquiry, arguing that a ministerial inquiry by the responsible authorities would be more effective. Since Gladstone's policy was based on naval supremacy, it argued, a ministerial inquiry

¹⁴⁷F.L. McClintock, “A Plea for Torpedo Boats;” E. Gardiner Fishbourne, “Docks on Foreign Stations;” and J.H. Selwyn, “A Vice-Admiral's View,” in “The Truth About the Navy: The Testimony of the Service,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 1-3. Admiral George Elliot added his support to the campaign three days later, “Admiral Elliot on the Need for Action,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6099 (Sep 26, 1884), 6. Additional letters elaborated on important elements, including the merits of torpedoes, port defences and rapid ship construction, see Nathaniel Barnaby, “Can an Ironclad be Built in Two Years?;” ‘Vice-Admiral,’ “The Defence of Our Ports;” Capt. H.H. Dory, “Torpedoes and Cruisers;” ‘Miles,’ “Torpedo Boats Without Torpedoes;” ‘F.’, “Woolwich Guns;” ‘Utility,’ “Our Older Ironclads;” and Robert Burnard, “Encouraging Naval Volunteers;” in “Correspondence,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6101 (Sep 29, 1884), 2.

¹⁴⁸‘Ofella,’ “A Reasonable Criticism;” and ‘An Irishman,’ “A Word on the Other Side;” in “The Truth About the Navy: The Testimony of the Service,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 3.

¹⁴⁹“Mr. W. H. Smith on the State of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 12. Henry Labouchere was Stead’s ally in future newspaper crusades.

¹⁵⁰“Occasional Notes,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6097 (Sep 24, 1884), 3.

under his supervision would be “confronted by an array of testimony simply overwhelming as to the inadequacy of our naval forces, and when once he is satisfied as to the reality of our danger there is no man in the Empire who will provide against it with greater energy and despatch.”¹⁵¹ Stead's faith in Gladstone is considered in more detail below, but the non-partisan importance of naval supremacy was restated on September 26 and 29 along with the belief that if the Board of Admiralty set out in clear terms what was needed for the navy, Gladstone would then take responsibility for remedying the problems.¹⁵² Reginald B. Brett's *Pall Mall* article on September 29 criticized the proposal of a parliamentary inquiry because it offered the Government a method of effectively shelving the question until the public attention was distracted by a new issue.¹⁵³ Stead's methods were calculated to combat the waywardness of public opinion, by repeatedly collecting and presenting opinions that confirmed the essential point — the navy needed more money.

Stead supported his agitation by personal communication with important Liberal politicians. To Rosebery, who was already predisposed to imperialism, Stead argued that the question of imperial defence was part of the long-term evolution of the relationships between Britain and the colonies, and between the colonies themselves. He requested any suggestions from Rosebery for furthering the development of these relationships.¹⁵⁴ Stead was also in direct communication with Carnarvon, who supplied as much information and support as he could without breaking the confidentiality of certain aspects of his

¹⁵¹“What is Wanted,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6096 (Sep 23, 1884), 1.

¹⁵²“Who is Responsible for the Navy?,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6099 (Sep 26, 1884), 1; “The Responsibility for the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6102 (Sep 30, 1884), 1. Letters published in the latter issue discussed the question of the personal responsibility of the First Lord of the Admiralty and his professional advisers.

¹⁵³Reginald B. Brett, “The Responsibility for the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6101 (Sep 29, 1884), 1-2.

¹⁵⁴NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10081, ff. 235-6, W.T. Stead to Rosebery, Sep 18, 1884.

Commission's reports. He did state in the *Pall Mall* on September 26 that, "I am not aware that a single practical step has been taken" to set the defences of coaling stations in order.¹⁵⁵ This information prompted the second set of articles focusing on the critical vulnerability of naval/commercial infrastructure, dealt with in the next section.

The political impact of the "Truth About the Navy" articles was showcased in the October 2 *Pall Mall* issue that summarized three Parliamentary speeches; Sir E.J. Reed and W.H. Smith argued that the navy was a non-partisan issue and the nation should invest in appropriate naval power, while Henry Richard cautioned against heavy expenditure until experts (he cited Reed and Lord Armstrong) could agree on which technology should be supported.¹⁵⁶ Richard's argument would not carry much weight with his contemporaries, because it used uncertainty over technological details to block a large range of expenditure that experts had deemed necessary. In case these exchanges made readers skeptical, Stead provided a letter from 'X.' and excerpts from newspapers on October 3, 4 and 6 that restated the core arguments of his campaign.¹⁵⁷ The *Pall Mall* did not shy away from disagreement, and the October 8 issue published "Two Views About the Navy," one by Lord Dunsany that despaired over the condition of the navy, and the other by Henry Richard who dismissed the concerns as panic-mongering and an inefficient means of building up suitable forces, particularly with the recent reports of

¹⁵⁵Carnarvon, "The Defence of Our Coaling Stations" in "The Truth About the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6099 (Sep 26, 1884), 6.

¹⁵⁶"The Truth as to the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6103 (Oct 2, 1884), 10. In mid-October Reed wrote to the *Times* to argue the case for ironclads instead of the protected cruisers advocated by Lord Armstrong, but the *Pall Mall* thought that Reed's fixation might "lead public attention from the vital question," "Occasional Notes," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6120 (Oct 20, 1884), 3.

¹⁵⁷X., "Our Navy and its Coaling Stations;" and "The Morning Papers: The State of the Navy," in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6104 (Oct 3, 1884), 2, 12; "The Morning Papers: The State of the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6105 (Oct 4, 1884), 12; "The State of the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6107 (Oct 6, 1884), 6.

administrative inefficiency.¹⁵⁸ The *Pall Mall* applied *reducto ad absurdum* to Richard's arguments, claiming that "Mr. Richard would argue in exactly the same way if we had not a ship in commission," and that he was denying the unanimous opinion of the service.¹⁵⁹ When reports revealed that the French believed their navy was in poor condition, the *Pall Mall* simply asserted that this was greater proof of the inadequacy of the Royal Navy.¹⁶⁰ Stead may have felt some pressure to further develop his case, because on October 10 the terms of the debate were shifted by Emile de Lwelleye's "Maritime Capture" as well as an anonymous letter on the same subject. Lwelleye focused on the demands of commerce defence because it would be very difficult to prevent marauding cruisers from escaping to sea, and combating enemy raiders would require substantial forces.¹⁶¹ These writers were the leading edge of a larger tendency to characterize the navy in terms of national insurance, whereby the necessary expenditure would be measured against the value of British trade, rather than the size or power of foreign naval forces. The danger to trade was the core of "A Suggested Naval Policy," which the *Pall Mall* attributed to an expert naval officer, that emphasized improving the defences of coaling stations, rapid fleet expansion and investing in new types of torpedo craft, protected cruisers and armed merchant ships.¹⁶² Stead was careful to provide another summary of the key elements of the agitation in the October 14 issue, ensuring that his readers remained focused on what he felt were the important aspects of the

¹⁵⁸Lord Dunsany and Henry Richard, "Two Views About the Navy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6109 (Oct 8, 1884), 1-2.

¹⁵⁹"Occasional Notes," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6109 (Oct 8, 1884), 3.

¹⁶⁰"Occasional Notes," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6110 (Oct 9, 1884), 3.

¹⁶¹Emile de Lwelleye, "Maritime Capture;" and 'B.,' "Correspondence: Our Commerce in Case of War," in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6111 (Oct 10, 1884), 1-2, 6.

¹⁶²"A Suggested Naval Policy," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6113 (Oct 13, 1884), 1-2.

debate.¹⁶³ Stead believed that newspapers were the best reflection of public opinion, but he also ensured that his newspaper provided the public with the 'right' interpretations to inform their judgement.

The most important personal communication was between Stead and Gladstone. Gladstone was the primary target for conversion to navalism, and Stead did not take it for granted that he would read, or pay attention to, the articles that were published in the *Pall Mall*. Stead met with Gladstone shortly after the first 'Truth About the Navy' articles were published to explain in personal interviews his views on the dangerous state of the navy.¹⁶⁴ After Gladstone made a public speech in mid-October that referred to the “power and the strength of the Empire,” Stead took advantage of the opening to write directly and restate the claims that had been made in the *Pall Mall*. He explained to Gladstone that his investigation had begun after an unnamed politician (Arnold-Forster) had mentioned that a war with France was possible over the situation in Egypt. In his investigations, Stead described how, “I took the greatest pains to ascertain from every person who could be considered an authority upon the navy or things naval, what they considered to be the exact position of affairs.” In case Gladstone would respond that these were simply alarmists, Stead said, “I entirely put out of court all the old Admirals and professional alarmists, and the panic-mongers of the service.”¹⁶⁵ He explained that the unavoidable, pessimistic and almost unanimous conclusion was that the navy had been starved of funds. Stead concluded by noting Gladstone's personal inconsistency, because “I found everywhere a conviction that while your whole foreign and colonial policy is based upon the maintenance of a supreme navy, you vetoed that expenditure without which our naval

¹⁶³“A Great Opportunity,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6114 (Oct 14, 1884), 1.

¹⁶⁴Recorded in *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 688-70, Sep 25, 1884.

¹⁶⁵BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, ff. 344-7, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, Oct 17, 1884.

supremacy cannot be maintained.” Stead suggested that Gladstone must be misinformed, because his attitude could not be intentional, and should familiarize himself personally with the state of the navy. Edward Hamilton, Gladstone's personal secretary, noted that Gladstone took the letter seriously and referred it to the responsible naval authorities.¹⁶⁶ Gladstone did not dismiss the navalist controversy, but he did not seem to feel that the situation warranted his personal intervention.

Gladstone's lacklustre response to private correspondence led Stead to press his case publicly in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. An October 17 article criticized Gladstone's confident speech on the strength of the British Empire, and told readers that “There must be a grave dereliction of duty somewhere,” leaving the glaring question of “who is to blame for the existence of so perilous a delusion?”¹⁶⁷ A follow-up article further emphasized the staggering coincidence that Gladstone made such a speech on the same day that the “Truth About our Coaling Stations” was published, absolutely contradicting Gladstone's position. This reaffirmed to the *Pall Mall* that the Government was concealing the Carnarvon Commission’s recommendations in order to avoid embarrassment, which “illustrated forcibly the absolute necessity of the action which we have taken in rousing public attention.”¹⁶⁸ The *Pall Mall* scoffed at the ‘official apologetics’ of the Liberal political press excusing the Government's actions with claims that Gladstone's Ministry had been quietly considering the issue of imperial defence the whole time. According to its usual practice, the *Pall Mall* published a letter defending Gladstone on October 20; ‘Spectator’ did not deny that the navy might require more money, but insisted that Gladstone was wise enough to judge the true balance between

¹⁶⁶*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, vol II, 711-2, Oct 19, 1884.

¹⁶⁷“Who is Responsible?” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6117 (Oct 17, 1884), 1.

¹⁶⁸“How Not to Do It,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6118 (Oct 18, 1884), 1.

the real strength of England and the weaknesses of other countries.¹⁶⁹ The *Pall Mall* published the letter, but included an editorial note that restated the vulnerability of coaling stations, and the greater ease with which other countries could shift their smaller merchant marines to neutral registration to protect them in wartime. Stead anticipated victory for his crusade, reporting rumours of a new Royal Commission on the naval question and possibly a new shipbuilding programme involving both the dockyards and private shipyards.¹⁷⁰ Stead realized that Gladstone was the keystone of resistance to naval expenditure, and used all the means of communication at his disposal to influence him.

As discussed in the narrative of events, Gladstone's opposition broke down, although he still hoped to reverse any temporary concessions after the public agitation had simmered down. Stead and the *Pall Mall* had effectively combined public and private action to convert key members of the Government and wear down Gladstone's personal opposition, but these activities cost Stead some of his influence with Gladstone. The experience of the 1884 Navy Scare shows how valuable a leading journal could be in creating a sense of overwhelming public opinion. When John Morley described the ongoing naval scare in December 1884, the *Pall Mall Gazette* protested loudly that no credit was given to the *Gazette* for its role; the *Broad Arrow* was quick to point to its own extensive efforts and those of other journalists and politicians to inform public opinion about naval deficiencies well before the *Pall Mall's* piece.¹⁷¹ The process of public education was a lengthy and involved one. A single article, or series of articles, was not

¹⁶⁹“Correspondence: Mr. Gladstone and the Strength of England,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6119 (Oct 20, 1884), 2.

¹⁷⁰“This Evening's News: The State of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6118 (Oct 18, 1884), 8. The *Pall Mall* also excerpted the *Standard* article that noted the lack of widespread appeal of Gladstone's pacifist position, and the absence of anti-expenditure activism, “The Morning Papers: The State of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6119 (Oct 20, 1884), 12.

¹⁷¹*Broad Arrow*, 33:861 (Dec 27, 1884), 845.

enough to create a policy response, but helped shift the political balance towards an immediate naval programme. The power that newspapers wielded in the scare would encourage navalist agitators to continue their public speaking and writing to convince decision makers in the Government that public opinion was solidly in support of a particular cause. At the same time, the disreputable 'newspaper scare' was distasteful, and the accusation of alarmism or panic-mongering was a potent one that agitators felt they had to defend against.

The Unsung Sequel: 'The Truth About Coaling Stations'

Coaling stations, the vital chain of refueling and resupply bases that supported both worldwide naval operations and merchant shipping, were an important thread in the 1884 Navy Scare. The defence of coaling stations was a challenging intellectual and political question, because it required establishing agreement on the risks to these stations in wartime, the cooperation of the army and navy in defence, and the relative value of fortifications versus mobile naval forces. In practice, like the wider question of the state of the navy, it was not a black or white issue. Thinkers debated the nuances of the appropriate balance of spending in order to achieve suitable defences without overinvesting in aging technology — the question of who would provide the funds brought in wider discourses on the nature and future of the British Empire itself. The defences of coaling stations became a core element of the 1884 Navy Scare in October because the ongoing deficiencies provided valuable credibility for accusations that the Government was putting financial retrenchment ahead of the national interest.

The Royal Commission on the Defence of British Possessions, which was chaired by Lord Carnarvon and reported in 1882, had strongly recommended improving the security of vital imperial infrastructure, but the Liberal Government was unwilling to provide the almost £1,000,000 requested for local fortifications and facilities. One difficulty was the division of costs between the Imperial Government and the colonies, and the Imperial Federation movement was partly driven by the financial aspect of defence expenditure. In February 1884, the Cabinet was presented with a memorandum outlining the recommendations of the Inspector-General of Fortifications, Sir Andrew Clarke.¹⁷² Clarke closely echoed the views of the Carnarvon Commission, including the need to prioritize the trade route around the Cape of Good Hope and the distinction between single-ship attacks or small raids, which required fortifications, and large-scale attacks, which would require naval assistance. Clarke agreed with the Commission's recommendation to spend £891,870 to defend important British coaling stations against raids. With CDC approval, the War Office sent this programme to the Colonial and India Offices in March. The War Office wanted the colonies to bear the bulk of the expense, but the India Office would only pay half the cost of the defences at Aden. The Foreign Office felt that the colonies could not bear the full cost, and the Imperial Government should pay for the armament for Singapore and Hong Kong and the full cost of works at St. Helena, Sierra Leone, Jamaica and St. Lucia. By August the money for Aden, Singapore and Hong Kong was approved, with Britain paying £150,000 of the total £350,000 proposed.¹⁷³ The defensive requirements of coaling stations were being addressed, but this was not made clear to the public.

¹⁷²NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/12/13 1884, Confidential Memorandum.

¹⁷³Command Paper, 1884, C. 4186, "Correspondence relating to the defence of colonial possessions and

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach raised the issue of coaling stations in the lengthy March 20, 1884 House of Commons debates. He pressed the Government to table some policy proposals to implement the recommendations of Carnarvon's Commission, but was only promised a statement.¹⁷⁴ Hartington did put together a draft proposal, but there seems to have been little urgency attached to solving the problem. Gladstone gave it seventh place on his agenda for a May 5 Cabinet meeting, and even Carnarvon was willing to accept some delay to avoid either too much or too little expenditure.¹⁷⁵ Some voices within the navy, such as Vice-Admiral Sir R.V. Hamilton, took the discussion of coaling stations to its logical endpoint, suggesting that the navy assume control over the defence of naval ports instead of the army. The First Naval Lord, Admiral Cooper Key, disagreed “almost entirely” because it would be detrimental to the navy to be tied to fixed defences and because army-navy cooperation would not be as impossible as Hamilton claimed. To Key, the natural division was for the army to control fixed defences and the navy the mobile defences, but both services would need to cooperate.¹⁷⁶ Considering the degree to which expert testimony regarded the defences of coaling stations as a pressing issue, it was not surprising that Stead would incorporate it into “The Truth About the Navy.”

Coaling stations were not a purely naval responsibility, because land defences were the purview of the army, and there was a two-week delay before this issue was given discreet space in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. “Letters about the Navy and its Coaling Stations” was published on October 1, including an apology to the many correspondents whose contributions were not included, although only two letters specifically addressed

garrisons abroad.”

¹⁷⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:286, (Mar 20, 1884), c. 361-2.

¹⁷⁵NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10081, f. 79-80, Carnarvon to Rosebery, May 15, 1884.

¹⁷⁶NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, A.C. Key to R.V. Hamilton, Jul 4, 1884.

the importance of protecting the fuel supply upon which the fleet depended.¹⁷⁷ As the debate on the state of the navy waned in mid-October, Stead chose to create a sequel set of articles, “The Truth About our Coaling Stations.” This series capitalized on the vulnerability of the Government to claims that it was deliberately concealing the Carnarvon Commission's reports to avoid necessary expenditure on fortifications and naval covering forces. “The Truth About the Navy” had described how “More than half of our coaling and telegraph stations are exposed to the destruction by the sudden descent of a hostile ship.”¹⁷⁸ The scale of defences that were contemplated envisioned a single ship or small raiding squadron that could loot coal and burn supplies before retreating, not a full-scale land and sea assault. The point was to prevent opportunistic attacks and force an enemy to undertake a large expedition that could be met by the battlefleet.

The new article set began with the strategic importance of coal to mercantile and naval operations. Britain's vulnerability had greatly increased because of the population's dependence on foreign sources of food and raw materials, while steam had made ships dependent upon regular refueling that did not apply to sailing ships. Britain had acquired an extensive chain of imperial coaling stations, but these were vulnerable to relatively minor attacks that could interrupt the movement of shipping and of naval cruisers on patrol. Protected dockyards at some stations were necessary to repair and maintain the vital mechanical systems that steamships depended on, particularly naval warships that could expect damage in combat. “The empire has outgrown its defences,” the article stated, but the real problem was that the report of the Carnarvon commission warning the

¹⁷⁷These two letters were Capt. Edmund H. Verney, R.N., “Weak Points in England's Defence;” and ‘B.,’ “Some Drastic Suggestions;” in “Letters about the Navy and its Coaling Stations,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6102 (Oct 1, 1884), 2.

¹⁷⁸‘One Who Knows the Facts,’ “The Truth About our Coaling Stations,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6116, (Oct 16, 1884), 5.

country about the deficiency had been deliberately “withheld lest the publication might alarm the public and awaken them to a sense of the fool's paradise in which they live.”¹⁷⁹ After a short period of suspense, a second article gave very detailed description of sixteen key naval stations that included the value of trade that passed by each station, their current defensive works and the best estimate for required defences. The article also gave specific recommendations for solving wider problems affecting imperial strategy, including expanding the Imperial telegraph network to ensure communications and improving cooperation with colonies in matters of defence. ‘One Who Knows’ concluded that an additional £1,000,000 was necessary for defending these stations, and urged the Admiralty to either fortify or abandon secondary stations rather than leaving them vulnerable to enterprising raiders.¹⁸⁰ These articles reaffirmed the conclusions of the previous “Truth About the Navy” pieces. The navy was characterized as insurance, and should be in the same proportion to the Merchant Marine as the French navy was to its merchant shipping — at least double the French navy.

The methods of the “Truth About our Coaling Stations” were very similar to “The Truth About the Navy” series. Newspapers were quoted extensively by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, with at least the pretence of impartiality. The *Daily News* took a partisan line, defending the record of the Liberal Government, while the *Times* hoped that the problem would “be energetically taken up and effectively supervised by all who can turn away from the party squabbles of the hour to matters of permanent national concern.”¹⁸¹ The

¹⁷⁹‘One Who Knows the Facts,’ “The Truth About our Coaling Stations,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1-3.

¹⁸⁰‘One Who Knows the Facts,’ “The Truth About our Coaling Stations – II.” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6117 (Oct 17, 1884), 1-5.

¹⁸¹“This Day's Papers: The Defence of Coaling Stations,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6118 (Oct 18, 1884), 11. The State of the Navy discourse in newspapers was also summarized in this issue, particularly the importance of commerce protection and the inefficiency of partisan civilian naval administration.

Pall Mall explicitly refuted the *Daily News*'s position that the Liberal Government had been responsibly ensuring naval sufficiency, arguing that it had buried the Carnarvon Commission's non-partisan report and consistently delayed and obstructed vital preparations.¹⁸² Political opposition to naval expenditure was vulnerable to being discredited by accusations of partisanship by navalist writers and editors. The reinvigoration of the public debate on coaling stations and imperial defence also renewed discussion of naval affairs. The *Engineer* reminded its readers about the lack of fast cruisers that were essential for commerce defence and recommended that a proportion of three British ships to two French be maintained.

The House of Lords considered the question of coaling stations in detail on November 13, 1884. The debate was hampered by the continued withholding of the Carnarvon Commission reports, although criticism of this secrecy was partly motivated by political partisanship. The Lords were largely in favour of increasing expenditure to fortify important coaling stations and improve the garrisons. Lord Northbrook demurred, arguing that there had been no undue delay in considering such an important question and claiming that the responsible authorities were providing their best estimate of the requirements of the service.¹⁸³ Northbrook was not denying that expenditure was necessary, only exculpating the Government from specific responsibility for the problem. Carnarvon took the opportunity to defend his Commission's work, which had "recently attracted a good deal of attention of the public."¹⁸⁴ He explained how his group had made several reports, and had even urged the issue in public in May 1883, with very little success. To Carnarvon, changing naval technology meant that additional infrastructure

¹⁸²"How Not to Do It," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6118 (Oct 18, 1884), 1.

¹⁸³UK, Lords, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Nov 13, 1884), 1549-54.

¹⁸⁴UK, Lords, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Nov 13, 1884), c. 1534-48.

was required to support the fleet, and the Commission's March 1884 recommendation, that £891,000 be spent on the fortification of coaling stations, had been the minimum necessary. Instead of accepting his proposals, the Treasury had responded with an arbitrary counter-proposal of £345,000 spread over an unspecified time period.

Carnarvon claimed to have “no wish to say a word to produce a panic,” but he rejoiced “that the Treasury have become so amenable to public criticism,” although he also noted the continued and misplaced optimism of government officials like Brassey.¹⁸⁵ In the debate, Northbrook admitted the core principle, that the defence of coaling stations against small-scale attacks was necessary to free the fleet for offensive operations, while any major attack would be met with mobile naval forces.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach focused on getting the Government to confirm that coaling stations would be given adequate Parliamentary time, which was promised early in the spring session.¹⁸⁶ In December, the Admiralty appointed a committee under Rear-Admiral Sir Hunt Grubbe to improve coaling facilities at naval ports, but their mandate did not include the defences of overseas coaling stations. The Government took minimal action, but the defences of coaling stations would not disappear as an objective of navalists. The 1885 Russian War Scare proved to be of some value for the state of British coaling stations. When the Admiralty received its share of the Vote of Credit, Lord Northbrook immediately transferred £200,000 to the War Office to fund the defences of coaling stations. This transfer was not acceptable procedure for Parliamentary finances, because it had not been approved by the House, but Northbrook was willing to bend the terms of the Vote of Credit in order to provide the comprehensive defence preparations

¹⁸⁵UK, Lords, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Nov 13, 1884), c. 1537, 1547.

¹⁸⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294, (Nov 17, 1884), 1854-5.

that a war would require.¹⁸⁷ This sum would not supply all the needs of coaling stations, but it was a substantial sum that began work at important locations, like Hong Kong, Aden and the Cape stations.

Infrastructure, particularly docks, had become a well-recognized component of practical naval strength by the 1890s, but this did not mean that British ports were suitably defended. Lord George Hamilton was forced to admit in Parliament that the promised dock at Bombay in India and another at Mauritius, both of which were urgently needed to provide the repair facilities for ironclads in the region, continued to be delayed due to a lack of funds.¹⁸⁸ Gibraltar was another place that was the subject of repeated questions, both in the defence of that port and the facilities available to maintain the Mediterranean fleet.¹⁸⁹ The commercial benefits of better facilities at Gibraltar were not neglected in arguments for improving the dock accommodation and coal storage. Critics like Carnarvon thought that the proposed dock sites were vulnerable to artillery fire from the mainland, but naval officers and some politicians emphasized that there was no truly secure place on the Rock, and naval power would have to shield the facilities.¹⁹⁰ General Sir Frederick Roberts suggested that instead of constructing Gibraltar's defences to defeat the "most formidable naval enemy," it would be better "to keep the works and armaments within limits proportionate to the danger to be apprehended, and the 'personnel' likely to

¹⁸⁷Parliamentary Paper, 1884-85 (311), "Report from the Select Committee on the Admiralty (expenditure and liabilities)", Aug 3, 1885.

¹⁸⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:338, (Jul 30, 1889), c. 1701-2; NMM, Fremantle Papers, FRE/138/C, Robinson to E.R. Fremantle, Jul 31, 1889.

¹⁸⁹For example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:336, (Jun 24, 1889), c. 533.

¹⁹⁰UK, Lords, *Hansard*, 3:341, (Feb 28, 1890), c. 1483-9; NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 15, 1890.

be available for manning the guns.”¹⁹¹ The navy versus army dichotomy, the 'blue-water' school against the 'fortifications' school, was not so distinct in practice.

In the 1890s, the strategy for the defence of coaling stations was solidly centered on blue-water forces, with only minor defences acceptable to naval officers and their allies. The First Naval Lord was intent on reducing expenditure on “fortification questions” except where ports were under the threat of torpedo attack, although Malta and Gibraltar were always exceptions.¹⁹² Spencer explained to Rosebery and Harcourt that “all these places [Home ports] are exposed to sudden Torpedo attack,” and that he had ordered boom defences to be prepared at Portsmouth with plans to do the same for other ports in mimicry of the French practice.¹⁹³ The solution that was being propounded in 1893 was the use of an active defence of torpedo-boat destroyers and stronger port defences of guns, booms and mines.¹⁹⁴ Fortifications had a role, but they were subordinate to naval forces and generally intended to force an attacker to increase the scale of their forces to the point that naval intervention would be successful.

Government Failure to Mitigate Navalist Demands, 1884–85

The *Pall Mall Gazette*'s “Truth About the Navy” and “Truth About Coaling Stations” article series presented a very credible picture of an aroused public opinion. Correspondence columns and newspaper excerpts were expertly deployed to create the impression of an overwhelming public consensus, partly because the existence of

¹⁹¹NMM, Fremantle Papers, FRE/138/C, Roberts to E.R. Fremantle, Jan 23, 1891.

¹⁹²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Sep 18, 1892.

¹⁹³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77397, folder 3, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Oct 3, 1893, also in BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46; NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10062, ff. 107-10, Spencer to Rosebery, Oct 3, 1893.

¹⁹⁴See T.A. Brassey, “Great Britain as a Sea Power,” *Nineteenth Century*, 34:197 (Jul 1893): 121-30.

alternate views were actively engaged rather than censored. Gladstone and his government were faced with a sustained agitation that defeated the administration's attempts to downplay and delay in the hope that the activism would die back naturally.

The navalist discourse was supported by continuing action on the part of Stead and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. An October 21 article provided a statement by “a very talented naval officer” discussing the deficiencies in flotilla craft, with particular emphasis on the inefficiency of their design in terms of speed, sea-keeping and fighting ability in comparison with their French counterparts.¹⁹⁵ Lord Henry Lennox criticized the honesty and integrity of the permanent officials and political administration of the navy in a letter to the *Times*, which was summarized in the *Pall Mall*, concluding that the Parliament appoint a Royal Commission with the intention of immediately voting on the necessary funds.¹⁹⁶ In response to criticism, Brassey defended the Government's naval policy in a speech to his constituents on October 21, which was given a full-page summary in the *Pall Mall*. His complex and nuanced arguments claimed that Britain possessed enough armoured ships compared to the most threatening plausible combination, France and Italy, and argued that it was simply not possible to support in peacetime the forces necessary to fully protect commerce in wartime. He defended the current administration's record while insisting that the Government would be responsive to public concerns; he claimed to “deprecate panic, for there is nothing to justify it,” and suggested panic expenditure would raise the burden of taxation without significantly improving the

¹⁹⁵“On the Small Vessels of our Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6120 (Oct 21, 1884), 1-2. He was particularly critical of what he perceived as the Admiralty's obsolete emphasis on sail power in warships.

¹⁹⁶“The Morning Papers: Letters to the Editor,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6120 (Oct 21, 1884), 6; “The Navy,” *Times*, 31270 (Oct 21, 1884), 8.

quality of the navy.¹⁹⁷ Where Liberal papers like the *Daily News* said that Brassey's speech would quiet the alarm, the *Pall Mall* claimed outright victory. Brassey's figures meshed with the essential facts given in "The Truth About the Navy," and the leading article on October 22 pointed out that Brassey effectively admitted that the navy was not superior to France in all respects — "Far less serious admissions have created a panic before now," it stated.¹⁹⁸ Newspaper excerpts were included from the *Times*, *Standard* and the liberal *Leeds Mercury* to support the *Pall Mall's* interpretation and undermine the included praise from the *Daily News*.¹⁹⁹ The back of 'official optimism' was largely broken by Brassey's inability to provide a credible picture of British naval strength using the same essential information that underpinned the initial "Truth About the Navy" case.

The professional advisers at the Admiralty were eager to take advantage of the state of public opinion in the wake of the controversy surrounding the "Truth About the Navy" articles. Admiral Cooper Key, the First Naval Lord, in his "Remarks on the Navy Estimates for 1885–86" argued that the supremacy of the navy should be "beyond question of comparison... I do not consider it is possible to maintain this supremacy with the amount now annually voted for the Navy...."²⁰⁰ The Admiralty Board did advise Northbrook to put off the statement on the navy until later in November because a programme of shipbuilding should not be rashly undertaken, recommending, with Northbrook's agreement, that coaling stations take priority.²⁰¹ Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Parliamentary Secretary at the Admiralty, explained to the Chancellor of the

¹⁹⁷“Sir Thomas Brassey on the Navy: an official defence and confession,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6121 (Oct 22, 1884), 6.

¹⁹⁸“The Official Admission at Last,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6121 (Oct 22, 1884), 1.

¹⁹⁹“The Morning Papers: The State of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6121 (Oct 22, 1884), 12.

²⁰⁰A.C. Key, “Remarks on the Navy Estimates for 1885-86,” Oct 23, 1884 in *British Naval Documents*, 607-9.

²⁰¹NA, Northbrook Papers, PRO/30/29/140 f. 74, Oct 23, 1884, to Northbrook; response quoted in Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 122.

Exchequer that there was “no sympathy at the Board of Admiralty with the present *scare*,” but that the navy’s margin of superiority had become uncomfortably small and between £500,000–1,000,000 was needed to remedy the situation.²⁰² Campbell-Bannerman predicted that the Conservative opposition would insist on strengthening the navy and anticipated that even the ‘Radical Economists’ would support this measure. Conservative MPs pressed the Government in question period for information about the state of the navy, specifically on aspects of naval power emphasised during the *scare*.²⁰³ Brassey did not answer requests to appoint a Royal Commission or Select Committee to inquire into the state of the navy. With Brassey unwilling to give any indication of the Government’s intentions, Sir Walter B. Barttelot put the same question to Gladstone. Gladstone evaded, claiming that he was kept plenty busy without meddling in departmental affairs, and Barttelot moved on to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who finally agreed to provide the information.²⁰⁴ The state of the navy was a good avenue of attack for Conservative critics, because it had enough professional support to have the facade of non-partisanship.

Gladstone was firmly opposed to increasing what he believed to be the already exorbitant sums spent on naval defences, based largely on his personal financial principles. After discussing coaling stations and fast cruisers for the navy in a Cabinet meeting on October 31, Gladstone set himself solidly against any increase in defence expenditure.²⁰⁵ Brassey, as Civil Lord, was caught in the middle, explaining to Childers that “I have had no light task this week in reconciling the statesmanlike objections of my

²⁰²Reported in *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Vol II, 698-700.

²⁰³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Oct 30, 1884), c. 516.

²⁰⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Oct 30, 1884), c. 538-9.

²⁰⁵BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43913, ff. 45-6, Cabinet notes, Oct 31, 1884.

chief to increased expenditure on ironclads with the demands of his Naval advisers, who are doubtless subject to an almost intolerable pressure from the Naval profession” that included the near-resignation of Lord Alcester.²⁰⁶ The Admiralty programme would involve an increase to the Navy Estimates, but Brassey opined that the House of Commons would find it more appealing because it “throws more work on the contract vote, and is more in harmony with the report of our own departmental committee.”

There was a growing division within the Liberal Party in reaction to Gladstone's intransigence, as even hardcore Radicals started to criticize their Chief. Henry Labouchere, a Radical Liberal who was not part of the Cabinet, pushed Gladstone for a government commitment to make the “promised statement with regard to any steps intended to be taken in order to secure the efficiency of the Navy and the security of our coaling stations abroad?”²⁰⁷ Gladstone challenged Labouchere if he thought that the Franchise Bill should be postponed to accommodate the navy; Labouchere backed down and accepted Gladstone's suggestion that a statement on the navy could be made after the Franchise Bill was concluded. Sir Donald Currie expressed his intention to table a resolution on “the state of the Navy, and the condition of our Eastern and Colonial Defences and Coaling Stations” at the earliest opportunity.

From political sources, Gladstone was getting a more optimistic interpretation. Campbell-Bannerman and Childers provided a comparison of the tonnage of British and foreign ships that concluded that Britain had 342,000 tons of armoured ships against 300,000 French, Italian and Russian. By the end of 1887 this would close to 438,000 against 423,000 tons and without new additions the totals in 1888 would be 432,000 to

²⁰⁶*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 169, Brassey to H.C.E. Childers, Nov 1884.

²⁰⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Nov 4, 1884), c. 905-6.

495,000. Childers informed Gladstone that it was improbable that Britain would not add new ships to the fleet by 1888 and that the worst-case scenario was France, Russia, Germany and Austria with 460,000 combined tons against Britain and Italy with 541,000. Childers believed the only deficiencies were in torpedo boats and the provision of steel for the British ordnance industry.²⁰⁸ The Cabinet met on November 11 and discussed a supplementary vote of several hundred thousand pounds.²⁰⁹ Gladstone's Ministry appears to have believed that a small increase would satisfy the Admiralty and quiet the agitation. Perhaps it would have met the Admiralty demands, which had been ground down through the usual bureaucratic process, but it was insufficient to quiet the public agitation. Gladstone proposed that a statement on the navy be made after the financial votes, but Northbrook pressed for a full Cabinet meeting to discuss the issue as soon as possible.

Parliamentary efforts to get a government statement on the navy were met with continual delay. W.H. Smith pressed Gladstone to devote a day of Parliament's time to discuss the navy question, preferably after the Government introduced a Supplementary Navy Estimate that the House could debate in concrete terms. Gladstone refused to promise a Supplementary Estimate, even though one was being considered by the Cabinet, but committed to making an official statement on November 24.²¹⁰ Meanwhile, Gladstone and the Cabinet had decided to postpone the statement on the navy because it was taking longer than anticipated to produce the Government programme of works.²¹¹

²⁰⁸*Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers*, vol 2, 168-9, Childers to W.E. Gladstone, Nov 7, 1884.

²⁰⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44645, f. 198, Cabinet Notes, Nov 11, 1884. Also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²¹⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293, (Nov 13, 1884), c. 1585.

²¹¹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44645, f. 222, Cabinet Notes, Nov 20, 1884, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

Nevertheless, the promise of a comprehensive official statement did forestall further questions on the state of the navy for the last week of November.

The Liberal Government under Gladstone relied on tactics of delay and prevarication to avoid making concrete commitments to increase naval expenditure, but these tactics were not effective when the core of the navalist agitation was located outside of Parliament. The issue was not primarily a partisan debate, but a patriotic one. *Stead* and the *Pall Mall* refused to be placated or distracted, and maintained a regular stream of information that constantly reinvigorated the 1884 Navy Scare. When the Government tried to placate public fears, these efforts were rebuffed by a newspaper press that was being fed concrete information from expert naval sources. The New Journalism helped to make the press more independent of partisan financing, and this gave newspapers the ability to act independently in pursuit of their own patriotic agenda. The *Pall Mall's* success in overwhelming 'official optimism' was based on the ability to collect a mass of information from disparate correspondents and fellow newspapers to create a credible portrayal of pro-navy public opinion that could challenge official assertions about the primacy of retrenchment-oriented policy.

Synthesizing Opinion in Monthly Magazines, 1884–85

Monthly magazines intended for educated, civilian audiences played a key role in collecting and systematizing public awareness of the 1884 Navy Scare. The core movement of navalism was contained in service periodicals, intended for largely professional or special interest readerships, and the 1884 Navy Scare occurred when these discourses spilled over into the mainstream daily and weekly newspapers. Monthly

magazines, such as *The Contemporary Review*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *The National Review*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Fortnightly Review*, had limited ability to respond to current events, but this delay also enabled these publications to present more thorough and systematic analyses of ongoing issues. These publications offered detailed analysis of a wide range of pressing social, political, economic and cultural issues, and were aimed at a primarily educated civilian audience — naval officers certainly read these journals but they were not the main readership. “The Truth About the Navy” debate led to a burst of articles in November 1884 that were written by key political figures of the agitation, including W.H. Smith, E.J. Reed and H.O. Arnold-Forster. After the Government had conceded defeat and presented the Northbrook programme in December, monthly magazines in 1885 incorporated these developments in retrospective articles that, in addition to restating the essential alarmist case, considered the overall role and value of public opinion to naval affairs. The monthly press provided a valuable service to the navalist cause by blending current events with more in-depth historical information, often with the explicit intention of encouraging future public engagement with the state of the navy.

Reed used the forum of the *Contemporary Review* to clearly present his arguments in favour of armoured cruisers instead of the unarmoured *Esmerelda* type, which were being promoted by the armaments manufacturer Lord Armstrong.²¹² Reed argued that unarmoured ships were incredibly vulnerable to shell-firing ordnance, and that it was a waste of public money to purchase cheaper ships that would be totally unfit

²¹²For excerpts of this extensive debate, see “Sir William Armstrong on the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6103 (Oct 1, 1884), 10; “Occasional Notes,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6119 (Oct 20, 1884), 3; E.J. Reed, “Correspondence: The Needs of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6120 (Oct 21, 1884), 2; “The Morning Papers: Letters to the Editor,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 40:6120 (Oct 21, 1884), 6.

to fight; he recommended a fast, 20-knot armoured cruiser that would be capable of “sweeping the seas” of unarmoured commerce raiders.²¹³ After some politicians had used the debate over warship design to justify delay in naval spending, Reed took the opportunity to clearly state that he did not see “the sense of refusing to build ships, and thus abandoning altogether the national defence, because these differences of view exist.”²¹⁴ In this case, even Reed with his fixation on design questions recognized that this had to be kept separate from the overriding question of total naval expenditure.

W.H. Smith was another well-known politician and navalist to write a lengthy article, in this case for *The National Review*. Smith avoided technical questions, preferring a strategic discussion on the strength of each British fleet measured against the three-power standard adopted by Hugh Childers in 1874. Smith argued that the navy was not sufficient in relation to its wartime duties, particularly because the blockade involved an indeterminate but assuredly large force. He anticipated that modern economies would be less resilient against the wartime disruption of trade, especially given Britain's dependence on imports, and asserted that wars were now happening too quickly for preparations to be made after a conflict began. Smith implicitly challenged the Admiralty or the Government to correct navalist commentators and assure the public that the state of the navy was adequate. To the inevitable argument that open discussion would provide valuable information to rivals, Smith explained that “our weakness and our strength are better known to public men who have the direction of affairs abroad, than they are

²¹³E.J. Reed, “The British Navy,” *Contemporary Review*, 46 (Nov 1884), 629. Unarmoured ships were mostly useful for peacetime imperial policing. He suggested that ironclads could provide effective convoy escorts if they were more numerous.

²¹⁴E.J. Reed, “The British Navy,” *Contemporary Review*, 46 (Nov 1884), 632.

probably to the members of our own Government” outside the military departments.²¹⁵

Like Reed, Smith had personal experience with the administration of the Admiralty, and this provided important credibility for convincing readers of the broad truths emerging from “The Truth About the Navy.”

H.O. Arnold-Forster's provocatively titled “The People of England *versus* Their Naval Officials” in *The Nineteenth Century* was the most significant of the three main November articles. After the actions of the *Pall Mall Gazette* had invigorated public interest, Arnold-Forster now asserted that the fact of naval inadequacy was “uncontradicted and unchallenged,” while expressing both awe and despair “that all this galaxy of talent [in the Admiralty and Government] is about to be galvanised into activity simply and solely by the action of a penny newspaper.”²¹⁶ Instead of examining the existing state of the navy, like Reed and Smith, Arnold-Forster examined in detail the various arguments that had been made by politicians (like Northbrook and Smith), professional experts (through personal contact), scientific authorities (Armstrong and Reed) and unprofessional opinion of concerned citizens — like Reed, he did not think disagreement over details justified delay. A Vote covering total naval spending was necessary, Arnold-Forster explained, but it was also important to understand how the navy had been allowed to decline to a perilous one-power standard of strength. He laid responsibility on the inefficiency of the Admiralty administration, and the unwillingness of officials to be truthful about the requirements of national defence. Arnold-Forster placed his faith in the patriotic navalism of the public to support necessary expenditure, but regarding “the talk about panic, there need be no alarm on that score” as long as

²¹⁵W.H. Smith, “The Navy; Its Duties and Capacity,” *The National Review*, 4:21 (Nov 1884), 294.

²¹⁶H.O. Arnold-Forster, “The People of England *versus* Their Naval Officials,” *Nineteenth Century*, 16:93 (Nov 1884), 702, 704.

determined action was taken to set the 'national insurance' on a proper footing.²¹⁷ This article represented the shift in public opinion towards concerns about the efficiency and responsibility of the administration of the navy, which became important in subsequent discourses that evaluated the success of 'panic' expenditure in 1884–5.

The convictions of navalism continued to be presented in monthly magazines in 1885, ensuring that the discourse was refreshed before the 1885 Russian War Scare provided external proof of navalist accusations. The *Quarterly Review's* contribution insisted that public concerns were genuine, and that “We refuse to bandy words with those who have a cant phrase at hand for every question, who call the awakening to neglected danger a *scare*, and fear of the consequences of sloth and blindness a *panic*.”²¹⁸ The scare had been necessary “to evoke that external pressure, without which Sir Thomas Brassey plainly declared nothing is done by the Admiralty or by Parliament.”²¹⁹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* strongly criticized the mismanagement of the Liberal Government, suggesting that while panics were a discredit to the nation's dignity, the temporary surge in public interest was a valuable opportunity to set the first line of national defence in order, considering that coast and inland defences were even worse.²²⁰

The problems of civilian naval management took a significant share in the discussion. Admiral R.S. Robinson's article in *The Nineteenth Century* blamed naval deficiencies on defective Admiralty administration because it “excludes from the duty and responsibility of the Admiralty such essential elements of naval power” as naval

²¹⁷ Arnold-Forster, “The People of England *versus* Their Naval Officials,” 713.

²¹⁸ “The Navy and the Empire,” *Quarterly Review*, 159:317 (Jan 1885), 202.

²¹⁹ “The Navy and the Empire,” *Quarterly Review*, 159:317 (Jan 1885), 212-3.

²²⁰ “National Insurance,” *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 137:832 (Feb 1885), 285.

ordnance and port defences.²²¹ The First Lord of the Admiralty was a political appointee who need not have any knowledge or experience of naval affairs and had the power to completely overrule his professional subordinates. The historian C.I. Hamilton makes the useful point that the First Lord possessed this power for at least the nineteenth century, if not earlier, but it had been concealed by acting in the name of the Board until the 1869 Childers' Reforms made it explicit.²²² Robinson wanted transparency and capability at the Admiralty. To prevent future scares, he suggested,

Select your Minister of Marine for his special knowledge of and abilities for the conduct of the duties confided in him. Make a proper division of the technical heads of Admiralty administration; bring home by name and publicity to all who direct these things individual and personal responsibility; be careful above all things that a system of clear, intelligible, and accurate account of the expenditure of the taxpayers' money shines clearly through the official acts and official proposals; bring the knowledge of what you do know to bear... on what you do not know, and you will have gone a long way to have an efficient navy, and to relegate into obscurity of the past the not ill-founded scares and panics so hateful to the official mind and so unworthy of the national greatness.²²³

Robinson argued that the professional heads of the services should be personally responsible to Parliament by signing their own names to a statement of confidence in the state of the navy.

The *Quarterly Review* showcased the use of historical research to understand the present situation, specifically how the legacy of Britain's naval supremacy in the nineteenth century permitted dramatic commercial and imperial expansion. The issue of national defence was more than the prevention of invasion, it was a complex Imperial issue united by the dependence on the Royal Navy. British commercial and imperial growth in the nineteenth century had increased national risks, but the navy had not grown

²²¹Robert Spencer Robinson, "The Navy and the Admiralty," *Nineteenth Century*, 17:95 (Jan 1885), 191.

²²²C.I. Hamilton, *Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 153-4.

²²³R.S. Robinson, "The Navy and the Admiralty," *Nineteenth Century*, 17:95 (Jan 1885), 200.

with the boom in trade. Enemy commerce raiders would be more effective and the blockade of the enemy more difficult. The *Quarterly* agreed with Admiral P.H. Colomb that starvation, rather than invasion, was the real danger to the country. *Blackwood's* took the commercial expansion of the nineteenth century and reconceptualised the navy in terms of “National Insurance,” the title of its article. It emphasized the rapidity of modern wars, and since Continental powers were focused on rapid mobilization and offensive action it was imperative that the Royal Navy be able to immediately launch an offensive blockade to protect British trade from commerce raiders.

For the *Quarterly*, the only effective solution was “a *strategic* system of defence, embracing the whole Empire, and all the Ocean pathways by which its commerce is maintained.”²²⁴ The article toyed with the idea of a navy strong enough to meet any probable combination of enemies, but modestly judged that the standard both Richard Cobden and French Emperor Napoleon III had applied, a navy double the size of France's, was suitable. French naval expansion threatened this standard, but the *Quarterly* explained that it was in response to German and Italian efforts and not intended for aggression against Britain.²²⁵ In every aspect of naval affairs Britain's position had worsened. Active personnel had declined to 59,250 compared with 66,000 in France plus a much larger reserve, France was four years ahead in ordnance production, and Britain had the worst ratio of torpedo boats to miles of coastline among any of the European Powers. Admiral Robinson's article concluded that the Navy Estimates were only a waste of money if the result was anything less than an efficient and sufficient navy, since Britain's enormous trade would be at the mercy of any enemy.

²²⁴“The Navy and the Empire,” *Quarterly Review*, 159:317 (Jan 1885), 206.

²²⁵“The Navy and the Empire,” *Quarterly Review*, 159:317 (Jan 1885), 215.

The *Quarterly Review* estimated £4,000,000 was necessary for shipbuilding, not the £3,000,000 over five years that had been proposed. Past experience showed that panic expenditure was inevitably spent in repairing pre-existing deficiencies not in improving the navy, leaving the current measure feeling less than adequate. *Blackwood's* was even more extreme, laying out a comprehensive and substantial plan, including £4–5,000,000 for shipbuilding above the normal Estimates, almost £3,000,000 for fortifications and ordnance at home ports, £3,000,000 for minefields and defences for mercantile ports, £3,000,000 to defend coaling stations and imperial ports against raids, and a combined £5,000,000 to develop the army's expeditionary force, auxiliary troops and training facilities. The proposals amounted to at least £19,000,000, which *Blackwood's* defended as far less than the cost of losing a war. To soften the blow, the article pointed out that the money could be produced from sums earmarked for reducing the National Debt and that Liberals could comfort themselves with the knowledge that the money would be spent in the United Kingdom, boosting the economy.²²⁶

Robinson was equally uncertain about the Northbrook programme itself. He noted the inconsistency between the descriptions presented to the Lords and Commons; the latter emphasized contract work with incentives for rapid completion, which Robinson favoured over the delay caused by design alterations. The programme's additional battleships were “little better than a sham and a delusion” because dockyard slips would not have been left empty in any case.²²⁷ Robinson echoed Edward Hamilton's logic, that “if these measures are necessary now, the Government has been guilty of incompetence of the most dangerous kind, a blind ignorance of what is required to constitute the

²²⁶“National Insurance,” *Blackwood's*, 137:832, (Feb 1885), 289-96.

²²⁷R.S. Robinson, “The Navy and the Admiralty,” *Nineteenth Century*, 17:95 (Jan 1885), 192-3.

material of a navy.”²²⁸ If the money was needed, it was because the political leadership at the Admiralty had insisted on the false supremacy of the navy against all expert advice and opinion. Robinson promised that all these recriminations would be abandoned if the navy was adequately treated and brought to the necessary standard of strength.

Robinson noted that important qualitative questions were not settled with the new programme. He explained to readers that a “number of ships do not constitute a fleet, and that two or three fleets are not a navy,” because an effective combat fleet required a range of armoured and unarmoured ships, flotilla craft, dry docks, coaling stations and harbours, among others, that numerical comparisons neglected.²²⁹ He recommended the strengthening of the navy's educational facilities, like the RUSI and Institution of Naval Architects, to meet the intellectual and planning demands of modern war. Robinson suggested that experiments would settle vexing design questions, such as the relative value of armour and watertight compartments, that would boost naval confidence in their ships; if this prevented greater losses in wartime it would more than justify the expense.

These syntheses confirm the emphasis on the strategic requirements of commerce defence, and the new type of argument that was convincing mainstream British society that naval expenditure was a national necessity. The size of British mercantile commerce was an almost limitless source of pro-navy argument, because it dwarfed all other powers and extended across the entire globe. These articles collectively justified the 1884 Navy Scare as a valuable tool in raising the necessary public agitation to force the Government's policy decisions.

²²⁸R.S. Robinson, “The Navy and the Admiralty,” *Nineteenth Century*, 17:95 (Jan 1885), 196-7.

²²⁹R.S. Robinson, “The Navy and the Admiralty,” *Nineteenth Century*, 17:95 (Jan 1885), 185-6.

Chapter 4 — Lord Randolph Churchill and the Campaign for Economy, 1885–87

I maintain that our naval defences are, and for a considerable time past have been, totally inadequate to our requirements; that in every branch of the service there are grave defects which may any day involve most serious dangers. I maintain that these defects are known, and have long been known, to the Admiralty, and that the Admiralty have refused or neglected to remedy them.... Under these circumstances, I say that it is not too much to demand that our whole system of Admiralty organisation should be remodelled in order that the recurrence of such things should be made impossible....¹

H.O. Arnold-Forster, “England or the Admiralty?,” *Nineteenth Century*, July 1885.

Navalists like Arnold-Forster were not placated by the Northbrook shipbuilding programme, and the war scare with Russia in the spring of 1885 confirmed their fears that the navy was inadequate to perform its duties. Agitators were the first to recognize that panic expenditure was a poor replacement, however necessary at the present moment, for regular and consistent naval investment, which they also insisted would be more economical than last-minute remedies. Arnold-Forster’s article was part of a refocusing of the navalist agitation towards an emphasis on administrative reform, in an effort to prevent future deficiencies and future scares, and thus provide public confidence as well as efficient expenditure. The events of 1885–87 have not been particularly notable in naval histories, with the creation of the NID in January 1887 taking the lion’s share of the attention. This chapter will argue that navalism underwent tremendous development in

¹H.O. Arnold-Forster, “England or the Admiralty?” *Nineteenth Century*, 18:101 (July 1885), 160-76.

this period as the lessons of the ‘Truth About the Navy’ were digested by activists and refocused on the reform of naval administration that produced significant results and shaped the structure of the 1889 NDA. The development of navalism sheds new light on the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill in December 1886, ostensibly over the need for economy in defence expenditure, which clearly highlighted the changing public perceptions of the economy-security dichotomy.

The importance of the mid-1880s to the history of the British Empire is well recognized. The 1885 Berlin Conference initiated a new wave of imperial expansion, and put greater pressure on Britain to formalize its commercial interests into political units. The Conservative administration of Lord Salisbury recreated the CDC in the aftermath of the 1885 Russian War Scare, discussed in the last the chapter. Great Power alignments intensified, with Salisbury signing a series of Mediterranean Agreements in 1887 with the Triple Alliance to counter the Franco-Russian alignment and its emphasis on contesting the Mediterranean.² British diplomatic isolation rested on supreme naval power, and naval spending left much to be desired. Other European countries were experiencing their own crises of confidence. A war scare flared up in France over a possible conflict with the Triple Alliance, which appears to have occupied more of Lord Rosebery’s thoughts in 1887 than navalism in England.³ The natural result of these events was a growth in French naval expenditure that in turn prompted a response in Britain. There were scares in Italy as well, which suited the political aims of Crispi and Bismarck, the foreign ministers of Italy and Germany, who sought to turn the Mediterranean Agreements into a

²C.J. Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886-1896*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 34.

³For example, see NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10087, ff. 60-3, T.H. Villiers to Rosebery, Mar 15, 1887. The French Mediterranean fleet increased to fourteen battleships in 1888 and twenty in 1891.

closer alliance.⁴ Diplomatic history treats these events as ‘manufactured’ by politicians, but they were equally complex events that deserve their own detailed analysis.

Domestically, the Imperial Federation League was founded in 1884, with W.E. Forster, Arnold-Forster’s adoptive father, as the first President; Rosebery was the Chairman of the English branch from 1885–92. Sir John Colomb advocated the cause at the RUSI in 1886, arguing that the Empire had been built primarily by trade, industry and settlement, not territorial conquest, and it was this shared interest in commercial and economic development that justified greater political unity. Colomb emphasized the importance of the navy, not just to protect Britain, but to defend the worldwide web of trade routes, resources and communications that every component of the Empire relied upon, pressing home that, “The necessary naval and military arrangements between the several parts of the same Empire to secure common safety for the common interests must be made and *paid for* in peace....”⁵ The Prince of Wales attended the lecture, and the Duke of Cambridge supported the belief that the best way to ensure peace was to end the temptation of a vulnerable and ill-defended Empire. The League asked for a Royal Commission to pursue imperial unity, which they saw as an inevitable evolution, and were able to inspire the 1887 Colonial Conference.⁶ The Colonial Conference initiated a new era of closer relations between the settlement colonies and the metropole, although the only material success for naval affairs was the Imperial Defence Act (IDA) whereby Britain supplied ships for a Pacific squadron that the Australian colonies would support.⁷

⁴Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 26-7.

⁵Captain J.C.R. Colomb, “Imperial Federation: Naval and Military,” pamphlet of the RUSI lecture of May 31, 1886. He had made very similar arguments in *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain* in 1880.

⁶Imperial Federation League, “The Record of the Past and the Promise of the Future,” 1886 in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 2510-7.

⁷“Correspondence in Preparation for the First Colonial Conference together with a Report of the Conference,” Nov 25, 1886–Jul 1887 in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, IV, 2810-

Popular naval periodicals became a regular feature in the aftermath of the 1884 Navy Scare, both contributing to and demonstrating the popularity of defence questions. The *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine* was founded just before the 1884 Navy Scare and ceased publication during the next naval scare, suggesting that while specialty periodicals could benefit financially from moments of public engagement they could not exist solely because of moments of public uproar.⁸ Lord Brassey founded his famous *Naval Annual* in 1886, about which retired Staff-Surgeon James C. Dickenson said “it is impossible to speak too highly.”⁹ The *Annual* collected original pieces from leading writers in naval theory and policy and remains a staple for modern naval historians. Brassey was a Liberal politician and a personal friend of Gladstone, who spent time on Brassey’s yacht *Sunbeam*.¹⁰ Public interest would be fed by the regular publication of news and opinion about naval affairs, and as these journals increased in number and reputation they gained more credibility as the representatives of public opinion. This chapter will show the growing regularization of navalist discussion, particularly through the commercialization of a public naval discourse conducted by a broad range of newspapers and periodicals. Important figures became directly involved in these efforts to shape public opinion, writing expert articles to inform the country. Periodicals preferred articles written by retired officers or officers who were serving on half-pay and not restricted by the Queen’s Regulations from speaking publicly.

This chapter will re-examine the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill in December 1886 in light of a greater appreciation for the depth and vigour of popular

32.

⁸The monthly *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine* sold for 6d, and used primarily woodcuts.

⁹James C. Dickenson, “The British Navy,” *United Service Magazine*, NS 1 (Jul 1888), 345.

¹⁰These meetings are recorded in *Diaries of William Gladstone*, but without details of the discussion. Aug 12, 14, 18, Oct 6, 8 1885; Jun 10, 1886.

navalism coming out of the 1884 Navy Scare. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill was intent on retrenchment in defense spending, particularly given his criticisms of the 1885 Vote of Credit, and impulsively offered his resignation when he was unable to force through sufficient economy. Churchill probably did not really intend to resign, but Salisbury was quick to seize the opportunity to force Churchill to stand on unpopular ground while constraining his ability to broaden cause to include foreign and Irish policy; Salisbury used the popularity of defence expenditure to crush an irritating colleague. As Churchill languished in the political wilderness, his views on naval expenditure quickly adapted to the new climate. After serving on the Parliamentary committee on the Estimates in 1887 he shifted to support professionalization as the necessary method of reforming army and navy administration, particularly in getting professional military advisers at the War Office.¹¹ When the Hartington Commission reported in 1890, Churchill dissented and advocated the more extreme measures of a single Defence Minister with each service represented by a single professional head chosen for a five-year term and given a seat in Cabinet. Churchill's progression shows the penetration of navalist arguments that helped to focus government efforts on reforming the administration of the Admiralty, which did allow for the temporary decrease of the Navy Estimates in 1888–89.

Simultaneous to Churchill's resignation, the Admiralty was creating the NID. This is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, but the decision was rooted in the experience of the 1885 manoeuvres, which supported the claims made by Beresford, backed by the press, for a larger and more responsible organization to replace the FIC. Shawn Grimes' work on naval war planning pays justifiable attention to the work of the

¹¹Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 334-6.

NID, which was doing its best to fill the role of a naval war staff through its mobilization plans and the strategic exercises that were conducted in what became annual naval manoeuvres.¹² Members of the NID were in close contact with the important intellectual work of naval historians, who deserve more credit for their contributions to naval strategic thought. Beresford's political significance is clearly revealed in this period, both for his professional acclaim after 1882 and his close connections with leading politicians and London society.¹³ This chapter emphasizes the role of the wider circle of professional naval officers who were increasingly engaging directly with the press.

The period between the Russian War Scare and Beresford's resignation in January 1888 set the stage for the powerful 1888 Navy Scare. To Marder, the reduction of naval construction expenditure in 1886–88, coupled with renewed French naval efforts and international tension meant that “the navy panic of 1888 was inevitable.”¹⁴ Yet it clearly took several years before the conditions were ripe for another scare. In his memoirs, Beresford stated that he began promoting a £20,000,000 construction programme after the 1885 war scare, but this claim was mainly self-aggrandizement.¹⁵ This period was critically important for entrenching blue-water strategic ideas in the British public, which Roger Parkinson observes was essential for the NDA's emphasis on a sea-going ironclad battlefleet that could blockade French and Russian commerce raiders.¹⁶ The combination of imperial and naval interests further reinforced the emphasis on commerce defence as the core defence requirement. The discourse on economy engaged in its last death throes,

¹²Beresford gave his plans to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in October, 1886, at the same time that the Admiralty Board had made its decision to create the NID, Grimes, *Naval Strategy and War Planning*, 7-8.

¹³Mark Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 48-9.

¹⁴Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 123; John Beeler argues that British naval spending was consistently at a Two Power Standard for the 1880s, Beeler, *British Naval Policy*, 275-6.

¹⁵*Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, 338-40.

¹⁶Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 81-2.

but it would take the end of the Northbrook programme and new naval cutbacks to drive a new scare into action in 1888. The measures that were debated in 1888 and led to the decisive 1889 NDA were grounded in the developing discourse that prioritized the critique of naval administration in the 1885–87 public debates. There was no coalescence of navalists yet, but relationships were constructed and arguments developed in anticipation of favorable conditions.

Narrative of Events, 1885–87

The Liberal ministry under Gladstone was defeated, almost accidentally, on an Irish bill in July 1885, although the naval and war scares and events in Egypt had been pivotal in its fall, and was replaced by the first Salisbury administration. Lord Salisbury took office as Prime Minister, and he appointed Lord George Hamilton to be the First Lord of the Admiralty.¹⁷ The Conservative Ministry was not subjected to particularly severe opposition. Even Gladstone expressed his general agreement with Salisbury's foreign policy, such as in the Balkans, which also had the support of Russophobic Queen Victoria.¹⁸ The fall of the Liberal Government on the Irish Question presaged the dominance of the Irish question in the mid-1880s, overshadowing navalist commentary.

Before the Liberal Government fell from power, it had mobilized a squadron of ships in preparation for a conflict with Russia over the 1885 Penjdeh Crisis. Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby was given command of these ships as a Particular Service (Evolutionary) Squadron on May 28, 1885, with orders to take it to sea on June 11 and

¹⁷The formation of the Government was difficult, particularly because of Randolph Churchill's intrigues against Sir Stafford Northcote and because it would be a minority Government taking office six months before a General Election, see James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 174-91.

¹⁸NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10023, ff.121-2, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Dec 1, 1885.

conduct the first naval manoeuvres.¹⁹ The Press Association's Portsmouth correspondent disseminated a rumour that Hornby was given “sealed orders for a foreign station, so as to be prepared for any eventualities,” but the rumour is unverified.²⁰ To the *Saturday Review*, the creation of a Squadron of Evolutions under Hornby had put the navy to work with the materials at hand, “making experiments which may possibly afford some sort of guide for the future.”²¹ Since technology was in flux, the *Review* explained, “the Admiralty can always appeal to the doubts of officers, and the differences of opinion among experts, as an excuse for hesitating and delaying.”²² Interim speculation was a “waste of words” until the manoeuvres provided real data as a foundation for analysis. The *Review* was grateful for the “hot fit” of Gladstone that had led to the Squadron, the only outcome of the lavish preparations for war that had begun with the Russian crisis.

Northbrook hoped that Hornby would be able to come to some conclusions regarding a “scheme to be adopted suited to the new conditions of naval warfare, as regards the proportion of [auxiliary vessels] to [ironclads] and the different classes of vessels which should be supplied in order to meet the different demands.”²³ The tactical and strategic lessons proved difficult to extract from the results of the exercises, but activity alone was beneficial. As Sir Thomas Brassey explained to the public in a letter to the *Times*, these exercises were valuable for the professional development of young officers and should be an annual exercise, and this was in fact accomplished. Rear-Admiral Edmund R. Fremantle thought that it was a far better use of mobilized naval

¹⁹The tactical and strategic aspects of the manoeuvres are described in Matthew Allen, “The Origins, Conduct and Outcomes of the British Naval Exercises of 1885,” *Mariner’s Mirror* 91:3 (2005): 421-35.

²⁰“Sealed Orders for Admiral Hornby,” *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3759 (May 28, 1885), 3; also carried under the same title in *Dundee Courier & Argues and Northern Warder*, 9946, (May 28).

²¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1547 (Jun 20, 1885), 813-4.

²²“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1547 (Jun 20, 1885), 813.

²³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt3/6, private from Northbrook to G.P. Hornby, May 23, 1885; PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, G. Hamilton to G.P. Hornby, Jun 25, 1885, reply Jun 26.

forces than a public spectacle of a Spithead Review in terms of increasing naval efficiency.²⁴ The public effect of the naval manoeuvres was enhanced by the inclusion of newspaper correspondents on board ships, as well as follow-up articles analyzing the exercises and presenting summaries of the lessons learned to the nation.²⁵

Arnold-Forster, a primary architect of the 1884 Navy Scare, helped to set the stage for the evolution of navalist discourses in 1885–86. In the July 1885 *Nineteenth Century* article quoted at the beginning of the chapter, he delivered a scathing condemnation of the Admiralty and accused its officials of deliberate misconduct in ignoring public criticism. Arnold-Forster pointed out that Reed had calculated £6,000,000 was necessary for shipbuilding alone, while the Government's £5,000,000 included a myriad of other expenses. Coaling stations were unprotected, the China Squadron was weak compared to other Powers, and heavy ordnance and maintenance infrastructure were deficient. Panic expenditure was also wasteful and less cost-effective. After three months of preparation, the nation's best effort was a heterogeneous collection of ships without overwhelming quality or quantity. To Arnold-Forster, the criticisms of Admiralty policy were practically unanimous, and only opposed by the political officials, supporting his conclusion that the problem was civilian political rule after Childers' 1869 Admiralty reforms. Arnold-Forster suggested that "the navy must be represented before Parliament by a man to whom its efficiency is an absolute and primary condition."²⁶ Only after Parliament refused expenditure should demands be modified.

²⁴E.R. Fremantle, "Ironclads and Torpedo Flotillas," *Nineteenth Century*, 18:104 (Oct 1885), 657.

²⁵For example, see Thomas Brassey, "Notes on the Berehaven Operations," *Times*, 31502 (Jul 18, 1885), 5; T. Brassey, "Notes on the Berehaven Operations," *Times*, 31508 (Jul 25, 1885), 5-6.

²⁶Arnold-Forster, "England or the Admiralty?" *Nineteenth Century*, 18:101 (July 1885), 174.

Arnold-Forster was not alone in developing these criticisms. The Admiralty had erred in its accounts of the 1885 Vote of Credit, and had spent £3,700,000 instead of £2,800,000. The *Saturday Review* viewed this error as proof of a “shamefully lax” financial system at the Admiralty that reinforced the *Review*’s negative opinion of the questionable and contradictory nature of the Northbrook administration's public statements. After the scare, Northbrook claimed that the opportunity had been taken to accelerate a preconceived plan, but the *Review* reminded readers that Northbrook had declared the navy satisfactory before the scare began. Torpedo boats were one example of poor financial management, since money was spent fitting them out but not accounted for in the Estimates. The *Review* demanded action, not “a departmental or Parliamentary inquiry to show that the Admiralty is ill organized” since experience had proven the point.²⁷ The financial woes and poor budgeting continued after the change in government, including an additional £150,000 for ordnance.²⁸ The Liberal Government gained little credit for its measures to improve the navy because these were undertaken in a haphazard manner under duress, which was not acceptable for the formation of national policy.

Naval experts continued their normal agitation efforts, although these had limited effect because many navalist writers were seen as uncompromising alarmists who lacked sufficient credibility to convince civilian audiences. Regardless, men like Admiral Sir Thomas Symonds used both public and personal channels to promulgate their views. Symonds wrote to Lord George Hamilton on August 14 urging that a full Commission be appointed to investigate the state of the navy, including personnel, ships, armaments, dockyards, coaling stations and organization, and present a report when Parliament

²⁷“The Admiralty,” *Saturday Review*, 60:1551 (Jul 18, 1885), 70.

²⁸NA, War Office: W.H. Smith Papers, WO/110/1/443, WH Smith to Lord George Hamilton, Aug 10, 1885.

resumed after its prorogation. Symonds was in contact with other important naval officers, a notable one being Hornby who was fresh from his experience commanding the manoeuvres. A December 1885 letter from Symonds argued that the French superiority in ships, due to the British practice of concentrating battleship armour that left the bow and stern unprotected, meant that in wartime Britain could not move the large number of troops stationed in Egypt through the Mediterranean.²⁹ With only one side of this correspondence, it is difficult to know if Hornby was feeding Symonds information, or if Symonds was trying to convince him to join the navalist cause. Certainly British opinion was being drawn to the plausible threat posed by the Franco-Russian combination. *Blackwood's* argued that these alignments could not be ignored, since Britain's wealth was a temptation for aggression from other nations. Beneficent imperialism and an active foreign policy were necessary responses to foreign control over international markets.³⁰

By October, new successes gave a more promising outlook for the Admiralty administration. The launch of a fast cruiser was attributed by the *Saturday Review* to the effect of public opinion on the Admiralty, and was built in the remarkable time of one and a half years as well as showing the stabilization of Royal Navy cruiser designs.³¹ All was not perfect, since merchant ships, fitted out at great expense during the war scare, had been returned with the war fittings intact and the contracts left to lapse. The *Review* worried that these ships could be sold to Russia, but disagreed with a *Times* letter advocating keeping these vessels in naval commission since it believed the author was speaking for personal financial reasons due to the low freight rates. The wastage of money by poor Admiralty decisions “really suggests the idea that a permanent

²⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2, T. Symonds to G.P. Hornby, Dec 30, 1885.

³⁰“A French Lesson,” *Blackwood's*, 154:936 (Oct 1893), 574-86.

³¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 60:1562 (Oct 3, 1885), 436-7.

organization should be kept on foot for the renewal of scares at intervals. It is not a very dignified way of keeping the navy efficient, but it is better to do it that way than not at all.”³² Popular agitation was not the method of naval reform that officers, politicians or the public would have preferred, but it was the only effective means of creating the political will needed in order to provide essential financial resources.

The Government tried to address public and expert criticisms using the normal method of appointing committees. In spite of the pressure on Hamilton, the *Saturday Review* thought it unlikely that the departmental committee’s reports would be published, or that the Admiralty would make a public statement of policy. The subsequent delay was acceptable to the *Review* if Hamilton was gathering information and preparing a scheme of Admiralty reorganization, because neither rapid publication nor over-hasty and wasteful action was desirable. The Committee's mandate indicated the areas of immediate need, including dockyard expenditure, finance, and a departmental committee on reorganization. The core of the issue was poor accounting of the public money spent, and unacceptable waste. The *Review* suggested that a clear statement of Admiralty actions regarding merchant auxiliary cruisers, discussed the previous month, would show the defects very clearly — things bought dearly at the last minute and then disposed of quickly at a fraction of the value.³³ For the money spent, there must be more useful work the ships could do, rather than the false economies of paper accounting. The Conservatives had internal issues that revealed ongoing shortcomings. In October Lord George Hamilton was unable to assist W.H. Smith, who requested naval boats for the Nile. Hamilton told him that while a substantial sum had been spent on the 54 new

³²“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 60:1562 (Oct 3, 1885), 437.

³³“Admiralty Reorganization,” *Saturday Review*, 60:1567 (Nov 7, 1885), 598-9.

torpedo boats to advance the work, there were not yet enough available for the navy's needs, let alone the army.³⁴ He blamed the previous Government for cutting down the navy to the point that substantial work was necessary to supply Britain's requirements.

Lord George Hamilton worked hard in the summer of 1885 to address concerns over the security of British ports. To keep costs down, he favoured using Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers (RNAV) to man local defences, telling the Liverpool branch in July that a capitation grant would be given to increase efficiency.³⁵ Naval officers were directed at the same time to submit defence plans for every port and navigable river that would include the use of Volunteer forces.³⁶ While the RNAV were eventually abolished due to criticisms that they redirected resources away from the sea-going fleet, naval officers were not opposed to the existence of volunteers. Bridge requested that Thomas Gibson Bowles, the owner of *Vanity Fair*, use his journal to encourage the inclusion of yachters in a proper system of coast and harbour defence that would utilize an “offensive defensive system” of mobile forces, rather than passive fortifications.³⁷

W.T. Stead was preoccupied with new journalistic crusades, most notably his revelation of the procurement of children, but still found time to engage with naval issues. Stead promoted the Russian cause during the 1885 war scare, through his intimate contact with Madame Novikoff. By November Brett was warning Rosebery that Stead had simply become the cipher for Russian interests expressed through Madame Novikoff.³⁸ But Stead had not entirely moved on from naval affairs. In a delightfully sly

³⁴NA, W.H. Smith Papers, WO/110/2/715. G. Hamilton to W.H. Smith. Oct 10, 1885.

³⁵“Lord G. Hamilton on the Navy,” *Times*, 31506, (Jul 23, 1885), 7.

³⁶NA, W.H. Smith Papers, WO/110/1, *Defence of Ports*, memorandum to Lord George Hamilton, Jul 23, 1885.

³⁷Lonard Edwin Naylor, *The Irrepressible Victorian: The story of Thomas Gibson Bowles, journalist, parliamentarian and founder editor of the original Vanity Fair*, (London: Macdonald, 1965), 116.

³⁸NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10006, ff. 50, 52-3. R. Brett to Rosebery enclosing W.T. Stead to R. Brett.

move he sent Gladstone an article on church reform, a subject in which Gladstone was unquestionably interested, but conveniently on the back was part of Admiral Robinson's article "The Government and the Navy."³⁹ Stead did not abandon the navalist movement, but neither did he take on a leadership role over the continuing agitation.

After the defeat of Salisbury's Ministry in January, Gladstone led a second Administration from February to July, but, as Lewis Harcourt wrote, "Never were the victors less triumphant or the vanquished less depressed."⁴⁰ The lingering impact of the 1884 scare was felt when the new Ministry was forming, and Gladstone told W.V. Harcourt that the three appointments demanding the most care were the War Office, the Chancellorship, and the Admiralty, and he singled out the Admiralty as requiring a special, but unstated, qualification.⁴¹ It took until February 9 to appoint the Marquess of Ripon as First Lord of the Admiralty. The Service did not fear the return of a Liberal Administration, W. Codrington observing to Admiral Hornby that the "Administration was doomed if he [Lord George Hamilton] had remained for two years as he was going."⁴² Neither party had a particularly good reputation among informed naval officers.

The new Liberal Government under Gladstone was faced with the daunting task of assuming the obligation of presenting the annual Estimates that had been largely prepared under Salisbury's administration. The Liberal Party was as constrained by the Northbrook programme's guarantees over naval spending as the Conservative Party had been. This did not prevent an internal party crisis from developing as certain government

Mar 6, 1886.

³⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, ff. 358-60, Stead to Gladstone, Nov 22, 1885.

⁴⁰*Papers of the Red Earl*, 7, excerpt from Lewis Harcourt's journal, Jan 27, 1886.

⁴¹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 8, Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Jan 31, 1886, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

⁴²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, W. Codrington to GP Hornby, Feb 5, 1886.

ministers dug in their heels over the Army and Navy Estimates, which showed minor increases over the previous year. Others, particularly W.V. Harcourt backed by Gladstone, sought to reverse the Northbrook programme and set a ceiling upon expenditure. After a heated struggle, the Estimates were held down to a minimal quarter-million increase on the 1885–86 totals.

The Admiralty Board were faced with some of the longer-term consequences of the recent fleet expansion. Vice-Admiral Anthony Hoskins, the Second Naval Lord, distributed a memorandum on February 15 to the new Board, discussing the personnel requirements of the fleet and the upcoming shortage of naval lieutenants.⁴³ Hoskins predicted that this deficiency would persist until 1893, since even a larger entry of cadets would require several years before they could add to the regular strength of the fleet. These long term issues would increasingly dog the Government, as the practical details of naval expansion programmes, the often-hidden requirements of ensuring additional fleet units were fully efficient, led to a cycle of rising expenditure.

Foreign affairs were not quiet while domestic politics revolved around the Irish Question, nor was the navy inactive. Greek aggression in the Mediterranean forced Salisbury to begin planning for a naval demonstration to cove Greece into disarming. Reginald Brett “suggested warning the Times and P.M.G., in order that the public mind should be, in some sort, prepared.”⁴⁴ After the Liberal Government assumed power, Brett advised the Foreign Minister, Lord Rosebery, to focus his efforts on the more influential

⁴³Vice-Admiral Sir Anthony Hoskins, “Memorandum for the Board of Admiralty,” Feb 15, 1886 in *British Naval Documents*, 733-4.

⁴⁴CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/7, Esher's Political Diary, Memorandum of a meeting with N. Rothschild, Jan 22, 1886.

papers, like the *Times*, rather than insignificant organs like the *Daily News*.⁴⁵ Perhaps he was recalling the millions spent in the recent war scare, and the necessity of informing and directing the public about government policy to prevent panic. A British blockade of Greek ports was declared, and the Levant squadron dispatched, in order to pressure the Greek Government, but Brett remained hopeful that the Greek fleet would not have to be destroyed. The experience of blockade in Greece provided useful leavening for the experience of the Evolutionary Squadron. Admiral Lord John Hay, the First Naval Lord, warned Ripon on Feb 13, 1886 about the danger of Greek torpedo boats for the blockading fleet, and the need for “some more fast vessels of small size to deal with the torpedo Boats. It is a very serious risk to run with these large ships of ours...”⁴⁶ Hay was confident a Greek torpedo attack would be defeated, but admitted that a determined assault could cause heavy losses.

Few naval officers were satisfied with the Government's unwillingness to provide the necessary funds. After the Greek blockade, Hay told Ripon, “I think it quite desirable that the Government should be required to understand that you can't swagger about all over the world and have squadrons here and there and then not have the money to build the ships that have to go.”⁴⁷ Even after the Northbrook programme had been maintained, plus an additional increase, a senior naval officer was expressing concern over the relative capacity of the fleet to fulfil the duties required of it by the Government. The demands that could be made of the navy had to be in proportion to its capacity, and if political interests wished to have naval support they had to be willing to pay the price.

⁴⁵NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10006, ff. 46-7, Brett to Rosebery, Feb 19, 1886.

⁴⁶BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 1-3, J.D. Hay to Ripon, Feb 13, 1886; Add MS 43636, ff. 10-18, Hay to Ripon, Feb 26, 1886.

⁴⁷BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 70-1, Hay to Ripon, Jun 12, 1886.

Gladstone was becoming concerned enough about the security of British commerce to question Harcourt (not the Admiralty) about how quickly ships could be transferred to neutral flags in practice, since the registry could not be instantly changed.⁴⁸ The idea that British shipping could be protected by neutral registration was popular among retrenchment-minded politicians; naval professionals realized that it was too cumbersome to be implemented quickly, and were unwilling to trust in legal protections on paper that were easily ignored by enemies in war.

At the end of July the Liberal Government fell over the introduction of a Home Rule Bill. Salisbury's new Ministry included the rising star and Tory Democrat Lord Randolph Churchill as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Very important for later events was Churchill's concern over his public image, and his sensitivity to press criticism.⁴⁹ It took over two weeks to re-appoint Lord George Hamilton as First Lord of the Admiralty. Service opinion did not seem to be overly politicized, but the new Conservative government was looked upon favourably.⁵⁰ James Bruce hoped the Conservatives would be more favourable to the navy and was pleased to see the election of Admiral Mayne increase the naval contingent in the House.⁵¹

The Admiralty Board was largely changed over with the political transition, the last time that the Board would change with the Government. Admiral Sir Arthur W.A. Hood, K.C.B. replaced Admiral Lord John Hay, K.C.B. as First Naval Lord. There was always a sense of urgency to the work of the Board. For example, A.H. Hoskins said "I

⁴⁸BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 103-4, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Apr 8, 1886.

⁴⁹Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, vol. 1, 294-5.

⁵⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/1200/B/1 pt2/6, M. Culme Seymour to G.P. Hornby, Oct 6, 1886.

⁵¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, James Bruce to G.P. Hornby, Mar 10, 1886.

believe many years will not elapse before we are put to the test..." of war.⁵² As was customary, Service gossip focused for a short time on the choice of Board appointments, and the proper qualifications that appointees should possess.⁵³ Commerrell's opinion was that Board members should be active members of the service who might actually command a fleet, rather than officers who had lost touch.⁵⁴ One appointment that met Commerrell's criteria was Lord Charles Beresford as Junior Naval Lord. Beresford was a well-known and well-respected naval officer, who was currently serving as a Conservative Member of Parliament. Admirals Fitzroy and Culme Seymour thought in spite of his lack of seniority in the service, it was a good appointment for political and social reasons, as well as his being a contemporary of George Hamilton and Randolph Churchill.⁵⁵ The benefit of having a powerful combination of professional expertise and political influence acting for the interests of the navy was obvious.

The future First Sea Lord, Captain John A. Fisher, was appointed DNO for the new Board, an appointment that he believed he owed to Hornby's involvement.⁵⁶ He later wrote to Hornby to gloat over the influence he had been able to exert in his first months in meaningless power-plays like getting the First Lord's carpet, or the paper given to Cabinet Ministers – "This is simply to report that I am kicking every boy's shins just to let them now I am here."⁵⁷ The materialist Fisher placed the DNO at the heart of the navy, explaining that ships existed to mount guns, and the ships required men, but it all rested on the guns. Fisher's appointment contributed to the frequent occurrence of

⁵²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6 of 6, A.H. Hoskins to G.P. Hornby, Aug 8, 1886.

⁵³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Brent to G.P. Hornby, Aug 6, 1886.

⁵⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Commerrell to G.P. Hornby, Aug 7, 1886.

⁵⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Fitzroy to G.P. Hornby, Aug 18, 1886; M. Culme Seymour to G.P. Hornby, Oct 6, 1886.

⁵⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, M. Culme Seymour to G.P. Hornby, Oct 6, 1886.

⁵⁷NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt3/6, J.A. Fisher to G.P. Hornby, Nov 26, 1886.

ordnance issues in public debates, and to the eventual restoration of naval ordnance to Admiralty control. It is worth noting that while both Fisher and Beresford wrote frequently to Hornby about naval affairs, any evidence of Hornby's responses or suggestions has been excised from Fisher's papers.

Beresford did not take long to inject energy into the reform of the navy. After only two weeks on the Board, Beresford reported to Hornby that “the opinions I have often given in public, are most strongly confirmed from what I have seen...” and continued on to describe the absolute lack of any system of organization for war.⁵⁸ In particular, he emphasized the lack of key fleet support components, like stores, fuel and ammunition ships, compared to what would be required for war operations. He pointed out that these would have to be procured after the outbreak of war, at enormous expense, besides being a massive risk inviting certain disaster. At the moment, Beresford believed that the fleet was critically vulnerable. He claimed to have canvassed the opinion of the Board on the matter, and they were “all in accord...” On August 24, 1886 he proposed writing a paper on the matter for the Board's consideration, and a circular letter was approved even before discussion of the issue.

Beresford argued that the fleet needed to be thoroughly re-organized to settle the war requirements of each station and the means of providing them, including fuel supplies, reserves and merchant shipping. This intelligence would be corrected every three months under the First Naval Lord's supervision, a task requiring either enlarging the existing FIC substantially or creating a special staff under the First Lord directly. Hornby responded to the request for some suggestions, which Beresford accepted gratefully while restating his grave concerns over the lack of preparedness and claiming

⁵⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Aug 24, 1886.

that “if I do not carry something when I bring it forward I shall resign and stir up the country on the matter.”⁵⁹ According to Parkinson, the Admiralty Board considered his arguments and dismissed them because the Board had access to intelligence reports that showed the real lack of preparedness in France and Russia.⁶⁰ Beresford, however, was willing to work around the Board, and gave the memorandum recommending a NID directly to Salisbury.

Beresford was particularly interested in getting the public involved and creating a politically influential agitation. In October Beresford reported to Hornby that it was “going ahead splendidly” and he might even get more than he had asked for.⁶¹ As the NID became a practical reality, it was tasked by Hood with examining mobilization plans. It was also suggested that the Admiralty Board should itself meet regularly to consider mobilization specifically.⁶² Beresford hoped that this plan might be presented on December 1 or 2, in order to maximize public effect during the formulation of the Estimates. On the other hand, he admitted the distaste both he and Hornby felt for the chatter of the RUSI, but insisted that this had been a very effective strategy in pushing the adoption of the machine gun.⁶³ Publicity at the right time and the right place could be very effective, even if it was not necessarily an enjoyable process.

Beresford claimed victory for every one of the demands made in his critique of administration, which he argued had made the power of civilians greater than ever. A different writer on the same letter corrected Beresford's claim that the staff consisted of

⁵⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, Aug 27, 1886. C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby. Private.

⁶⁰Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 95.

⁶¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 28, 1886.

⁶²“Minutes by members of the Board of Admiralty on proposals for a new department for intelligence and mobilization,” in *British Naval Documents*, 610-2.

⁶³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Nov 4, 1886.

seventeen naval officers to read ten officers and six civilians, noting “This does not look like a bona fide game was in play.”⁶⁴ It was certainly a challenge to set up an institution of such complexity and potential influence, and there were serious disagreements over the desirable combination of naval and civilian members. Captain William R. Hall, the first Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI), told Admiral R.V. Hamilton at the end of October that he had almost finished the arrangements, “although of course there will be all kinds of underground opposition from the civilian” element.⁶⁵ He wanted a department composed entirely of naval and marine officers, plus a clerical establishment, with one division for mobilization and war planning and one for collecting foreign and domestic intelligence. Naval officers had a deep-seated suspicion of the interference of ignorant civilians, associating them with unreasonable retrenchment or inefficiency.

The new NID would continue the work of the FIC in collecting information about international developments, as well as working out mobilization plans. Beresford crowed in November that “Hood has taken my paper and galloped ahead of it even in detail, and himself proposed a larger staff than ever all under executive... [naval officers].”⁶⁶ In light of the ongoing tension between executive and engineer officers, it is worth noting that Beresford specified the executive control of such a department, perhaps as a conscious effort to carve out a professional niche, or capacity, for the executive officer class. The instructions issued to the NID in January 1887 stated that the purpose of the department was to prepare for war by collecting and sifting information, as well as planning.⁶⁷ The need for good information had been underlined by the 1884 and 1885 scares, where

⁶⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt3/6, J.A. Fisher to G.P. Hornby, Oct 8, 1886.

⁶⁵NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, Hall to R.V. Hamilton, Oct 31, 1886.

⁶⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Nov 4, 1886.

⁶⁷“Instructions for the Director of Naval Intelligence, January 1887,” in *British Naval Documents*, 612-4.

inaccurate information was deployed with little official recourse (at least, to the Board's point of view); better information would stabilize policy and prevent unwarranted public mood swings. There were fears that the NID might start to assume administrative functions, beyond its accepted duties in preparing mobilization plans.⁶⁸ Mobilization was the primary focus, and Hall hoped that within six months a practical war organization could be set up that would gather regular and reserve personnel and ready all ships for sea in four days, reducing to 40 hours in the future.

Contrary to Beresford's description of Hood's attitude, Parkinson suggests that Hood shared his predecessor's distaste for an institution that undermined his authority, and this was the rationale for appointing Captain Hall as DNI rather than a higher ranking senior officer with greater influence.⁶⁹ Parkinson is very critical of Hall, claiming that he continued to argue for British naval weakness despite possessing intelligence evidence that directly contradicted him. Parkinson argues that the cutback in NID salaries, which would trigger the resignation of Lord Charles Beresford in early 1888, was aimed at triggering the resignation of the NID officers, implying that this was because they were attempting to unjustly promote naval expansion.

As the Army and Navy Estimates for 1887–88 were being prepared in the autumn of 1886, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Randolph Churchill, decided to take a stand against excessive defence expenditure. The Admiralty had produced a £700,000 reduction, but the Army Estimates had greatly increased, in part because of greater charges for naval ordnance. Churchill wrote a strong letter to Salisbury that Salisbury was able to interpret as an offer of resignation and immediately accepted. Churchill had not

⁶⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, [?] to G.P. Hornby, Dec 7, 1886.

⁶⁹Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 95.

realized that he was disposable, and Salisbury took the opportunity to rid himself of a political thorn. The public fallout was not favourable to Churchill's abrupt methods, and although he quickly re-characterized his resignation as a general statement against the Government's policy priorities, he was not able to gain political traction. Retrenchment failed to ignite public opinion the way navalism had been able to do in 1884, and the pro-navalist element was able to take advantage of the opportunity to restate their criticism of administration and the starvation of the navy. C.I. Hamilton suggests that the appointment of Goschen, who had been a former First Lord of the Admiralty, was far more favourable to the expansion of naval spending.⁷⁰ The events surrounding Churchill's resignation are dealt with in greater detail below.

From the Admiralty perspective, Lord George Hamilton regretted Churchill's resignation, but insisted that the increases in the gunnery vote were the result of previous neglect and parsimony, and could not be avoided if national defences were properly handled.⁷¹ Looking ahead, Hamilton reassured his Admirals that the current tightness of national finances would be alleviated next year and offered some hope of straightening affairs out. Hamilton foreshadowed a measure made far more famous by Fisher's 1904 reforms, by suggesting that "small useless craft" should be replaced by larger vessels that would be better at 'showing the flag' and "afford much greater protection to our trade ... in peace and war."⁷² These concepts were not revolutionary, but longstanding strategic options that were considered and implemented over many decades. Whether the navy chose small ships or large vessels, these ships still had to be built, armed, manned and maintained and this would add, not subtract, from the navy charges.

⁷⁰C.I. Hamilton, *Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 209.

⁷¹NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, G. Hamilton to R.V. Hamilton, Dec 27, 1886.

⁷²NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, G. Hamilton to R.V. Hamilton, Dec 27, 1886.

While the Government was experiencing the resignation of Churchill, the Liberal Party helped to overshadow events with its own major crisis. In December 1886, it was leaked to the press in the 'Hawarden Kite' that Gladstone had committed himself to the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. Over 80 Liberal MPs split from the Gladstonian Liberals, recasting themselves as Liberal Unionists and aligning with the Conservative party. There were hopes of reconciling the Liberals, but these efforts, extending over several years, did not bear fruit. Gladstone became fixated with Ireland, and it would take a major agitation in 1893 to turn Gladstone's mind away from Ireland and to the navy. For the Conservatives, the Liberal policy towards Ireland assisted the Conservatives in recasting themselves as the party of Empire — the Unionists. The split of the Liberal Party was not entirely negative. Hamer argues that afterwards the party was unusually homogenous and united ideologically and their effective obstructionist tactics gave Gladstone ample opportunity to state and restate his position.⁷³ The crisis led to a complete reversal of the Liberal dominance of the newspaper press, leaving the Conservatives as the leading partisan influence in the press.⁷⁴ Salisbury's policy toward the press focused on encouraging defections from the Liberal camp, rather than founding new press organs; Koss points to this shift as the explanation for the Liberal turn towards the provincial press.⁷⁵ By 1888, the Liberals were only left with the *Daily News*, and lacked a sixpenny weekly paper until the *Speaker* was founded in 1889.

While the Irish question provided a substantial distraction, some of Churchill's criticisms were being validated by the analysis of the money spent during the 1885 Russian War Scare, although the press did not condemn the navy. The March 1887

⁷³Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery*, 126-9.

⁷⁴Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, vol I, 286-7.

⁷⁵Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, vol I, 287-92.

Report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General on the accounting of the 1885 Vote of Credit showed that money had been spent on ordinary charges without approval. The *Saturday Review* defended the 'improperly' charged items, since the money voted during "the scare was simply spent in doing work which ought to have been provided for in the ordinary estimates."⁷⁶ The real scandal was that these items, including harbour dredging, shipbuilding contracts, and machinery, had to be provided out of funds devoted to special war preparations. This emphasis was not intended as a denial of the existence of waste in naval spending, but to distinguish it from routine expenditure that had been neglected through parsimony. The *Review* defended the Admiralty and the Service against charges of wrongdoing by placing blame on the political manipulation of the Estimates. The article is also evidence of public indifference to Churchill's resignation and the rejection of his arguments about financial extravagance.

With public attention briefly drawn to naval affairs the press spoke in favour of improving the navy, but there was a substantial discourse coalescing around criticisms of the inefficient administration of the navy. Newspapers continued to remind the public that the defences of such vital imperial infrastructure as coaling stations and commercial ports were neglected.⁷⁷ In this case, the recent scare had provided information that proved that the Carnarvon Commission's recommendations had been ignored. Admiral R.S. Robinson wrote to the *Contemporary Review* in February 1887 to explain the problems facing the navy to the civilian public.⁷⁸ Like Arnold-Forster, he argued that the problems were well known and were the result of a fundamentally flawed administrative system

⁷⁶"Spending the Vote of Credit," *Saturday Review*, 63:1636 (Mar 5, 1887), 328.

⁷⁷"The Defence of Our Coaling Stations and Commercial Ports," *Times*, 31962 (Jan 6, 1887), 12.

⁷⁸R.S. Robinson, "The Navy and Its Rulers," *Contemporary Review*, 51 (Feb 1887), 252-3. He got a lot of his information from the 1886 *Naval Annual*.

that lacked responsibility and rationality, like the control of naval ordnance by the War Office. The solution was individual responsibility of the professional heads of the navy to Parliament, putting their own names to a report that would be presented directly to the House and thus negate any partisan political interference. Arthur Forwood, the Civil Lord, had argued in January that money should be spent in a responsible and businesslike manner and Robinson concurred entirely. Money had been voted in recent scares, but Robinson did not trust the Government to maintain programmes that were begun to placate the public because the money was quickly reduced and the construction time and expense greatly increased. A first step would be to reorganize the Estimates to make them more intelligible and reveal how money was being spent.

After the resignation of Churchill, public scrutiny of the Navy Estimates was unduly high. Lord George Hamilton told Rear-Admiral R.V. Hamilton that he felt the acute strain involved in producing the Estimates under such conditions.⁷⁹ He was able to produce a substantial decrease of £793,000 in the Estimates, which he attributed in his memoirs to the administrative improvements in accounting and organization.⁸⁰ Lord George Hamilton noted with pride that a suitable budgetary provision was made for maintenance and repairs and, unlike the 1870s, would not be redirected to new construction. Historian C.I. Hamilton argues that the 1887–8 Statement Explanatory of the Estimates was the watershed of a new procedure, and an attempt to address the growing criticism of Admiralty financial structures.⁸¹ Instead of a confusing mass of financial figures, Parliament would be given a statement describing the coming year's

⁷⁹NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9. Ld G. Hamilton to R. Vesey Hamilton, Mar 9, 1887.

⁸⁰Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflection: Volume II, 1886-1906*, (London, 1922), 92-3.

⁸¹C.I. Hamilton, *Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 208.

naval policy so that MPs and the country could evaluate the overall character of naval expenditure. Hamilton also proposed to change the format of the Navy Estimates to reduce the confusing density of accumulated figures and provide a clearer account of expenditure to the House and, by extension, the public.⁸² The *Saturday Review* approved, since the strength of the fleet would be clearly stated and the budget would respect the need to maintain and replace warships.⁸³ In case the reader might give too much credit to the current Government, the *Review* noted that both sides of the House had starved the navy and the current favourable situation was the product of the Northbrook programme. In spite of the 1884 Navy Scare, it was still unclear whether spending or retrenchment was more popular and navalists worried about Parliament's willingness adequately support the navy.

Randolph Churchill bragged to his mother that "the Government have adopted my suggestions as to the printed statements of Estimates and as to Parliamentary Committee; so altogether my action is not unjustified by events."⁸⁴ Winston fully supported this argument, listing Randolph's main objections that were ultimately sustained: £700,000 reduction in the Navy Estimates, £170,000 reduction for naval ordnance, rejection of Supplementary Estimate for Egyptian defences, and expenditure on coaling stations was severely reduced and delayed until 1888.⁸⁵ These short term reductions set the stage for public mobilization in the powerful 1888 Navy Scare.

The Anglo-Italian relationship developed along increasingly formalized lines in early 1887 and helped bring the strategic importance of the Mediterranean to the

⁸²*Parliamentary Paper*, 1887 (c. 4990), Feb 28, 1887.

⁸³"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 63:1639 (Mar 25, 1887), 429-30.

⁸⁴Right Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P., *Lord Randolph Churchill*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), 665-6.

⁸⁵W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 668.

forefront of the naval discourse. The Mediterranean agreements between Britain and Italy were based on the desire to maintain the status quo and prevent French or Russian expansion in the Mediterranean, Aegean and Adriatic.⁸⁶ At the same time, Salisbury informed the Queen that the Italian ambassador had been clearly informed that any British support would depend upon the nature and justification of the conflict. There would be no 'blank cheque' of support for Italy, nor would the agreements be explicitly directed against a single foreign power.⁸⁷ It did mean that later strategic analysts would incorporate a degree of reliance upon a friendly or allied Italian navy.

The vulnerability of British seaborne trade coupled with the realization of Britain's reliance on food and raw material imports was at the root of most discussions of naval strategy. H.W. Gordon wrote to the *Times* on August 3, describing how modern artillery was affecting fortifications, by pushing outworks to meet the increased range of weapons. Gordon argued that it would be very difficult to prevent the blocking of the Suez Canal, which was the only real value of holding the Mediterranean at all, and thus trade would be diverted in any case. A strong fleet at Gibraltar would bottle up the Mediterranean and provide all the necessary security, since the actual value of trade in the region was minimal, and Gordon did not consider the question of Constantinople or the Straits to be particularly crucial. Gordon referenced recent *Fortnightly Review* articles on "The Present Position of European Politics," concurring that the navy either required a substantial increase, or the recognition that French forces were more easily blockaded in the Mediterranean than in Toulon. The RUSI discussion in May showed a common

⁸⁶*Great Britain and the Span of Empire*, III, 505-6, Feb 12, 1887.

⁸⁷Salisbury to Queen Victoria, Feb 2, 1887, Feb 5, 1887 in *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire*, III, 504-5.

feeling among senior naval officers, including Hall at the NID, that the Suez route would be abandoned in war and that the canal would probably be blocked.⁸⁸

In the summer of 1887 there was a sustained public discourse on the British position in the Mediterranean. J.W. MacLean approved of Beresford's position, but explained that, "I was disappointed at not seeing what you had said about abandoning the Mediterranean route in time of war" in the lecture notes Beresford had provided him.⁸⁹ As Beresford realized, the question was whether the Mediterranean would be held by a sufficient naval force to protect the trade route, which would need to be enormous, or trade would have to be rerouted. There was simply no other option.

The idea that Admiralty administration should be run on businesslike principles continued to engage thinkers. The July 18, 1887 House of Commons debate was key point of discussion of businesslike principles. Beresford argued that it would lead to greater continuity, efficiency and economy, although how this would be achieved is never particularly clear. It seems to be more of an ideological stance than a practical suggestion, since it is based on the misconception that business was run efficiently and economically. In his activism, Beresford ended up offering his resignation over the issue of the royal yacht, but neither Salisbury or the Queen were willing to accept, although the Queen "seems chiefly to have felt the fact that the affair got into the newspapers, but by the very nature of the case this was hardly to be avoided."⁹⁰

The 1887 Colonial Conference, discussed in the chapter introduction, was accompanied by the Queen's Jubilee naval review. Marder notes that, "The jubilee naval review at Spithead in 1887 exhibited to the people the weakness as well as the strength of

⁸⁸H.W. Gordon, "Our Position in the Mediterranean and Coaling Stations," *Times*, 32141 (Aug 3, 1887), 3.

⁸⁹BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, f. 55-6, J.W. Maclean to C. Beresford, Jun 28, 1887.

⁹⁰BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 49-50, Salisbury to Beresford, Jul 28, 1887.

the navy, and the lessons of the display were interpreted to them by numerous writers in the press.”⁹¹ Navalist commentators were able to emphasize weakness in this show of strength, particularly the age and quality of many of the warships in the front lines of the fleet. Simple numbers had no power unless the quality of the material and the sufficiency of the personnel were adequate.

The continued neglect of the defences of coaling stations remained a thorn in the side of Lord Carnarvon. He wrote to the *Times* on August 30, before he departed for an imperial tour, arguing that the colonial governments were making suitable efforts to build up their defences, but the Imperial government was not fulfilling its end of the compact. With the concurrence of the *Times* editorial, Carnarvon argued that the problem was that government ministers wanted to reduce expenditure and throw costs onto future governments. Coaling stations were unprotected against attacks by flying squadrons, and “Without coaling stations a nineteenth century fleet becomes in a few weeks a number of hulks.”⁹² Carnarvon accused the Imperial Government of a direct breach of faith, since colonies were investing in fortifications while the ordnance promised by the Imperial government had been subjected to lengthy delays. The *Times* reminded readers that the recent naval manoeuvres had shown the difficulty of controlling the Channel and preventing raids on British home ports.

The cause of administrative reform was somewhat abated by the decision to reform the format of the Navy Estimates. During the early stages of the 1888 scare, which owed much of its strength to the preceding years covered in this chapter, the 1888–89 Navy Estimates were reformed in order to increase the clarity of the information

⁹¹Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 45.

⁹²Editorial, *Times*, 32164 (Aug 30, 1887), 7.

provided to the public and to Parliament. With so many concerns about civilian management, it was a logical step to reduce the accounting jumble. A 'Statement explanatory of the Navy Estimates' was written by the First Lord, to explain in plain language the policy behind the Estimates and any changes that had been made from the previous year. The Navy Estimates were now a public policy statement, rather than a strictly budgetary concern, and the public had to be able to understand where and how the money was being sent. This understanding would be presented through newspapers and periodicals that digested the Estimates and provided opinions to their readers.

The new format was developed in December 1887, on the initiative of the Admiralty. It proposed that information be grouped in more logical categories, and the critical data related to the construction and repair of ships, Vote 8, would now be grouped under four headings, personnel, material, contract work and miscellaneous.⁹³ Forwood, who authored the proposal, noted that it was difficult to compare costs between the Royal Dockyards and private contractors, because the dockyards did not just construct and repair ships, but also functioned as national arsenals. The Treasury approved of the principles, but thought that the breakdown of Vote 8 was not particularly clear, suggesting instead that the money should be divided by ship rather than category, to allow clear comparisons of costs and overruns. They also noted that a new format would make comparisons with previous years very difficult.⁹⁴ In spite of Treasury resistance, the Admiralty definitely chose to adopt the new format on February 6, and the Treasury conceded on the last day of the month, but only after a last-ditch complaint that naval

⁹³Parliamentary Paper, 256 (188), "Navy Estimates (New Form). Correspondence between the Admiralty and the Treasury regarding the new form of navy estimates." July 2, 1888, 4.

⁹⁴Treasury minute, Jan 24, 1888 in Parliamentary Paper, 256 (1888), "Navy Estimates (New Form)," July 2, 1888, 6-7. 10-11.

works under £10,000 would be placed in appendices that did not require Treasury sanction to be exceeded, when the former limit had been £500.⁹⁵ The Admiralty preferred overall Treasury oversight with greater ability for departments to transfer funds, which the Treasury thought was a reduction of Parliamentary control over expenditure.⁹⁶

Panics were partly an outcome of the growing intellectualism of the naval officers. As naval officers became more rigorous and professional, the deficiencies in naval organization became more glaring and immediate and naval officers were more willing to agitate for what they believed to be the national interest. This activism was inevitable because modern war had become so complex that to have all necessities for instant war prepared in peace required massive investment. It was the concurrence of these ideas of preparedness with the impact of technological change that resulted in the demands for major investment programmes.

The Liberal *Westminster Review* backed the assertions of Beresford, focusing on the contradiction between the dual civilian and military heads at the War Office and the seven heads at the Admiralty Board, particularly when “the most perfect form of government is *one-man* government, provided that it is pure.”⁹⁷ The main problems were inconsistency, including the different ranks, titles and pay for the staff establishments and the appointment of committees without implementing their recommendations. While Board members were occupied with narrow departmental concerns, the *Review* placed little faith in the inexperienced civilian First Lord to lead the Admiralty properly without being overly dominated by the views of his naval secretary. The *Review* supported comprehensive reform of both army and navy administration to make Ministers,

⁹⁵Parliamentary Paper, 256 (1888), “Navy Estimates (New Form),” (Jul 2, 1888), 19-22.

⁹⁶Parliamentary Paper, 256 (1888), “Navy Estimates (New Form),” (Jul 2, 1888), 26-7.

⁹⁷“Military and Naval Administration,” *Westminster Review*, 128:1 (Apr 1887), 441.

preferably professional officers, personally responsible for their departments. The contentious issue of civilian versus naval leadership at the Admiralty was not a clear dichotomy for contemporaries; naval officers accepted the principle of overall civilian rule, but chafed at what seemed like the excessive power of the First Lord compared to the professional advisers in the administration. Beresford continued his activism, even tendering his resignation in the summer to both Salisbury and the Queen, who rejected it.⁹⁸ In October he published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* another exposé on the lack of systematic organization at the Admiralty.

The multitude of events and episodes of 1885–87 hovered on the edge of triggering a naval scare, but never quite crossed the threshold. As in later 'interregnum' periods, these years were significant for the long-term development of navalist discourses which educated the public to think in terms of blue-water strategy and naval supremacy. The continued existence of the Northbrook programme and some attempts to address administrative criticisms, coupled with the distraction of domestic Irish politics, ensured that agitators could not gain sufficient traction in these years. But the stage was set for an even more dramatic series of events in 1888 that led to a massive navy scare and the equally massive and revolutionary 1889 NDA. Years of failed scares increased the tensions, and the real causes which gave agitators their credibility only became more severe after delays and inaction.

⁹⁸BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 49-50, C. Beresford to Salisbury, Jul 26, 1887, Queen's response Jul 28.

The Manoeuvres and the Reality of War

When the Russian War Scare was at its height in April and May 1885, a fleet was readied for instant action. Public furore over the crisis faded, but the force had already been assembled. The widely respected Admiral G.P. Hornby, recently Commander in Chief Portsmouth, was given command of the Particular Service, or Evolutionary, Squadron. He took the rising star John Fisher as his flag captain. The naval service was impressed by the practical value offered by the exercises, for both experiment and experience, and when manoeuvres became an annual feature they provided critical material for the creation and sustenance of navalist agitation.

Simply mobilizing the fleet was a significant experience for the navy, since it required the development of clear plans for assembling a complete war-ready force and improved the navy's ability to respond to the rapidity of modern warfare. The *Saturday Review's* interpretation of the Admiralty inspection of the dockyards concluded for its readers that the war scare with Russia had proven extremely beneficial in refitting and readying warships as well as ordering a large new programme of ships. These "wholesome effects of the war scare" highlighted the failure of previous naval policy and the need to constantly adapt to changing technological environment.⁹⁹ Experiments were necessary to determine which of the myriad technological inventions were valuable, and their impact on tactics and strategy. Officers realized the value in showing the public that last-minute preparations were more costly and wasteful than consistent measures. Brent explained to Hornby that the fleets were deficient in many important support elements, but the funding was not forthcoming until an emergency, in which case "they will fit out

⁹⁹"The Admiralty Visitation," *Saturday Review*, 60:1556 (Aug 22, 1885), 239-40.

a dozen store ships in a dozen days, but the waste and jumble....”¹⁰⁰ The mobilization of the fleet was a chance to put ships and men through the closest approximation of real war, and to reveal the defects that would otherwise be crippling to a fleet in action. Both the *Ajax* and *Agamemnon* had steering defects that pointed to poor design, while a poorly ventilated coal bunker exploded on the *Inflexible*. Press commentators were disappointed that such obvious issues had not been solved.¹⁰¹

Hornby conducted several basic fleet exercises. In one example of these exercises, on July 17 Admiral Whyte advanced his fleet in an indented line abreast, and Hornby was able to break the line in true Nelsonian fashion.¹⁰² Afterwards, Admiral Fitzroy concluded that, “we have made a good advance in Squadron Manoeuvres.”¹⁰³ In the autumn of 1886, when navalists were renewing their activity in anticipation of the formation of the 1887–88 Estimates, Fitzroy reminded Hornby that the squadron manoeuvres had shown the importance of sufficient numbers of second-class cruisers for scouting and communications.¹⁰⁴ These were fixed requirements that did not include the vessels necessary for the attack or defence of commerce. In public commentary, the Squadron was criticized for relying on obsolete and inadequate warships as key fleet units, but Roger Parkinson argues that the use of so-called 'coast defence vessels' was strategically sound because these were also the coast-attack ships that would be vital in a conflict with Russia in the shallow Baltic sea.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Brent to G.P. Hornby, Aug 6, 1886.

¹⁰¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1547 (Jun 20, 1885), 813.

¹⁰²See NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/105, Journal of Particular Service Squadron. The exercises are analyzed in Allen, “Origins, Conduct and Outcomes of the British Naval Exercises of 1885.”

¹⁰³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Fitzroy to G.P. Hornby, Aug 18, 1886.

¹⁰⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, Fitzroy to G.P. Hornby, Oct 6, 1886.

¹⁰⁵Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 43-4.

One of the main goals of the manoeuvres was to test torpedo boats both on offense and defence to evaluate their tactical and strategic value. A boom and minefield for harbour defence were constructed, and attacks made on the fleet at sea. The manoeuvres were somewhat disheartening, since they verified that blockade and offensive operations would be rendered far more difficult with modern harbour defences, mines and torpedo boats. The first-class boats were barely seaworthy and the second-class not at all, while searchlights and quick-firing guns suggested ironclads might be able to protect themselves. The conclusions were uncertain because only eight torpedo boats were available, instead of the swarms the French would deploy.¹⁰⁶

The British Admiral Hobart Pasha, who had commanded Ottoman naval forces in action against torpedo boats in the 1878–79 Russo-Turkish War, had conveniently published *The Torpedo Scare* in 1885 and used the opportunity of the manoeuvres to promote his theories. He wanted to “stem the tide of public opinion” that was over-emphasizing the revolutionary effect of the torpedo and prove that these weapons, “though not to be entirely despised, may be designed [sic] as the 'naval scare of the day.'”¹⁰⁷ Hobart published an article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* that summarized his arguments and connected them to the recent experiments conducted by Hornby. Torpedo craft were very fragile and torpedoes had poor speed and navigation, while ironclads had received important defensive weapons, so Hobart concluded that the torpedo threat could be actively met by mobility, torpedo nets and darkness, with wire barriers set up at night to block torpedo craft.¹⁰⁸ The *Saturday Review* agreed that

¹⁰⁶H.O. Arnold-Forster, “England or the Admiralty?” *Nineteenth Century*, 18:101 (July 1885), 169.

¹⁰⁷Hobart Pasha, “The Torpedo Scare,” *Blackwood's*, 836:137 (Jun 1885), 737-47. Published as a pamphlet, *The Torpedo Scare: Experiences during the Turco-Russian War*, (Blackwood, 1885).

¹⁰⁸Hobart Pasha, “The Torpedo Scare,” *Blackwood's*, 836:137 (Jun 1885), 737-47.

ironclads had more ‘fight back’ than torpedo enthusiasts had judged, and that it would be very “doubtful whether the torpedo boat will ever be able to take part in general naval engagements or even to attack well-armed ships that are on the alert.”¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere, the *Review* examined the torpedo question in more detail and concurred with Hobart that Hornby’s experiments at Bantry Bay had shown that fast ships could evade torpedoes and defend themselves even at night, and “that ought to be good news for a country with many war-ships.”¹¹⁰ Limited numbers of torpedo boats left some uncertainty, but there was no reason to think that older methods of war with battlefleets had been totally invalidated by new technology that made asymmetrical warfare theoretically possible.

In October, Edmund Fremantle moderated Hobart's position in an article in the popular civilian monthly the *Nineteenth Century*. Given that testing torpedo warfare was the primary objective of the manoeuvres, Fremantle argued that the experiments of Hornby's squadron were not conclusive because the torpedo boat flotilla was too small, which gave an unfair advantage to the defences of the ironclads.¹¹¹ He emphasized that the eight first-class torpedo boats collectively cost £108,000 and required 180 men and were pitted against fourteen ironclads costing £7,000,000 and carrying 7,000 men. Fremantle agreed that the navy should invest in torpedo technology that had made enormous technological strides in the last decades, but this had not invalidated the ironclad, which had greatly improved its close-quarters defences. It was clear to Fremantle that torpedo attacks in wartime would be confined to night, and he fully

¹⁰⁹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 59:1547 (Jun 20, 1885), 813.

¹¹⁰“Torpedoes,” *Saturday Review*, 60:1551 (Jul 18, 1885), 76-7.

¹¹¹E.R. Fremantle, “Ironclads and Torpedo Flotillas,” *Nineteenth Century*, 18:104 (Oct 1885), 657.

supported the proposals of Reed and Barnaby for a new type of torpedo boat catcher, or destroyer, that could provide an active defence for the ironclads.¹¹²

Thinkers recognized that the manoeuvres had given hope that torpedo boats could be effectively combated by large ships, as well as suggesting clear avenues for improving the tactical effectiveness of the designs. The decision to continue building ironclads was not ignorant or retrograde, but a well-considered stance that believed that the risk of a revolutionary force structure was not worth the potential financial savings. These were very reasonable arguments at the time, but would require constant revisiting as technology changed. Naval officers realized that the diverse needs of a combat-ready fleet were more expensive than a purely demonstration or 'show' fleet. When H.W. Brent wrote to Hornby for his opinion about a potential book, he commented that the Report of the Particular Service Squadron and other literature had proven that future fleets would be composed of a variety of craft, including ironclads, cruisers and torpedo craft.¹¹³

The efforts of the Admiralty to repair the technological deficiencies in the current classes of torpedo craft fed into the growing dissatisfaction with the administration of the navy. The First Naval Lord, Hay, proposed to send twenty-four of the new, improved class of torpedo boats to the Mediterranean Fleet, but, as E.P. Galloway informed Admiral Hornby, these vessels had neither guns nor torpedoes. In fact, the few ships that had actually been completed were still undergoing testing and in no condition to deploy.¹¹⁴ In October 1886 Admiral Vesey Hamilton was informed that, “the torpedo boats ordered during the scare of last spring by Lord Northbrook from Thorneycroft are

¹¹²Fremantle, “Ironclads and Torpedo Flotillas,” *Nineteenth Century*, 18:104 (Oct 1885), 667-8, 670-3.

¹¹³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, H.W. Brent to G.P. Hornby, Apr 16, 1886.

¹¹⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, E.P. Galloway to G.P. Hornby, Mar 29, 1886.

in their current state failures...” because of the poor sea-keeping and wet decks.¹¹⁵ This was one issue that started Hornby down the path of a navalist agitator. Hornby was told by Fisher that the shipyard of Yarrow had delivered foreign orders for torpedo boats before British orders that had been placed earlier. Fisher cautiously recommended that Hornby get confirmation from Hall at the NID to counter the denials of Yarrow before bringing the case before Lord Ripon.¹¹⁶ Naval officers within the Admiralty were willing to collaborate with key correspondents to further their common aim of a stronger navy.

The manoeuvres would be an important avenue for popularizing the navy. Since the benefits of manoeuvres were so widely extolled, the analysis of the lessons could be very influential on public and government. Of course, to some extent the heads of the navy could present whatever interpretation they chose, but there plenty of commentators outside of the Admiralty ready to criticize the official line. Naval officers were very concerned with the state of the navy, and while they preferred to have the manoeuvres as true-to-war as possible, they were not generally sorry to see stirrings of public interest. None of the manoeuvres dealt with here led to the kind of massive programme like happened in 1888, but they supported the doubts that existed over the Two-Power Standard in the Mediterranean, and calls for a new programme to meet the higher level of strength that the practical application of a strategy of offensive blockade demanded.

In subsequent manoeuvres the Admiralty gave more consideration to generating good publicity. The 1889 manoeuvres began with a fleet review at Spithead, with arrangements provided for the press to attend although the Admiralty would not provide

¹¹⁵NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, illegible to R.V. Hamilton, Oct 31, 1886.

¹¹⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, J.A. Fisher to G.P. Hornby, May 21, 1886.

refreshments as they had during the 1887 Jubilee Review.¹¹⁷ On the actual day, someone neglected to inform the press boat that the event was delayed six hours, and so the reporters were waiting and the refreshments were reserved for the MPs!¹¹⁸ The 1891 summer naval manoeuvres were very instructive. Bridge hoped that the good work of the previous year would be continued, and be expanded to include tactical manoeuvres, which would also need to be kept confidential. For the 1891 summer manoeuvres, James Thursfield tried to convince Bridge to include some “spectacular manoeuvres” like coastal bombardments in order to attract public attention, but Bridge was not willing to compromise the educational value of the manoeuvres in order to cultivate public opinion.¹¹⁹ The Admiralty was interested in boosting the publicity of naval events, but it was not a priority compared with the experience generated by the manoeuvres. When MPs asked the Government about viewing the manoeuvres, Lord George Hamilton explained that the ironclads were going to be engaging in important but, for the press, uninteresting “technical evolutions” while the gunboats engaged in interesting exercises were too small to accommodate the press.¹²⁰

In spite of Bridge’s opinion, there were widely publicized acts that would inevitably spark public debate. The destruction and monetary indemnities levied on the Scottish coast were notable features of the 1889 exercises, and sparked a short round of discussion in the press. Sir George Campbell thought that the more humane rules of land warfare ought to apply to naval attacks on civilian property, but Hamilton insisted that

¹¹⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:338, (Jul 25, 1889), c. 1260-1.

¹¹⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 8, 1889), c. 792-3.

¹¹⁹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Aug 14, 1891.

¹²⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:355, (Jul 14, 1891), c. 1181-3.

such actions were legitimate under the Declaration of Paris.¹²¹ The consistent conclusion in the press, particularly the *Times* and the *Morning Post* was that coast defences in the British Isles were insufficient for home defence. 'A Flag Officer' writing in the *United Service Magazine* argued that small vessels did not possess the speed or sea keeping to protect commerce, and recommended that the navy rely on armed merchant cruisers and old ironclads that would be re-engined for high speed and coal endurance.¹²²

After Beresford made sweeping criticisms of Admiral Baird's and Admiral D'Arcy-Irvine's attack on the Thames at the 1889 Cutler's Feast dinner, the *Army and Navy Gazette* reminded readers in a leading article that the press was not the best judge of naval strategy, and the reliance on correspondents had meant that some officers received unjust criticism for their conduct. The *Gazette* explained that Baird could only try a dash to the Channel or a ruse, and chose the latter course that had been suggested in venues such as the RUSI. Only after failing to contest the Channel did Baird turn to depredations along the coast (just as Tryon had in 1888). To the *Gazette*, Tryon's inability to prevent these depredations, even with the previous years' experience, was proof that the navy could not prevent coastal attacks in wartime.¹²³

The 1890 manoeuvres were designed to test the attack and defence of commerce as well as the tactical functions of cruisers, in order to create experience in this critical aspect of warfare. Admiral Seymour took his 'enemy' fleet away to the Azores, and interdicted commerce, while Admiral Tryon took the 'British' fleet into the Channel. Seymour was condemned for having focused on preventing Tryon gaining a "manoeuvre-

¹²¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:340, (Aug 27, 1889), c. 602.

¹²²'A Flag Officer,' "Practical Results of our Mimic Warfare," *United Service Magazine*, NS 4 (Nov 1889), 1-11.

¹²³"The Press and the Naval Manoeuvres," *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1546 (Sep 7, 1889), 705.

triumph” over him, instead of following the spirit of his instructions to prey on commerce.¹²⁴ Bridge praised Tryon's strategic vision, because he took his main force to the Channel and thus to the “whole crowded part of the trade route leaving his adversary only the less frequented part to prey upon.”¹²⁵ Seymour's initial pride was quickly stripped away, as he realized that he had misread the intent of the manoeuvres and failed in the eyes of his peers, even though the press was more focused on his actions than the less showy methods of Tryon. At the Club, Seymour lost his boisterousness and remained unusually quiet.¹²⁶ There were important lessons. The mobilization of Tryon's fleet had taken too long, preventing the immediate dispatch of cruisers to contain Seymour's fleet.¹²⁷ Bridge was very critical of the performance of the Royal Dockyards, accusing them of deliberately disobeying orders to ready ships for the mobilization.¹²⁸ Torpedo attack was of dubious value, with success only coming after the boats were under significant fire. The idea of coastal bombardment was also rejected. The lesson of concentration of force was emphasized in the final Report, caring more for Tryon's example than Seymour's. Bridge's Report went further than describing the 1890 manoeuvres, and sought to explain how practising mobilization and manoeuvres gave useful experience in real war operations.

The realism of the manoeuvres continued to be a source of debate. Parliamentary questions about the observation of the Sabbath (naval operations would not be suspended) and the publication by newspapers of tactically useful intelligence that

¹²⁴NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Sep 28, 1890.

¹²⁵NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 8, 1890.

¹²⁶NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 10, 1890.

¹²⁷NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 8, 1890.

¹²⁸NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 15, 1890, Jan 15, 1891.

opposing Admirals could use, which would not be available in a real war.¹²⁹ Lt. Caius Crutchley, R.N.R. and the future Secretary of the Navy League, refused to accept that his merchant ship had been captured in the 1889 exercises because the capturing cruiser was unable to overtake him.¹³⁰ During the exercises focusing on coastal attack and defence, the military was not going to be fully involved and the defending forces were going to be spread out, which commentators felt robbed the exercises of their realism and hence their experimental value.¹³¹ Admiral Geoffrey Richards thought financial limitations, namely restrictions on coal expenditure for warships, seriously hampered the reality of the manoeuvres.¹³² Bridge thought that the strategic and tactical exercises had taught clear, practical lessons to naval officers.¹³³ The contrast between these two positions is not as great as it might appear. The value of the manoeuvres for training was verified by experience, and the debates increasingly shifted to the nuances of the simulation.

Important lessons practical lessons continued to shape naval policy. The NID benefitted from the opportunity to mobilize dockyards and naval bases, and the “gulf now yawning between the Service and the R.N.R.” was being slowly bridged by included RNR men in exercises.¹³⁴ After 1891 Tryon improved signalling and started to shift institutional thinking away from the impractical micromanagement of a fleet by an Admiral towards reliance on personal initiative.¹³⁵ Tryon was beginning to clarify the distinctions between strategic, tactical and evolutionary fleet operations for his fellow

¹²⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:337, (Jul 18, 1889), c. 707; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 15, 1889), c. 1353.

¹³⁰“The Last of the Naval Manoeuvres,” *Saturday Review*, 68:1766 (Aug 31, 1889), 234.

¹³¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 2, 1889), c. 179-80; “The Last of the Naval Manoeuvres,” *Saturday Review*, 68:1766 (Aug 31, 1889), 234.

¹³²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt2, Sir G. Richards to G.P. Hornby, Jan 1, 1891.

¹³³NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Aug 14, 1891.

¹³⁴NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Jul 17, 1891; Aug 22, 1890.

¹³⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt3, G. Tryon to G.P. Hornby, Dec 23, 1891.

naval officers.¹³⁶ Many lessons remained uncertain. In the 1891 manoeuvres Admiral Long was given enough forces to take offensive action against torpedo craft, and this success seemingly verified the strategy of close, aggressive blockade particularly in the newspaper reports. Bridge to Custance that the view from “Long's side are very incorrect and misleading.”¹³⁷ The manoeuvres did show how effective offensive action could be, but this did not mean that the torpedo boat had ceased to be a strategic threat, or that the balance had positively shifted in favour of the ironclad.

Even with all the confusion of interpreting the results of the manoeuvres, their ultimate value was unquestioned — the public was being made quite aware that the money was well spent. As the *Times* explained to its readers in September, there was no certainty in the realm of naval warfare, and there were many competing theories of more or less equal value. Only active practice through manoeuvres could inform the Service about the nature of war.¹³⁸ The unfortunate aspect for Bridge was that while public interest in the manoeuvres was very high at the moment, this did not mean that the best lessons were the most popular; after the 1890 manoeuvres he found it “disheartening to find that the press and the public have been so demoralized by absurdities... that a really instructive programme bearing some likeness to the business of real war is denounced as a failure.”¹³⁹ Naval manoeuvres became an important part of the navalist discourse because they provided rare and valuable experience and information about the nature of naval warfare that commentators could incorporate into their arguments.

¹³⁶NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 31, 1891.

¹³⁷NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Aug 14, 1891.

¹³⁸Leading article, *Times*, 32810 (Sep 21, 1889), 9; see the letter by Admiral Richard Mayne, “Naval Manoeuvres,” of the same issue.

¹³⁹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 24, 1890 and Aug 22, 1890.

Home Rule and the Liberal Naval Administration

When W.E. Gladstone and the Liberal Party assumed power in February 1886, they inherited the budget, and the Navy Estimates, prepared by their predecessors. The Conservatives had been considering modest increases to meet the needs of the expanding fleet. On Jan 6, 1886, Lord George Hamilton was contemplating an increase in the naval ordnance vote from £825,000 to £1,000,000 although the estimate from the Board was even higher at £1,330,000, arguing that “I do not think we can do with less as we have so many large ironclads completing this year which must be armed.”¹⁴⁰ The Conservative government had only considered two votes, and the Liberals had to work off sketch estimates, so it would be late in February before the proposals would be completed.¹⁴¹ Both parties had to deal with the legacy of the Northbrook expansion programme that entailed greater spending on the armament, equipment and manning of new ships.

William Vernon Harcourt, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, immediately pressed for reduction to the Army and Navy Estimates in accordance with his, and Gladstone’s, views of financial orthodoxy. Harcourt believed that the country could not bear the increase to taxation that additional expenditure would entail; the combined total of £30,000,000 for the Services was unprecedented for peacetime, which he attributed to the situation in Egypt and “partly to the Pall Mall scares got up by the Services.”¹⁴² On a personal level, Harcourt wrote to Gladstone listing the average estimates for the last several administrations, three of Gladstone's and one of Disraeli's, that showed a steady increase for both services. Harcourt pointedly emphasized that the majority of the

¹⁴⁰NA, War Office Papers, WO 110/3/1248, Lord G. Hamilton to W.H. Smith, Jan 6, 1884.

¹⁴¹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 89, ff. 39-40, Ripon to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 18, 1886.

¹⁴²BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 89, ff. 43-4, W.V. Harcourt to Ripon and H.C. Bannerman, Feb 12, 1886.

increase, almost £13,000,000 over the last fifteen years, had taken place under Gladstone's supervision.¹⁴³ Gladstone encouraged Harcourt to give these financial estimates to the political heads of the Admiralty and War Office, respectively Lord Ripon and Henry Campbell-Bannerman.¹⁴⁴

Ripon sent a tart letter in answer to Harcourt's demands for reductions, commenting "It is a mistake to begin firing your big guns at the commencement of an action," and informing him that proper estimates were being prepared as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁵ Ripon reminded Harcourt that the 1884 shipbuilding programme,

has committed the Admiralty to a very large expenditure under contract with private firms, from which it is now impossible to withdraw. I am endeavouring... to reduce the other Votes as much as I can, but I am not prepared to weaken our existing naval force seriously by throwing ships out of Commission.¹⁴⁶

To Gladstone's credit, he did recognize that the construction contracts would have to be honoured.¹⁴⁷ Campbell-Bannerman was as determined as Ripon to provide essential security needs, particularly the long-neglected defences of coaling stations. Gladstone resisted, demanding, through Harcourt, that Campbell-Bannerman "give particulars as to the actual meaning on economic grounds of proceeding rapidly with Coaling Stations abroad."¹⁴⁸ The Liberal leadership was arraying itself against increased expenditure, but others did not see it the same way. Reginald Brett suggested to a friend that the current time was opportune to press for the defences of commercial ports along the lines of the Carnarvon Commission's recommendations.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 29-39, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone. Feb 15, 1886.

¹⁴⁴BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 47-8, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 16, 1886.

¹⁴⁵BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 89, ff. 41-2. Ripon to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 11, 1886.

¹⁴⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 89, ff. 43-4. Ripon to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 12, 1886.

¹⁴⁷BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 27, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 14, 1886.

¹⁴⁸BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 25-6, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt. Feb 13, 1886.

¹⁴⁹CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/7, Esher's Political Diary, Feb 18, 1886.

Although he had not formally embraced Home Rule, for Gladstone the “Irish emergency at the present moment dominates and overshadows every other emergency,” explicitly referring to the predictable demands for substantial defence spending.¹⁵⁰ Gladstone tried to stay out of the process of forming the departmental Estimates, but the Prime Minister's authority was vital to the decision-making process. After a meeting with Ripon and Campbell-Bannerman, Harcourt informed Gladstone that, “I have shot my bolt and if anything further is to be done it must be done by your authority.”¹⁵¹ He included an account of the meeting he had with Childers, Campbell-Bannerman and Ripon in order to reduce the Estimates; Campbell-Bannerman refused to go less than £19,000,000, £1,200,000 more than the last Estimates, while Ripon insisted on an £800,000 increase above 1885–6. Harcourt concluded that only borrowing or new taxation could meet these demands, and he offered his resignation instead of approving such measures.¹⁵²

Gladstone became even more insistent and entrenched in his position, claiming that “Beyond all doubt the Cabinet have decided that the Naval & Military estimates taken together are not to exceed sensibly the charge of last year as it was reported to us in Cabinet.”¹⁵³ Gladstone was firm on this point because he had already informed the Queen and the departments; the department heads, Harcourt and Childers, could discuss “not whether this should be done, but *how* it could best be done.” He did clarify that 'sensibly' might be taken to mean an increase in “only *tens* of thousands” or perhaps only one or two hundreds of thousands. Gladstone hoped that Childers would be able, in unison with Harcourt, to establish a strong defence against the 'extravagant' claims. He acknowledged

¹⁵⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 23-4, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 12, 1886.

¹⁵¹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 59, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 19, 1886.

¹⁵²BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 53-4, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 19, 1886.

¹⁵³BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 59, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 19, 1886.

that Harcourt had given a margin of some £500,000 and that “Ripon has I should think the preferable claim on this or on a good part of it.”¹⁵⁴ As the Cabinet debated its stance on naval expenditure, Gladstone felt the pressure to defend his interpretation. In a letter to Harcourt on Feb 20, 1886, Gladstone explained that his incomplete Cabinet note from February 15 said “General sense of the Cabinet that 30 millions of last Session should be’ The sentence owing to some casual interruption is not finished but the meaning is perfectly plain” that the Cabinet had agreed to this spending ceiling.¹⁵⁵ Retrenchment might be unattainable, but Gladstone opposed additional expenditure in spite of the resistance of his own party members.

Harcourt immediately responded that the issue was not what the Cabinet had agreed to, but his inability to budge Campbell-Bannerman's and Ripon's Estimates, while simultaneously recognizing that the economical mood of the Commons would make passing increased Estimates very difficult.¹⁵⁶ Gladstone suggested that Childers cut down the Estimates himself and propose them with Harcourt, but to Harcourt the only option was for Gladstone to deal with the situation himself.¹⁵⁷ Three days later Gladstone proposed the same solution, and Harcourt repeating his insistence on Gladstone's personal participation.¹⁵⁸ Harcourt argued he had already entered into particulars, and compromise had not been attainable:

You will observe that the Departments absolutely decline to accept the basis assumed to be settled viz. the reduction approximately to last years Estimates or to discuss the question on that footing. They treat the question as at large and to

¹⁵⁴BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44548, f. 55, W.E. Gladstone to H.C.E. Childers, Feb 20, 1886.

¹⁵⁵BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 61, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 20, 1886.

¹⁵⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 63-4, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 20, 1886.

¹⁵⁷BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 65, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 20, 1886; MS Harcourt 10, ff. 67-8, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 20, 1886.

¹⁵⁸*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Gladstone's Cabinet notes, Feb 22, 1886.

be governed by their judgement of their requirements independently of such a basis.¹⁵⁹

Gladstone explained that his authority was no more than that of the Cabinet, and argued that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a duty to go into the particulars of the Estimates, reminding him both that he had done so as Chancellor and that Childers was a strong asset for Harcourt.¹⁶⁰ Gladstone promised his full support within Parliamentary method. Harcourt relented and organized another meeting on February 24, but with little hope of success. He had few specific arguments to challenge the experienced department heads and Childers, far from being the reinforcement Gladstone envisioned, only proposed small cuts before siding with the Services. It verified Harcourt's belief that "The experience of the past shows that this attempt to cope with the Estimates on details has utterly failed and the Depts have invariably beaten the Exchequer..."¹⁶¹ Only by setting an absolute maximum limit to total expenditure could the Government hope to control and limit spending.

After the February 24 meeting, Harcourt reported that Childers had concluded £1,000,000 more than the 1885–6 Estimates was warranted, as well as his personal opposition. Each of these advances, he argued, were individually insignificant but combined to drive the constant expansion of expenditure that was going to create substantial deficits or new taxation; "They do not get all they ask but they establish a solid advance each year."¹⁶² Campbell-Bannerman noted to Harcourt that, "You are very cruel, after the ruthless sacrifices you have imposed on us."¹⁶³ In desperation, Harcourt

¹⁵⁹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 76-9, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 22, 1886.

¹⁶⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 80-1, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 22, 1886.

¹⁶¹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 71-3, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 22, 1886.

¹⁶²BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 82-3, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 22, 1886.

¹⁶³BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 89, ff. 47-8, W.V. Harcourt to Ripon and H. Campbell-Bannerman, Feb 26, 1886.

even referred to the French policies of meeting financial difficulties through reductions in shipbuilding, military expenditure and the recall of expeditions.

The press was not silent on the Estimates either. Brett wrote to G.E. Buckle, the Editor of the *Times*, explaining the current situation within the Government. He claimed that the Tories had set up large naval estimates because they knew they would not have to pass them through Parliament, while the new Liberal Cabinet wanted to abandon the Northbrook programme (except for Rosebery, Ripon, Campbell-Bannerman and later Morley). Eventually the Estimates were retained and the reduction in the naval yards would be minimal, although there was no money for coaling stations, while the War Office would have to discharge workmen from Enfield and reduce the force in Egypt. Brett hoped that Buckle could deploy these insights “for the purpose of screwing up C. Bannerman's failing courage” in spite of the upcoming deficit that Harcourt predicted.¹⁶⁴

The Navy Estimates presented on March 8 only showed an increase of £298,200, well less than the amount feared. The details showed about £500,000 in increases across the major categories of wages, ordnance, torpedoes, dockyard wages and contract shipbuilding, while £189,000 was saved on timber stores that no longer needed replenishing. An extra paper, a “Statement explaining the differences between amounts proposed in the Navy Estimates for 1886–87 and amounts voted for 1885–6”, was issued, possibly in response to a real or perceived need to justify the sums spent.¹⁶⁵ A belief in the existence of a Service conspiracy of activists driving up naval expenditure was growing in the minds of Gladstone, Harcourt and their close allies. Far from agitation

¹⁶⁴CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/7, Esher's Political Diary, Mar 3, 1886.

¹⁶⁵Parliamentary Paper. 1887(67). “Statement explaining the differences between amounts proposed in the Navy Estimates for 1886-87 and the amounts voted for 1885-86,” Feb 18, 1886. See also *Parliamentary Paper*. 1886(66). “Navy Estimates for the Year 1886-87.”

changing their opinions, it further entrenched their resistance and distaste for the activists' cause, and shows the complexity of the reception of propaganda.

This internal Liberal struggle over defence expenditure foreshadowed a series of crises within the party. A growing number of politicians, particularly those who had served in the War Office and Admiralty, were unwilling to compromise the security needs of the country, as they were defined by the professional officers. They were becoming convinced that the alarmists had some reasonable grounds for complaint at the irrational, and potentially dangerous, economizing for political reasons. Gladstone and Harcourt tried repeatedly to base policy decisions solely upon the financial state of the country, without regard to the strategic or technological pressures being put upon the armed forces. In what became a pattern, Gladstone prioritized Irish affairs to the neglect of other issues, perhaps misunderstanding the growing political weight of naval matters.

Administrative Reform and Randolph Churchill's Resignation

Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation as Chancellor of the Exchequer in December 1886 caught his colleagues by surprise and has posed a conundrum for historians. With this decision Churchill's meteoric career in the early 1880s came to an abrupt close, and he never re-emerged from the political wilderness.¹⁶⁶ Historians have detailed the many tensions that arose between Churchill and the Old Guard led by Salisbury, including Local Government, foreign affairs and Irish policy, behind the actual catalyst of the Estimates that had alienated his colleagues.¹⁶⁷ Salisbury explained to his

¹⁶⁶See James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 100-27, 249-51. Churchill's colleagues in the Fourth Party were A.J. Balfour, Gorst and Drummond Wolff; the latter two men were frequent participants in defence debates and questions.

¹⁶⁷This is a major theme of Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, "Crisis Politics, 1885-1886," "Die-Hard

fellow Conservatives that “R.C.’s interference was incessant,” while he was also “wholly out of sympathy with the rest of the Cabinet...;” although Salisbury tried to placate Churchill for a time he was also being encouraged by other Tories to take a stand.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, Churchill impressed the permanent officials at the Treasury with his Gladstonian financial views and he pledged himself to the cause of fiscal economy, which would inevitably have to be sought in the Service Estimates.¹⁶⁹ Biographies of Churchill have rejected Winston Churchill’s claims that his father followed a consistent course in pursuit of economy, and instead emphasize his volatility and political opportunism. There were times in 1884–85 that Churchill spoke against extravagant defence expenditure, although in a November 1884 interview he supported a new naval programme.¹⁷⁰ Imperial defence is treated as a sidelight in these accounts, “a comparatively minor issue [that] proved to be the decisive *casus belli*.”¹⁷¹ Churchill was highly cognizant of the value of popularity, but he seems to have been largely unaware of the growing current of opinion that favoured security over economy and was more willing than ever to pay for it.¹⁷² This section sheds new light on the largely negative response to both Churchill’s cause and his tactics, that showed contemporaries the unpopularity of economy compared with security and to historians the political savvy of Salisbury, who forced Churchill to stand on the defence issue alone.

Churchill was impatient to develop the 1887-8 Estimates in November, hoping that the Budget could be presented to the Cabinet in December and Parliament in

Politics, 1886,” and “Official Politics, 1886,” 214-99; see also James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 264-80.
¹⁶⁸James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 273 and 277.

¹⁶⁹Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 289-91, 302-3; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 266-9.

¹⁷⁰Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 139-40, 164-5, 186-90. Contemporaries at the India Office like Bertram Currie did not detect any “zeal in economy” or “large or statesmanlike views.”

¹⁷¹James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 165-9, 192-3, 281.

¹⁷²For instance, see Churchill’s decision to annex Upper Burma, Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 208-10.

January, almost a month earlier than normal.¹⁷³ Winston's biography emphasized the radical nature of the Budget, but more recent historical analysis shows the continuity between measures that had been considered by Harcourt the previous year and were later implemented by Goschen, including graduated death duties, a lower income tax and reduced Sinking Fund contributions. Since his budget required economy in defence spending, Churchill immediately experienced the same resistance as Harcourt the previous year. W.H. Smith, Secretary at War, blamed the extravagant expenditure on his predecessor and pointed out that this information had already been provided to Churchill.¹⁷⁴ Lord George Hamilton, the First Lord, could only offer £50,000 as the greatest reduction that could be expected. The conflict over the Estimates came to a head in mid-December. On December 14 Smith reported that, due to certain automatic increases and a drop in Indian contributions, there was "no hope whatever of any reductions in W.O. estimates compared with 1886–7."¹⁷⁵ Churchill wrote to both Smith and Salisbury on December 15 insisting that, "I cannot continue to be responsible for the management of the finances unless the total expenditure shows a considerable & marked reduction...."¹⁷⁶ Churchill proposed sending out an official Treasury minute calling attention to the increasing expenditure, perhaps hoping to browbeat better results from his colleagues. Smith quite calmly informed Churchill that, on further reflection, he simply could not ask for less than the minimum required for national safety; he insisted that if anyone was to resign, it would be himself, but assured Churchill that he would personally

¹⁷³NA, War Office Papers, WO/110/2/751, Lord R. Churchill to W.H. Smith, Nov 3, 1886.

¹⁷⁴W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 609. Nov 20, 1886. W.H. Smith to R. Churchill.

¹⁷⁵W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 611-2. W.H. Smith to R. Churchill. Dec 14, 1886.

¹⁷⁶W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 612; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 282, R. Churchill to W.H. Smith, Dec 15, 1886.

defend the Estimates in the House.¹⁷⁷ It is a remarkable letter, as Smith politely insisted on the necessary course of action and told Churchill that the Estimates would not change under a different Minister. Salisbury was surprised that Hamilton produced a reduction at all, and defended Smith as too “little imaginative” to be anything less than honest about the requirements of the War Office, so the only choice was to pay.¹⁷⁸ Historians observe that Churchill blundered on December 18 by rudely replying to Smith’s reasonable request for information on Budget figures and accusing him of gross financial extravagance, which deeply offended a quiet but influential colleague.¹⁷⁹

After received the Estimates from Smith and Hamilton on December 20, Churchill decided upon resignation. Hamilton’s memoirs recount how he met Churchill on the train to Windsor and was shocked by the seemingly random and impulsive decision to resign, particularly as the issues seemed minor and soluble.¹⁸⁰ Churchill wrote to Salisbury that night, explaining that although the Navy Estimates were now reduced by £500,000 this was offset by larger ordnance demands that increased the Army Estimates by £300,000, thus showing an estimated £31,000,000 for the two services (which would more than likely be exceeded). Churchill told Salisbury that this amount was unacceptable, but since, “I know that on this subject I cannot look for any sympathy or effective support from you and I am certain I shall find no supporters in the Cabinet” he simply offered his resignation.¹⁸¹ He suggested a wiser foreign policy might render huge armaments unnecessary, or if the policy of fortifying coaling stations and ports were

¹⁷⁷Included in W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 612; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 283, W.H. Smith to R. Churchill, Dec 16, 1886.

¹⁷⁸W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 612-3.

¹⁷⁹Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 301-4; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 284-5.

¹⁸⁰Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, 48-53.

¹⁸¹Included in W.S Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 614-5; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 287-8, R. Churchill to Salisbury, Dec 20, 1886.

abandoned or modified considerable savings might be achieved, but he recognized there was little chance of such measures.

Churchill's intentions with this letter confused contemporaries and historians. Randolph himself explained to Joseph Chamberlain that Salisbury "had been for weeks prepared for [his resignation], and possibly courted the crash;" Winston thought Salisbury delayed in the hope of reconciliation.¹⁸² Lord Rosebery agreed with Randolph's conclusions, having been informed by Brett at the time that Salisbury was very pessimistic over the Budget and had seized on Smith and Hamilton's claims against the reduction of the Estimates in order to reject the Budget as a whole.¹⁸³ Historians have tended to accept the argument that Churchill did not really intend to resign, but to use the threat of resignation to exert power since in previous conflicts the threat had convinced Salisbury to enter into correspondence.¹⁸⁴ Foster points out that Churchill was bragging to W.V. Harcourt and J. Chamberlain in July and December 1886, respectively, that he had used the threat of resignation to cut £3,500,000 from the Army and Navy Estimates.¹⁸⁵ When Hamilton heard the draft letter, he did not doubt that the result would be Salisbury accepting the offer at face value.

Salisbury proved to be an intelligent and ruthless adversary, skillfully isolating Churchill and ensuring that the debate remained fixed upon the weak case that Churchill could make against the Estimates. Arthur Balfour, who had been undermining Churchill for years to his uncle, told Salisbury that Churchill had chosen a convenient issue to stand

¹⁸²W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 613, 638, Dec 24, 1886. R. Churchill to J. Chamberlain.

¹⁸³Rosebery, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 5; CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/8, Esher's Political Diary, Dec 31, 1886, letter R. Brett to Rosebery.

¹⁸⁴James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 193, 288-9, 318.

¹⁸⁵Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 290.

on because it would “carry with him none of the party.”¹⁸⁶ Salisbury wrote to one of Churchill’s few potential allies, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, downplaying the crisis and insisting that Hamilton and Smith had done their best to reduce the Estimates; Beach delayed his return to London and did not intercede on Churchill’s behalf.¹⁸⁷ With his support solidifying, Salisbury wrote a vague letter that Churchill interpreted as an acceptance of his offer to resign, because it did not mention the possibility of a meeting or reconciliation. Salisbury explained that “it is not too much to say that the chances are in favour of war at an early date,” and patriotically reminded Churchill that British ports and coaling stations were in a disturbingly unprotected state, according to the Royal Commission, so, “To refuse to take measure for their protection would be to incur the gravest possible responsibility.”¹⁸⁸ Churchill immediately responded that increasing armaments would provide an equally great temptation to use them, a logic that had more appeal after the First World War than before.¹⁸⁹

With his resignation seemingly accepted, Churchill visited G.E. Buckle, editor of the *Times*, to pass on the news and ask for editorial support, which Buckle refused. The refusal denied Churchill the ability to broaden the ground of his resignation, and the *Times* leaders remained resolutely focused on the Estimates.¹⁹⁰ Salisbury had not written to the Queen the night before, possibly with the intention of letting Churchill impulsively trip himself up, and she was greatly offended to read of the resignation in the *Times*

¹⁸⁶James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 296-7, A.J. Balfour to Salisbury, Dec 23, 1886.

¹⁸⁷James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 290-2, Salisbury to Sir M. Hicks-Beach, Dec 21, 1886.

¹⁸⁸In W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 616-7 and James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 293-4, Salisbury to R. Churchill. Dec 22, 1886.

¹⁸⁹W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 617-8, R. Churchill to Salisbury. Dec 22, 1886.

¹⁹⁰Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 308-9; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 295. See *Times* for December 23-25.

without having been personally informed.¹⁹¹ Churchill's method of resigning exposed him to a great deal of legitimate criticism that Gladstone thought would ultimately count decisively against him.¹⁹² Initially Churchill intended to fight, "regardless of what he may bring down with him in his fall," but three days later Reginald Brett noted that Churchill was despondent, for "no one had been near him, not even those who owed everything to him."¹⁹³ Churchill took special pains to show Brett the correspondence between himself and Salisbury to defend his interpretation that the letter had accepted his resignation and should have informed the Queen. Brett thought that Churchill was too emotional to have considered any accommodation or compromise. Churchill apologized first to the Prince of Wales and later the Queen directly, and explaining that his mistake was one of "ignorance and misunderstanding, and not the least from design."¹⁹⁴ The response was a cool acknowledgement that showed no hint of regret over Churchill's departure. Post facto backpedalling could mollify some critics, but this mistake prevented other political elements from rallying to his cause.

For commentators such as Brett, Churchill's actions were inexplicable without a more serious motive than the defence Estimates, but Salisbury "probably saw the weakness and unpopularity of the restricted ground taken up by Churchill..." and prevented his escape.¹⁹⁵ In the Cabinet discussion on December 28, Salisbury was able to keep the focus solely upon the issue of the Estimates without drawing in other political questions upon which Churchill had been acting. In particular he emphasized the need for

¹⁹¹James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 295.

¹⁹²BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44255, f. 154, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Dec 25, 1886.

¹⁹³CACC, Esher Papers, ESHR/2/8. Esher's Political Diary, R. Brett to Ld Hartington, Dec 24, 1886; ESHR/2/8, Esher's Political Diary, Dec 25, 1886.

¹⁹⁴W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 642-5; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 299-300, R. Churchill to the Prince of Wales, Dec 23, 1886.

¹⁹⁵CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/8, Esher's Political Diary, Dec 23, 1886; Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 305-7.

defended coaling stations, “on which the British fleet depended for its world-wide mobility,” noting that the sums required were “remarkably small.”¹⁹⁶ Smith was given an outpouring of support from colleagues expressing their concurrence with his refusal to reduce the Army Estimates below an acceptable level.¹⁹⁷ Lord Cranbrook, never a fan of Churchill, said that “no lamentations were wasted over R.C. His conduct has disgusted all...”¹⁹⁸ Salisbury moved quickly to negotiate with the Liberal Unionists, particularly to get George Goschen on side and avoid the resignation of the Government; there were faint hopes of reconciliation through the efforts of Drummond Wolff, but Salisbury was not willing to negotiate for Churchill’s return.¹⁹⁹ There was a great deal of speculation about whether the situation would bring in the Liberal Unionists, and few were surprised at Goschen's inclusion in the Government. W.V. Harcourt, for one, was happy with this move, even though it stabilized the Conservative Government.²⁰⁰

Churchill’s reputation never recovered from the poor timing of his resignation. The sudden death of Lord Iddesleigh, Sir Stafford Northcote, on January 7, who had been the butt of much of Churchill’s political bullying, cost him sympathy.²⁰¹ Salisbury also prevented Churchill from publishing their correspondence, and then delayed the opening of Parliament until January 27 to allow the Government to stabilize before Churchill could explain himself. On top of this, Salisbury was sending his own version of events to

¹⁹⁶Summarized in W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*.

¹⁹⁷James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 297-8.

¹⁹⁸James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 304-6.

¹⁹⁹No one ‘forgot Goschen.’ Salisbury was determined to carry on regardless of whether Goschen joined the Government, Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 322-3; In his later years Churchill himself frequently restated the anecdote when talking about his resignation, W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 645; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 309-10.

²⁰⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 11, ff. 10-4, Copy of W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Jan 3, 1887. He gave five reasons, that Goschen would have been a “thorn in our side,” it kept Churchill out of office, it antagonized Chamberlain, detached Goschen from Hartington (leader of the Liberal Unionists), and because Goschen would make a bad leader, but a good Chancellor.

²⁰¹Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 323-4. The Standard was particularly hard on Churchill.

E.T. Cook of the *Pall Mall Gazette* while Smith was privately describing to other MPs Churchill's cynical play for dominance of the party.²⁰² Churchill's biographers conclude that it was not in his nature to make long-term strategic plans, and since he made no effort to mobilize or prepare supporters to make a leadership bid, his resignation was a blunder that turned into a half-hearted leadership bid.²⁰³ Foster points out that the possibility of Hartington assuming office in a coalition with Liberal Unionists was not implausible, and in this scenario Churchill may have found himself back in office; this never materialized and the Liberals were never interested in taking Churchill into their own party as a colleague.²⁰⁴

In public, the resignation provided an opportunity for navalist periodicals to reject the re-imposition of Treasury retrenchment. The *Saturday Review* explicitly condemned Churchill for opposing the Estimates, arguing that the only relevant considerations were whether the thing should be done, and whether taxpayers would pay for it. Since these two conditions had been met, with public and professional support, the Chancellor's job was not to decide policy but "to find money for necessary purposes in the most businesslike and economical way, and that is all..." The *Review* wanted readers to understand that the expenditure "was not spontaneously asked for by any Minister in love with bloated armaments" but pressed on the Admiralty and the Government by the public, making it absurd for Churchill to "come now and talk of the burden on the country as excessive."²⁰⁵

²⁰²W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 654-5; Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 311-19.

²⁰³Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 311-7; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 309-10.

²⁰⁴Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 325-6.

²⁰⁵"Our Fortifications," *Saturday Review*, 63:1627 (Jan 1, 1887), 6-7.

Rumours were circulating, correctly, that Churchill's resignation was partly related to the provision of defences for coaling stations. Carnarvon was motivated to write personally to the *Times* explaining that the general conclusions of his Commission were supported by professionals and politicians. The navy and British commerce was endangered by the lack of defences for the vital commodity of coal, which was as important as ships and guns for the effectiveness and mobility of the fleet. Carnarvon did note that progress had been made, but only where local communities had willingly borne the cost and these did not tend to be critical strategic positions.²⁰⁶ A second letter argued that improving the defences of Britain's commercial ports was vital because of the country's dependence on overseas trade.²⁰⁷ The *Times* editorial supported Carnarvon, placing even greater priority on the defences of coaling stations and commercial harbours because they liberated the fleet from local defence and increased the efficiency of naval forces. The rapid obsolescence of ordnance meant that "an organized system of artillery defence requires the utmost caution and circumspection."²⁰⁸ Systematic organization was the most important point, including sufficient personnel and a clear command structure. Even the *Naval Annual* could not apply Brassey's customary optimism to its description of the state of these stations, which also noted Gibraltar's continued lack of dock accommodation necessary to maintain the Mediterranean fleet.²⁰⁹

Liberals were torn between praise for the cause of economy, and condemnation of Churchill's methods. Harcourt had advanced warning from Brett and praised Churchill's decision, comparing it to his own situation (except he had had Gladstone's support)

²⁰⁶Carnarvon, "The Defence of our Coaling Stations and Commercial Ports," *Times*, 31962 (Jan 6, 1887), 12.

²⁰⁷Carnarvon, "The Defence of Our Commercial Ports," *Times*, 31964 (Jan 8, 1887), 12.

²⁰⁸Leader, *Times*, 31964, (Jan 8, 1887), 9.

²⁰⁹This was restated in "Our Fortifications," *Saturday Review*, 63:1627 (Jan 1, 1887), 6-7.

saying “I have always said that we should never really get economy till a [Chancellor] actually resigned on the Estimates and now we have got it.”²¹⁰ Harcourt was uncertain whether Churchill’s appeal to the Tory public would overcome the antagonism of MPs, since the “anti-Jingo declaration will be a bitter pill to many of them.” In spite of his own doubts over the possibility of war, even Gladstone had a hard time approving of Churchill’s actions, telling John Morley “I have repeatedly fought estimates to the extremity with an intention of resigning *in case*. But to send in a resignation makes it impossible for his colleagues, as men of honour, to recede.”²¹¹ Harcourt thought Gladstone’s assessment rather charitable, suggesting that Churchill had intentionally created a sensation since “this taste for sensations grows like opium eating.”²¹² When Churchill tried to convince people that his real quarrel had been about Salisbury’s foreign policy and the danger of war, Harcourt, for one, remained convinced that “if this was R.C.’s real ground he has played his cards very ill and his communiqué to the Times is wholly silent on foreign affairs.”²¹³ As mentioned earlier, the *Times* did not publish the full account, or allow Churchill to broaden his case. Labouchere, a Radical, noted the existence of a “strong public opinion, even amongst Liberals, for an expenditure on armaments.”²¹⁴ Radicals were coming around to the view that the navy had to be properly funded, and they also recognized the new political reality that national defences had become a topic of popular politics and political image.

²¹⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 15, ff. 80-9, W.V. Harcourt to J. Morley, Dec 22, 1886.

²¹¹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, f. 152, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 24, 1886; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44255, f. 154, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Dec 25, 1886; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44255, f. 154, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Dec 25, 1886. Gladstone said, the “talk about the Continental war I for one regard as pure nonsense when aimed at magnifying our Estimates.”

²¹²BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 160-6, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 26, 1886. Confidential.

²¹³BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 10, ff. 182-9, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 29, 1886.

²¹⁴W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 631-2. H. Labouchere to R. Churchill. Dec 23, 1886.

With negative perceptions surrounding his actions, Churchill attempted to defend himself. A January 12 letter from Churchill to Russell of the *Evening Post* redirected the issue away from defence towards Ireland and Local Government — a stance that won approval from Gladstone.²¹⁵ He wrote to Akers-Douglas, the Conservative Chief Whip, with an abridged version being leaked to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which he emphasized the importance of maintaining the Union and argued that unconstrained expenditure and the requisite taxation would crush the life out of the nation as well as contradict the Conservative criticism of the 1880–85 Liberal government's betrayal of its promise of 'Peace, Retrenchment and Reform.'²¹⁶ Of course, Churchill also coupled this with the promise to serve in any government that respected these principles, and to avoid any attacks on the Government. He repeated these points in Parliament on January 27, insisting that it had not been a hasty decision, but it was widely considered a weak speech that hurt his case by claiming he would have accepted token half-million reductions in the Estimates.²¹⁷ Soon after Churchill left on holidays, missing the last opportunities to regain political influence and remaining in the wilderness for the remainder of his life.²¹⁸

The wilderness did not mean that Churchill vanished entirely. Churchill pressed the Government to appoint a Committee on the Army and Navy Estimates in 1887, claiming in March that his resignation was intended to lead to an inquiry into Admiralty and War Office administration; when it finally passed Smith asked Churchill if he would accept the nomination as Chair, sarcastically praising his impartiality.²¹⁹ Winston

²¹⁵BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 11, ff. 28-9, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Jan 12, 1887.

²¹⁶Quoted in W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 640-2, R Churchill to Akers-Douglas, Jan 1, 1887; see also Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 321-3.

²¹⁷Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 326-7.

²¹⁸Churchill's biographers conclude the holiday was a bad career move, Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 329-30; James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 314-6.

²¹⁹W.H. Smith to R Churchill, May 14, 1887. quoted in W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 677;

attributed great public effect to the actions of this Committee, claiming that “As it gradually became directed to efficiency rather than simple economy it enlisted an increasing measure of professional support.”²²⁰ More recent work questions the amount of influence wielded by Churchill, because his continued campaigning for the unpopular cause of economy relied on inaccurate information and increasingly distasteful personal attacks.²²¹ He was part of a brief controversy in the *Times* over warship-design with Nathaniel Barnaby and Edward J. Reed, but it was ephemeral.

Reflecting in 1905 on his friend, Lord Rosebery explained that,

He had made another mistake, he sincerely believed in the necessity for rigid economy; so did Mr. Gladstone; so did no one else. It is the great disappointment in connection with our new or renewed democratic bodies, parliamentary and municipal, that economy has no friends. So his resignation based on this issue fell flat, and appealed to no one, except as regarded his own personality and power.²²²

Churchill’s resignation was built on a mixture of idealism, opportunism and impulse, but it was a clear lesson to contemporaries. A Chancellor had resigned on the cause of economy, and the political nation had barely skipped a beat. It could not help but encourage future navalist efforts to see the Admiralty and War Office hold to their principles and resist excessive retrenchment. There would be some economies in the Estimates, and important reforms were conducted in rationalizing defence expenditure, but it was only through the fixation upon efficiency rather than economy that these were politically palatable.

Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 330-1.

²²⁰W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 687.

²²¹James, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 308-11; see also Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 334-6; 348-81.

²²²Rosebery, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 65-6; see also CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/8. Esher’s Political Diary, Dec 25, 1886.

Chapter 5 — The 1888 Navy Scare and the Naval Defence Act,

1889

...by far the most interesting was the speech of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman. It was long, it did not read at all badly, and mankind may be defied to make out from it what Mr. Campbell-Bannerman wanted or did not want, would do or would not do, for the navy. He regretted that Her Majesty's Ministers had not done enough; he regretted that they were going to do too much; he doubted the wisdom of embarking more money in ships in the present unsettled condition of science; he thought it a good thing to increase the navy; he was afraid that too much influence was being given to the House of Lords; and he finally regretted that the Admiralty were not exerting themselves to gradually and regularly build up the navy until it was of adequate strength.... An examination of no great severity will extract from it [the speech] the information that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman has decided to wait till he finds out whether it will be most convenient for him to overcome the difficulties which prevent him from helping the Ministry increase the navy, or to yield to his natural desire to damage the Cabinet. In this Mr. Campbell-Bannerman seems to be in some sort — as on former occasions of doubt — the spokesman and representative of his party.¹

“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, April 6, 1889

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's speech indicates the constant struggle in late nineteenth-century Britain between partisan politics and non-partisan questions of national significance. The equivocal attitude of Campbell-Bannerman to the proposals of the Conservative Government was common to many Liberal politicians, and it was also the subject of frequent criticism by nationalist commentators and media organs, like the *Saturday Review*. The Conservative party was working to craft a political platform that included emphasis on patriotism, national security, and Empire, but the Liberals were no

¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 67:1745 (Apr 6, 1889), 395.

less concerned with maintaining British defences in an adequate state.² When faced with the massive public and professional consensus on the necessity of a large-scale increase of the navy that was generated over the course of the 1888 Navy Scare, neither party was willing to pay the political price for fiscal economy.

This chapter will focus on the multiple stages of the 1888 Navy Scare, and analyze some of the key processes involved in these stages and in the resulting NDA. Newspaper editors, so important in the 1884 Navy Scare, would be replaced as the leading generators of public agitation by a group of respected naval officers. Retired personalities like Admirals Symonds and Elliot would not be the most prominent voices for the navy, with their place taken by Admiral G.P. Hornby, Captain C.P.P. FitzGerald and Lord Charles Beresford. The NID had done good work in gathering intelligence and developing mobilization plans for home and foreign stations, but it was only seen as an advisory rather than a war-planning body and the salaries of the department were reduced in 1887, which Beresford loudly protested as a retrograde measure.³ Beresford's resignation from the Admiralty Board in 1888 recharged public debates on naval administration that were reinforced after the summer manoeuvres raised doubts about the navy's sufficiency for an effective blockade of the French fleet.⁴ The era-defining Two-Power Standard was officially articulated by the Three Admirals' Committee that investigated the summer naval manoeuvres in the fall of 1888, reporting in February 1889 that the navy was inadequate for an offensive blockade and the worldwide protection of

²Matthew Johnson, "The Liberal Party and the Navy League in Britain before the Great War," *Twentieth Century British History*, 22:2 (June 2011): 137-63.

³Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning*, 8-11.

⁴These are very briefly noted in Beeler, *Naval Policy in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli*, 268.

trade.⁵ The idea that the fleet should be supreme was long-standing, but this was the first time that a concrete measure was proposed for evaluating the national defences. It is often treated as a clear concept that was at minimum numerical equality in battleships with the next two largest powers, and preferably a 5:3 superiority over both powers combined.⁶ This was the general understanding, but interpretations evolved over time and proved to be very debatable in practice.

The 1888 Navy Scare is usually explained in relation to technological change and Great Power rivalries. Marder argues that the scare was the inevitable product of the previous year's cuts in the Navy Estimates and was sparked by the January revelations about French naval preparations at Toulon, an explanation that recurs in both Mark Hamilton's and Jon Sumida's accounts.⁷ Lowe goes further, claiming that while public clamour made some members of the Cabinet "uneasy... the final push that determined Cabinet action came, as usual, from Bismarck."⁸ This was Bismarck's August 1888 demand that Britain live up to its Mediterranean treaty obligations in return for help from the Triple Alliance. Foreign affairs were an important factor, and the impulse to build the fleet was in no small part aided by the desire to retain the diplomatic isolation that naval supremacy provided. Even Salisbury had no intention of entering into any entanglements with the Triple Alliance. John Beeler argues that by 1888 Britain had actually achieved a Two-Power Standard in naval expenditure, and rivals possessed relatively tiny fleets and were making very little effort, and the Board was pushed by public clamour to this act of

⁵M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 53-5.

⁶Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 106-7.

⁷Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 22-3; Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, 11-2.

⁸Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 45-8.

folly against its better knowledge.⁹ Foreign affairs provided credibility for arguments, but navalists also sought efficiency in administration for its own sake.

The result was the March 1889 NDA that provided for a five year programme of £21,000,000 paid for over seven years. The NDA included a total of 70 ships: eight *Royal Sovereign* first-class battleships, two smaller *Barfleur* second-class battleships, nine *Edgar* first-class cruisers, twenty-nine *Apollo* and *Astraea* second-class cruisers, four *Pearl* third-class cruisers, and eighteen torpedo gunboats. The programme was designed by Chief Constructor W.H. White, who Lord George Hamilton credited with the form and success of the NDA, and was accompanied by plans to scrap 72 obsolete warships, although only 30 were ultimately scrapped.¹⁰ As an Act of Parliament, the programme was immutable without the consent of Parliament, with the explicit intention that no subsequent government could abandon it without public knowledge and Parliamentary consent. As Campbell-Bannerman's speech suggests, the implication that the Liberals would abandon a popular programme was probably unjustified, but it built on Gladstone's known distaste for excessive armaments expenditure. The Liberal Party had lost credibility for its handling of the 1884 Navy Scare and the Northbrook programme did not garner much gratitude.

Historians have tended to focus on the core battleships of the programme, the iconic *Royal Sovereign* class that defined the 'pre-dreadnought' battleships. Marder treated the new battleship programme as evidence of the hypocrisy of navalist agitators who were “announcing, by day, that the large battleship was obsolete, and, by night, that

⁹Beeler, *Naval Policy in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli*, 275-6.

¹⁰M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 63. It bears more than a superficial resemblance to the type of programme which made Fisher famous in 1904.

many more were urgently required.”¹¹ Sumida supports the NDA for its emphasis on the modernity of warships, since it occurred at a moment when battleship technology had reached a satisfactory equilibrium in terms of reliable breech-loading heavy guns, lighter and tougher steel armour, high freeboard hulls and triple expansion steam engines.¹² The *Royal Sovereign* was built in two years, eight months — a testament to reforms in the Royal Dockyards and a triumph rivalling the building of the *Dreadnought*.¹³ Brian McLaren Ranft explains the NDA and the expansion of the navy in the late nineteenth century as responses to the need to defend trade, while Theodore Ropp emphasises colonial conflicts in creating the decisive *jeune école* approach to naval war and thus the need to secure maritime trade routes.¹⁴ Parkinson and Grimes show that the preference for distant blockade and commerce defence, learnt from the experience of the manoeuvres, did not mean that the battleship no longer had an important role to play in sealing up enemy commerce raiders.¹⁵ Parkinson recognizes the emphasis on cruisers but attributes the NDA primarily to the abandonment of the strategy of convoying merchant ships and its replacement by the immediate blockade of the enemy fleet in port, in order to protect trade.¹⁶ Grimes successfully integrates the growing emphasis on destroyers with the shift towards an observational, rather than a close blockade, that would be maintained by careful scouting. Certainly the nature of the NDA was determined by the Admiralty Board with these considerations in mind, but the Act was a political decision,

¹¹Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 123-4.

¹²Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, 12-4.

¹³Ashworth, “Economic Aspects of Late Victorian Naval Administration,” 502.

¹⁴Brian McLaren Ranft, “The Naval Defence of British Sea Borne Trade, 1860-1905,” (unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1967); Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*.

¹⁵Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning*, 8-11.

¹⁶M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 54-5; Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 105.

and in political terms it was the public discourses that proved to be the most powerful in driving such extreme measures.

The NDA and Two-Power Standard were important milestones and blend Britain into the meta-narrative of rising militarism leading up to the First World War. It was geared to France and Russia, but Britain was aggressively restoring her claim to a strictly defined and unquestioned supremacy that was eventually turned toward Germany. There was an internal element to the NDA, where such a policy was the outcome of professional discourses on the needs of the navy. This emphasizes the Three Admirals' Committee, and the functionality of the normal governing structure. But there is another side to the story, where political energies were harnessed through the generation of a scare in the main organs of public opinion in support of longstanding professional commentary outside of the official governing structure of the Admiralty. The interaction of these two processes is the story of the NDA, through the permeability of press, naval and political spheres.

Narrative of Events, 1888–89

The story of the NDA begins with the 1888 Navy Scare. This scare was built of multiple layers, and required empirical verification to fully impress its lessons on a skeptical public and government. The agitation was able to succeed because it built on longstanding critiques that had become to some extent common sense, backed up by the credibility of the expert testimony from leading naval officers, and was verified by well-timed 'revelations' of the real relative power of the fleet. The narrative shows that

multiple events were required to build the credibility and publicity of navalist concerns to the point where it achieved critical political mass.

Arthur Marder's pioneering work emphasized foreign affairs in the causation of the 1888 scare, and these were certainly important factors. The Italian Foreign Minister, Crispi, was trying to build the Mediterranean Agreements into a full alliance, and was passing on rumours of French aggressive movements in the hope of a British commitment of naval support.¹⁷ At the same time, British shipbuilding expenditure declined from £3,600,000 in 1885–6 to £2,500,000 in 1888–9 while French shipbuilding had increased from £1,300,000 in 1885 to £2,180,000 in 1888, which for Marder meant that “the navy panic of 1888 was inevitable.”¹⁸ Thus, when the *Standard*, a favourite periodical of Salisbury's, reported a Reuter's telegram on January 21, 1888, about the extensive preparations of the French fleet at Toulon, the warning fell on fertile ground.¹⁹ Salisbury responded by ordering the Admiralty to reinforce the Mediterranean fleet while simultaneously pursuing a diplomatic resolution.²⁰ Internal reports from the Foreign Office denied that there was anything unusual in the French movements, but the Italian *charge d'affairs* in London insisted to Salisbury that the entire French fleet was being concentrated. Salisbury was inclined to send forces to the Mediterranean, but Hamilton responded that the threat was greater in the Far East where British commerce was more vulnerable.²¹ Salisbury acquiesced, and the Duke's request for reinforcements was

¹⁷Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 35.

¹⁸Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 130-5.

¹⁹“The French Navy,” *Standard*. 19822 (Jan 21, 1888), 5. Koss notes that in the late 1880s Salisbury had substantial influence with the *Standard*, using a journalist, Austin, as his major conduit for expositions on policy so that he could disclaim responsibility (Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, II, 300).

²⁰Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 35.

²¹Hamilton quoted in Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 42.

refused on the rationale that a mobile Channel Fleet would be more flexible and could help contain enemy forces within the Mediterranean in wartime.

The Admiralty was not convinced of the threat and adopted the view of Lord Lytton's Foreign Office, which verified through diplomatic channels the truth of French assurances that the fleet was only being brought up to normal strength after a period of under-provisioning.²² When Queen Victoria inquired about French naval movements in August, Salisbury assured her that these were minor adjustments and there was no cause for concern. According to Lowe, the Admiralty did not feel that the likelihood of war was particularly serious, and tended to believe that any reaction would be deliberately provocative.²³ Leading Board members, like Hood, were confident about the state of the navy, but junior members like Beresford were thoroughly dissatisfied.

Naval officers on the spot were less comfortable with the growth of French naval power, and they made their opinions known. The Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, the Duke of Edinburgh, was asked by the Admiralty on January 30, 1888 for his opinion on what forces would be necessary in case of war. The Duke emphasized the problems of maintenance and repair of his ships, and ultimately admitted that the Mediterranean fleet was half the strength of the French forces in terms of ironclads, and thus insufficient for its duty of blockading the French fleet. The 3:2 superiority he required for blockade meant that an additional fourteen armoured ships would be necessary, which the Board was not willing to provide since it would mean weakening the Channel Fleet and the force in Home waters.²⁴ As Parkinson argues, the close blockade of the enemy was the

²²Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 126-7.

²³Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 37.

²⁴Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 129-30.

favoured British strategy, in order to seal up commerce raiders, and this defined the relative measure of sufficiency.

The Admiralty strove to strengthen Britain's diplomatic prestige in the Mediterranean. In February, Hamilton offered to extend the Channel Squadron's Mediterranean cruise, and include visits to Italian ports. At the end of March, when fears of a French attack on Italy were revived, Crispi and Bismarck put pressure on Salisbury to reinforce the Mediterranean, to which the Admiralty easily acquiesced.²⁵ The Germans wanted British protection for the Italian coast so that Italy would be freed to support Austria, which was Germany's foreign policy priority. The Italians took these British gestures to mean that the Mediterranean Agreements had solidified into a naval alliance, but the British government never felt that it had made a binding commitment. Salisbury assured the French that Britain had not become an adherent of the Triple Alliance. Domestic opposition was building, including a press campaign by the Liberal Labouchere for disclosure of British commitments, but the Government could only hedge and state that no material commitment had been made. A Parliamentary response was necessary, but outright denial would mean the repudiation of the Mediterranean Agreements and leaving Constantinople vulnerable, while outright confirmation could alienate the pro-French MPs who were integral to the Government's stability.²⁶ Later Franco-Italian war scares in April did not receive the same consideration in Whitehall.

The realization that French naval strength was being developed at an uncomfortable rate was not, in itself, sufficient to initiate large-scale debate in public forums. An additional domestic catalyst was necessary for publicity, and was provided by

²⁵Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 35-6.

²⁶Lowe, *Salisbury and the Mediterranean*, 38.

the resignation of Beresford on January 19, 1888 over the reduction of the salaries of the NID staff. To Beresford, it was intolerable that the First Lord could deceive Parliament by implying that the Board was in support of the measure, and the ability of the First Lord to speak in the name of the professional Board members spurred agitation over the administrative structures of the Admiralty. Like Randolph Churchill, Beresford took his case to the public, but Beresford was on much firmer ground than Churchill had been.

Public discourses were invigorated following Beresford's resignation. Admiral Hornby took a leading role in writing publicly to the newspapers and coordinated fellow outspoken naval officers who formed the core of the new agitation. Hornby's involvement with the LCC and the mobilization of business interests and taxpayers in support of the navalist agitation is dealt with in more detail below. The public discussion followed Beresford's lead in refocusing concerns away from the NID, to the more general critique of Admiralty administration and demands for reform. Men like Beresford, Hornby, the Colomb brothers, Sir W. Barttelot, Sir H. Havelock-Allen and Sir E. Hamley, agreed that the country needed a clear and definitive statement of national defence needs, a necessity that the *Saturday Review*, one month later, now fully supported. For the *Review* public opinion was an important element in justifying action, claiming that, "The mere facts that professional men are well-nigh unanimous in the belief that our defences are dangerously weak, and that large support is given to them from outside, supply reason enough for calling for an inquiry."²⁷ The *Review* advocated a two-power standard, without using that specific label, and demanded an official statement of the policy that the public could use as a yardstick to comprehend naval policy.²⁸ The *Review* always hesitated to support

²⁷"The Defence of the Country," *Saturday Review*, 65:1689 (Mar 10, 1888), 280.

²⁸"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 65:1690 (Mar 17, 1888), 309-10.

panic, believing only clear strategic principles could prevent future unrest. Agitators were realizing that naval expenditure was the most effective avenue for public oversight, rather than technology or administration.

In the spring of 1888, the naval scare was not powerful enough to change the 1888–89 Navy Estimates. These showed a decrease of £700,000, which Hamilton defended as compatible with increasing naval efficiency, through reduced waste. He argued that another large naval programme was undesirable because of the rapid obsolescence of ships, but this did not quiet the navalist discourse.²⁹ Hamilton claimed that the navy had become stronger under the current Administration, a partisan stance that had little credence with navalists. The conflict between Hamilton's official optimism and the pessimism of naval thinkers led to new calls for a public crusade to match 1884. Beresford led a Parliamentary effort to appoint an investigative committee. Rear-Admiral Field, MP, made a similar effort, but another naval MP, Rear-Admiral Mayne, remarked to Hornby that, “Field is the 'element' we most dread, as he is so likely to make the whole matter appear ridiculous.”³⁰ Mayne made Field sound like a petulant child, “Field must have his own motion!” instead of supporting Beresford's motion; Mayne had decided he would only support Beresford's.³¹ Field was a long-standing navalist commentator and had served in Parliament for several years, but he had even less credibility than Symonds. The loudest voice did not always carry the most weight.

A Select Committee was appointed on March 19, 1888 consisting of the navalists Beresford, Reed, Mayne, Hanbury and Colonel Hill as well as an assortment of politicians. The Committee was tasked with investigating the internal administration of

²⁹Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 126.

³⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, R-Ad Mayne to G.P. Hornby, Feb 15, 1888.

³¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, Mayne to G.P. Hornby, Mar 1, 1888.

the Admiralty and was given the power to call witnesses, request papers and generally poke around the Admiralty's business. The committee reported in August after the summer manoeuvres, and generally accepted the distribution of Admiralty business and the chain of authority from a supreme ministerial First Lord down through responsible department heads who would resign in the case of serious differences of opinion, thus ensuring that decisions were made with professional advice.³² What the 1888 Select Committee was really concerned with pursuing was the proper financial accountability and sound businesslike administration. They did touch upon questions of policy, but only to ensure personal responsibility. The conclusions of the Committee would contribute to the ultimate form of the NDA.

Beresford continued to press Parliament for a broad-ranging inquiry into administration beyond the Select Committee. He explained to a Conservative meeting at Welbeck Abby in May that, "He objected to more money being raised until that already voted was properly expended" in a "business-like manner."³³ Critics observed that his statements were vague arguments for increasing professional authority but no concrete plans.³⁴ Internal Admiralty administration persisted as a problem, but public and professional agitation turned away from the internal business of the Admiralty in favour of the sufficiency of the fleet. A Royal Commission in 1890 under Lord Hartington would revisit the administrative issue, but with the same limited effects.

Historical explanations of the NDA focus on the Report of Three Admirals after the summer manoeuvres, which officially promulgated the Two-Power Standard, but its

³²Parliamentary Paper, No. 328 (1888), "Select Committee on Navy Estimates: Fourth Report, Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix," iii-iv. Printed August 6, 1888.

³³Reported in "Lord C. Beresford on Naval Reforms," *York Herald*, 11539 (May 25, 1888), 7.

³⁴"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 65:1690 (Mar 17, 1888), 309-10.

real roots lie in the massive public mobilization in April and May 1888. A group of naval officers and businessmen gathered together under the LCC's auspices to make a concerted and coordinated attempt to “drive the nails home that we reformers are striking into the public mind.”³⁵ The mechanisms of this agitation were innovative, and are dealt with in more detail below. Navalists built an alliance with political and business interests to create an irrefutable case for naval expansion. The involvement of the LCC was not new, but the efforts were much more systematic. Government efforts to calm the situation were met with solid arguments made by credible experts, particularly Admiral Hornby. Hornby's extensive collection of personal papers, which do not suffer from the kind of extensive editing which mars Fisher's papers, show that he was at the center of a web of correspondents and was a navalist 'heavy hitter' due to his great prestige and influence.

An invasion scare was brewing in the first half of 1888, and this further invigorated navalists to make their case to the country. Navalists built an alliance with national business interests, and consistently emphasized the economics of naval war. Hornby assembled a table of the cruiser forces of different powers and sent it to key correspondents, including Admiral Mayne who had not realized how deficient the navy's force of fast cruisers was.³⁶ Hornby was a prominent proponent of cruisers, and consistently championed the idea that cruisers should be subjected to a different standard than battleships. Hornby told the LCC that 144 cruisers, costing £33,500,000, were necessary to fully protect British commerce. The protection of commerce required cruisers, since smaller craft were not seaworthy enough to be reliable. Brassey's *Naval Annual* was particularly energetic in promoting a strong cruiser construction programme,

³⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Apr 23, 1888.

³⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, R. Mayne to G.P. Hornby, Mar 1, 1888.

instead of spending money on stationary harbour defences. 'W.L.C.' in the *St. James Gazette* of May 31, 1888, a favorite magazine of Queen Victoria run by the ex-editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Frederick Greenwood, described how France had sixteen cruisers of over 18 knots speed, with superior seaworthiness and design, against only eight British ships of comparable speed. The question of armour and speed were closely related problems of cruiser design. Sir E.J. Reed continued to advocate great speed and a combination of side and deck armour for cruisers, thus necessitating very large and costly ships. Other thinkers pointed to the improbability of enemy shot striking a very narrow armour belt; they argued that protected cruisers (with only an armoured deck) gave acceptable protection and greater speed, firepower and coal for the same cost as a vessel with side armour. The *Broad Arrow* reminded its readers that the naval profession was divided between these two schools of design, and greater armour protection would require sacrificing speed, range or fighting power.³⁷ Cruisers were an effective means of appealing to non-expert business and mercantile audiences because their connection to commerce defence was obvious.

Cruisers were critical, but they could not be relied on to maintain the security of British communications without a battlefleet in support to counter enemy capital ships. P.H. Colomb's May 18 RUSI lecture on "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom" was particularly important for presenting a blue-water alternative that emphasized offensive blockade rather than fortifications as the source of British security.³⁸ Without command of the sea, Britain could be isolated and starved into submission. Brassey's *Annual* was criticized by Charles Hotham, who thought "Brassey's comparison of English

³⁷"Comments," *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 7, 1888), 6.

³⁸See Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, 46-7.

and French and Russian ironclads [was a] most incorrect and dangerous statement” because it misidentified belted cruisers as ironclads.³⁹ The distinction was important, since belted cruisers could not fight in a fleet action but were valuable for trade defence and patrolling in force. Hotham, a great admirer of Hornby's efforts to rouse the public, suggested that he should “Take up the cudgels for more battle ships” as he had already done for cruisers.⁴⁰ Cruisers and commerce defence was the initial impulse for building the alliance with the LCC, but the incorporation of the battlefleet through an offensive blockade of raiders ensured a broad expansion programme.

France was by far the dominant threat in naval thought, but there was enough leavening of Russia to justify a Two-Power Standard. A *St. James' Gazette* article, “Danger in the Pacific,” describing Russia's superior strength in the Pacific was significant enough to prompt the MP Seton-Karr to ask for verification from the First Lord of the Admiralty, who insisted that the author had greatly exaggerated the Russian fleet, which was one ironclad and five cruisers, not four ironclads and ten cruisers.⁴¹ The *Broad Arrow*, a weekly service periodical, noted a panic in the Austrian press when a meeting was held between the Kaiser and the Tsar.⁴² While the French naval challenge was the heart of British strategic thinking, the Russian threat posed a world-wide problem that navalists used to justify the Two-Power Standard and blue-water strategic focus.

Concerns over the state of imperial defences resulted in W.H. Smith's motion on June 4 for a £3,450,000 programme providing a squadron of cruisers for Australian waters and improved defences for coaling stations. The subsequent debates quickly

³⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9, C. Hotham to G.P. Hornby, Apr 10, 1888.

⁴⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9, C. Hotham to G.P. Hornby, Jul 15, 1888.

⁴¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:326, (May 11, 1888), c. 41-2.

⁴²Leader, *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 7, 1888), 17.

expanded into a general discussion of the state of the navy. The Government would not respond to calls for a new Commission inquiring into the navy, but would create a Committee of the Cabinet to investigate. Captain Price, MP, thought, quite presciently, that the situation would be very similar to 1884, with confident official statements transforming into demands for substantial expenditure.⁴³ The Commons was heavily divided. Some politicians resisted these new calls for expenditure. C. Wilson argued that the only dangers to Britain were the enemies made in former wars, and a halt should be made to a wasteful arms race, since ships were quickly obsolete. Jacob Bright naively asserted that merchant ships were now safe from capture at sea, through international law, and that the French posed no aggressive threat after their 1870 defeat. Brassey argued in the Lords that Britain needed more fast cruisers to protect trade, and that the money could be found by reducing expenditure on ships too small or slow for fleet actions or commerce defence. Not all observers were so quick to dismiss the utility of small ships, which had proven useful in previous wars.⁴⁴ In Parliament, Hamilton stated that “the Government have no intention of making such a sudden addition to the Naval Force of this country” as alarmists were demanding, because the Admiralty would not “indulge in spasmodic shipbuilding.”⁴⁵

Arthur Forwood, the Civil Lord, attempted to calm public fears and counter ongoing navalist activity with a speech in early July to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. He explained that the sheer enormity of British mercantile shipping made it impossible for naval forces to provide effective protection against raiders (an early parallel to the 1930's 'the bomber always gets through' idea). The only solution was the

⁴³“House of Commons, Monday, June 4,” *Times*, 32404 (Jun 5, 1888), 7.

⁴⁴“The Lords and the Navy,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1046 (Jul 14, 1888), 33.

⁴⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:328, (Jul 13, 1888), c. 1244.

wholesale transfer of British commerce to neutral flags. Naval officers thought that the speech was 'floundering', and were unwilling to accept a protection that only applied on paper. Hotham thought “Commercial men will not be pleased at his 'Defence of Commerce'!!” because it relied on transferring ships to neutral flags in wartime.⁴⁶ The *Broad Arrow* pointed out that the law was not as simple as switching flags; transfers of ownership had to be judged to be valid legal sales in a Prize Court. The only viable solution was the same as it had been in the past, to keep the rate of capture at a low limit to prevent extravagant insurance premiums.⁴⁷

The Admiralty, at this point, was divided on the issue of the state of the navy. Many officers, like Beresford and Hornby, were obviously discontented, but leading officers on the Admiralty Board were not so insecure. Marder's analysis concludes that Hood and Hoskins were complacent about the state of the navy.⁴⁸ Hotham explained to Hornby that, “Hood thinks we are strong enough and Cabinet [is] no doubt delighted to leave our small building programme....”⁴⁹ Hood's testimony stated that six cruisers were required by 1890, certainly not as many as Hornby thought, while battleships would also need to be constructed to replace obsolete vessels and match fresh foreign ironclad construction. The programme was moderate compared to some navalist demands, but it left significant latitude for new efforts. Hood was unwilling to give a definite estimate of how close Britain was to achieving a Two-Power Standard, but Hotham, a close confidant of Hornby, explicitly declared himself to be unsatisfied with the strength of the navy in both cruisers and battleships. Hood was far less concerned than his colleagues,

⁴⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, C. Hotham to G.P. Hornby, Jul 15, 1888.

⁴⁷*Broad Arrow*, 41:1046 (Jul 14, 1888), 38-9.

⁴⁸Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 132.

⁴⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, C. Hotham to G.P. Hornby, Jul 15, 1888.

who were also more involved with mobilizing public support through Hornby, but the Committee felt that Hood's evidence meant that a better and more complete assessment of Britain's strategic position and defence requirements was needed.

John Colomb pressed the Government to provide a return that would authoritatively state the comparative strength of foreign navies, including their disposition and the state of completion of warships.⁵⁰ A return was produced, but the numbers continued to be a source of disagreement. Beresford argued that British strength was overestimated by including two obsolete ships sold for scrap and six coast defence ships on distant stations. Hamilton admitted this, but countered that eight French ships were armoured gunboats, and half their coast defence ships were ineffective.⁵¹ For Hotham the unarmoured ends of British battleships effectively made them second-class ships, making the navy seriously qualitatively inferior to the French.⁵² As the state of the navy became more frequently discussed in quantitative terms, there was tremendous uncertainty in the 1880s over the qualitative accuracy of these comparisons. Standardized warship classes were necessary for the clear application of the Two-Power Standard, but were difficult to achieve because of constant technological change.

The 1888 summer naval manoeuvres firmly established the practice of annual fleet exercises for the Royal Navy. Their primary role was to practice mobilization along the lines developed by the recently formed NID. 'A Naval Journalist' described in the *United Service Magazine* how these exercises created valuable publicity for the navy, and had been widely reported in the newspaper and periodical press.⁵³ On the other hand,

⁵⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:325, Apr 30, 1888, c. 895-6.

⁵¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:328, Jul 17, 1888, c. 1527-8.

⁵²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, C. Hotham to G.P. Hornby, Jul 15, 1888.

⁵³'A Naval Journalist,' "The Naval Mobilization and Manoeuvres of '88," *United Service Magazine*, NS I,

Admiral Field tried to get a vessel to convey MPs to witness the manoeuvres, but there was little interest.⁵⁴ The manoeuvres involved a total of 70 warships, which was smaller than the fleet assembled for the previous year's Jubilee Review, but the ships were more modern and the fleet more battle-ready.⁵⁵ Eleven Royal Naval Reserve officers were participating in to strengthen ties between the regular and reserve forces. The goal was always to make this practice as realistic as possible, and the rules had been modified to better reflect the relative fighting power of different ships.

The exercises were designed to test the effectiveness of blockade, blockade-breaking and fleet actions, which were the core issues facing British war planning. Two fleets were composed, with the relative strengths of the British forces in Home waters and the French forces in the Atlantic. 'A' Fleet under Admiral Baird, Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Squadron, was tasked with masking 'B' Fleet, under Admiral Tryon, that was stationed in two Irish ports representing Brest and Cherbourg. The mobilization of the fleet was very successful, and the squadrons were the most powerful that had been formed for such exercises, "which is a good deal more than can be truthfully said of the experimental squadrons of preceding years."⁵⁶ The *United Service Magazine* was quick to connect the speed of the mobilization with the activity of Beresford, Colomb and Hall, who were important supporters of the NID. 'A Naval Journalist' defended the effort and expense of the manoeuvres because they were more real and valuable than the limited benefits obtainable from fleet reviews.⁵⁷

(Aug 1888), 385-92.

⁵⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:328, (Jul 12, 1888), c. 1084-5.

⁵⁵"Navy Notes," *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 7, 1888), 18-9.

⁵⁶"Navy Notes," *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 28, 1888), 103.

⁵⁷'A Naval Journalist,' "The Naval Mobilization and Manoeuvres of '88," NS I, *United Service Magazine*, (Aug 1888), 385-92.

The manoeuvres began on July 24, 1888. 'A' Fleet was unable to fully contain the enemy fleet and three cruisers broke through the blockade to conduct commerce raiding operations and levy 'indemnities' from undefended coastal towns, while a battleship and three other cruisers terrorized the East coast of England and Scotland. Baird lifted the blockade and moved his fleet to the Thames, which allowed 'B' fleet to unite and attack the commercial ports of Holyhead and Liverpool. As these attacks were occurring, Campbell-Bannerman asked the Government if the 'escaped cruisers' would be curtailed to prevent "needless disturbance and inconvenience to the inhabitants of the places visited, without any advantage to the Naval Service of the country."⁵⁸ Admiral Field interrupted to commend the officers for their zeal in enlightening the public about the vulnerability of the coast. Hamilton refused to grudge the hardworking sailors a few blank shots. Campbell-Bannerman demanded to know if the Admiralty was deliberately trying to teach the civil population of the country a lesson; Hamilton evaded, saying that both the service and the country were learning valuable lessons. The Admiralty would certainly not want to admit that the exercises were being dramatized for political effect. Public anxiety was further stoked by newspaper reports of mechanical defects in warships, but Hamilton assured the House that these reports were exaggerated and ships were properly supplied.⁵⁹ Coal supply was challenging, both the protection of colliers and the simple physical challenge of refueling at sea or in open roadsteads.

The public outcry to these depredations was predictable, and reminded the public of the dangers alarmists had identified, both for invasion and commerce raiding. The ability of cruisers to slip around British forces raised the spectre of invasion, and of the

⁵⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:329, Aug 7, 1888, c. 1839-42.

⁵⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:328, Jul 19, 1888, c. 1740-2; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:329, Jul 20, 1888, c. 40 and c. 49; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:329, Jul 23, 1888, c. 192-3.

100,000-man raids that Wolseley had been describing in early 1888. The real result, however, was an inclination among politicians and strategic thinkers to strengthen the fleet rather than to accept the redirection of funds to fixed fortifications. To provide an official analysis of the naval manoeuvres and to answer some of the larger strategic and tactical questions arising from the exercises, a Committee of Three Admirals was appointed, including Sir Frederick Richards, Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, and Sir William Dowell. The first two members would serve as First Naval Lord in the early 1890s. Much to Beresford's astonishment and outrage, Hornby, "the one independent man in whom the Service has confidence," was not asked to serve on the Committee.⁶⁰ These men quickly expanded their mandate into an examination of the sufficiency of the navy for the anticipated needs of a full-scale naval war.

Wolfe Murray told Hornby that the danger of torpedo attacks was increasing as the crews gained experience, making "a blockade by ironclads in the old sense of the term [close blockade]... impossible."⁶¹ Murray claimed that the experience justified Hornby's belief that 144 new cruisers were needed, since practical blockade would require a three to one superiority in order to keep the enemy under observation and prevent the escape of cruisers. George Baden-Powell's piece in the *Fortnightly Review* argued that a mosquito fleet composed of small, civilian craft armed with small quick-firing guns and torpedoes would render blockade difficult by preventing coaling and opportunistically attacking.⁶² Blockading forces required a new type of torpedo vessel with the speed, range and sea-keeping to keep the enemy under observation. The first of

⁶⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 10, 13, 1888.

⁶¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, W. Murray to G.P. Hornby, Aug 11, 1888.

⁶²George Baden-Powell, "Mosquito Defence," *Fortnightly Review*, 44:262 (Oct 1888), 546-56.

these torpedo-boat destroyers was the Japanese navy's *Kotaka*, of 203 tons and 19 knots speed, carrying four 1.5-inch guns, six 14-inch torpedo tubes.

Before the end of August there were media reports about an increase of the navy in both ironclads and cruisers. By reporting such a rumour, real or created, Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette* took the opportunity to explain how the manoeuvres had proven the inadequacy of the existing navy. The public had been told that the navy was strong enough to seal up the enemy's fleet and to hunt down cruisers, and both had been proven false — fast cruisers escaped at night and proved difficult to catch, while torpedo boats and their crews were worn out after ten days service.⁶³ Stead offered no solutions, simply that the close blockade was dead. Beresford, backed by the writing skill of Stead and the circulation of the *Pall Mall*, argued that the naval manoeuvres proved that Admiral Baird's 7:5 ratio of ironclads was inadequate to completely blockade the enemy, and that there were insufficient reserves in the Channel after blockading forces were deployed. He recommended that five ironclads and twenty cruisers should be built at once.⁶⁴ Even then, Beresford's priority was implementing a system of personal responsibility at the Admiralty and the preparation of the navy for war, for which readers were directed to Beresford's May and June *Nineteenth Century* articles.⁶⁵

The professional advisers at the Admiralty Board may have felt empowered by the growing public awareness of naval affairs; they were also driven by the fear that the Army would get a greater share of the defence pie through Wolseley's activities in promoting an invasion scare, dealt with in more detail below. The Admiralty Board,

⁶³“An Increase of the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7310 (Aug 21, 1888), 1.

⁶⁴“Is the Navy Strong Enough?” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7325 (Sep 7, 1888), 1-2.

⁶⁵Charles Beresford, “The Admiralty Confusion and Its Cure,” *Nineteenth Century*, 23:135 (May 1888): 760-5; Beresford, “A Workable Admiralty,” *Nineteenth Century*, 23:136 (Jun 1888): 809-16.

including Hood, Hoskins, Graham and Hotham, recommended in July 1888 that the Government undertake a new shipbuilding programme of £18,569,063 spread over five years, “with the view of providing thoroughly against a combination of France and Russia against this country without allies.”⁶⁶ In case of a war with France, Russia remaining unmentioned, the navy would require two main battlefleets, in home waters and in the Mediterranean (stationed at Gibraltar) superior to French forces in those areas in order to contain enemy forces, along with a “small force of fast cruisers” to protect trade off the coast of Ireland and the Channel. The French would be sealed inside the Mediterranean, not Toulon itself, by a distant blockade relying on fast cruiser scouts to prevent the escape of commerce-destroyers, particularly armed merchant cruisers. In the attached comparison between French and British forces, the British were numerically superior in all classes save coast-defence vessels, with the superiority in armoured cruisers growing greatly by April 1889. The conclusion was that these forces, properly disposed, would “render the coasts of the United Kingdom safe against invasion or bombardment, and render Gibraltar and Malta secure against attack, and provide protection for our trade at the entrance to and in the Channel.”⁶⁷ Coaling stations would be sufficiently protected against single-ship raids by the fortifications already planned.

The problem anticipated by the memorandum was a Franco-Russian combination, which would entail the defence of Constantinople. This was the one contingency that Hood believed would justify a new programme. The Baltic could be contained by a small force, while the Turkish Black Sea fleet would need help against three new Russian battleships nearing completion. This was possible with existing forces, but there was no

⁶⁶NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/24, A.W.A. Hood, A.H. Hoskins, W. Graham, C.F. Hotham, “The Requirements of the British Navy,” Confidential, July 1888, 1.

⁶⁷NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/24, “The Requirements of the British Navy,” July 1888, 3.

reserve and no margin to counter new Franco-Russian efforts or compensate for obsolescence. The memorandum recommended a programme of eight first- and two second-class battleships, along with eight first-, twenty-five second- and four third-class cruisers, and eighteen torpedo catchers. The Admiralty request was based on a Two-Power Standard against the plausible threat of a Franco-Russian combination. The similarity between this proposal and the later £20,000,000 programme advocated in public by Beresford show that there was significant communication between naval officers. Admiral Hornby corresponded regularly with both Beresford and Hotham to coordinate their efforts, and this correspondence is examined in greater detail below.

The combination of multiple stages of public controversy and agitation with the practical experience of the manoeuvres proved to be decisive. In September Lord George Hamilton acknowledged the merits of the navalist case and effectively accepted that public concerns required a clear response. He promised that “the Board are going to find out practically and definitely what are the requirements of the country for national defence first, and then submit a plan or proposal for the acceptance of Parliament and the people.”⁶⁸ Beresford was not willing to rest on these promises, and advised Hornby that they continue their agitation and “keep the [Government] up to the protestations and promises.”⁶⁹ Beresford's intention to continue pressing the Government was published in the *Broad Arrow* on October 27, which noted that recently discovered letters of Lord Nelson showed that organizational problems were not new.⁷⁰ The *Edinburgh Review's* article on “Naval Defence” also used history to justify naval expansion, in this case

⁶⁸“Lord Charles Beresford and the Admiralty,” *The Star*, 70, (Oct 23, 1888); NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/35, Admiral H. Keppel's Diary, Oct 6, 1888.

⁶⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 13, 1888.

⁷⁰“Naval Notes,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1061 (Oct 27, 1888), 499-5.

evoking the memory of the Spanish Armada when technology had been very uncertain and the Spanish had gone to war with an outdated understanding of the current conditions.⁷¹ The critique of administration raised its head again, with Beresford and Randolph Churchill collaborating to oppose any new shipbuilding programme without a clear plan for national defences. Nevertheless, the Government had conceded the core principle, that strategic plans should determine the peacetime force level of the navy.

Hornby's circle of correspondents continued to agitate in support of a new shipbuilding programme, but effective public messaging was a point of contention. After Hornby spoke at the LCC, Beresford wrote pleadingly, "Please don't ask for 30 Ironclads and 250 Cruisers, such demands though they may be right will drive the country into thinking we better take our chances as we are than go into any extra defence at all if it takes so much to put us right."⁷² Hornby did not react well to this advice, labelling Beresford a 'politician and a trimmer' for asking for less than what was necessary. Beresford clarified that his point was that if naval forces were to be evaluated in terms of national insurance, then if the premium was considered to be too high by the tax-paying population, the country might choose to forego insurance altogether.⁷³ Beresford thought that five ironclads and twenty-two cruisers would meet the most pressing needs, and was an achievable goal. Some agitators, like Hornby, were uncompromising in their principles, but others recognized that naval expenditure was the product of political negotiations that required flexibility and nuance. While the *Broad Arrow* was hesitant to give the 'small fry' free licence to speak on naval affairs, 'great men' (which would

⁷¹"Naval Defence," *Edinburgh Review*, 168:344 (Oct 1888), 451-91.

⁷²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120C/1 pt8, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 10, 1888.

⁷³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120C/1 pt8, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 18, 1888.

include Hornby) should speak their full mind to the country.⁷⁴ The complexities of organizing a coordinated public movement of naval experts is dealt with in greater detail below, as Hornby and his colleagues united with commercial interests through the LCC.

The *St. James' Gazette* presented a 'pilot balloon' for a new government programme on October 20, but it met with heavy criticism for only including four battleships. Admiral Elliot did not think that this programme met the expectations of Beresford and other navalists after Hamilton's September speech for a definite scheme of defence, and argued that ten new battleships were necessary. The *Broad Arrow* supported Elliot, suggesting that other thinkers like Hornby and Symonds might recommend even more battleships and advising navalists to hammer away on the point that the navy was actually £1,600,000 in arrears; this had to be made up before any expenditure might be considered additional. Anticipating arguments about commerce warfare, the *Arrow* countered that while cruisers were important, they had to have the support of a battlefleet, while only in the event of a successful blockade would an enemy attack commerce, for want of other objectives.⁷⁵

Under the concerted onslaught that included activity by army advocates about the danger of invasion (examined in detail below) the Government waffled. Arthur Forwood's speech in late October was taken by navalists to mean that the Government had abandoned its claims of naval sufficiency. Forwood did make partisan claims criticizing the previous administration as retrograde compared to the current progressive administration, which the *Broad Arrow* thought to be “unwise and untruthful.”⁷⁶ Ordnance problems had been due to manufacturing and material, not administration, and

⁷⁴“Comments,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1062, (Nov 3, 1888), 518.

⁷⁵Summarized in “The Programme,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1061 (Oct 27, 1888), 483-4.

⁷⁶“Comments,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1062 (Nov 3, 1888), 518.

regardless of the balance of work between private shipyards and the Royal Dockyards, the sums devoted to shipbuilding had fallen behind, which the *Arrow* blamed on Churchill's drive for economy. Forwood restated his belief that in wartime commerce would continue under neutral flags, which offended the sense of realism of naval officers.

The Admiralty had continued its work on the "Special Programme for New Construction, 1889–90 to 1893–94" along the lines of the June 1888 memorandum.⁷⁷ W.H. White laid out the detailed arrangement for building sixty-five warships over five and a half years, including the detailed financial progress of the dockyards. There would be eight first-class and two second-class battleships in the programme, the number proposed by extra-Parliamentary commentators. Arrangements included completing current construction, and ensuring a constant £700,000 annual expenditure at the dockyards. White expected that new shipbuilding would be contemplated in 1892–93 and new warships would be laid down in early 1893–94 to ensure continuity of construction and the dockyards labour force. White accurately predicted both the upswing in naval discourse in 1892 and the Spencer shipbuilding programme that resulted from renewed agitation in the 1893 Navy Scare. The larger warship designs in the NDA would also necessitate improvements in dockyard equipment, and contract ships would be purchased once designs were finalized after dockyard testing.

Parliamentary questions revealed the expectation of a new programme of expenditure before the Three Admirals' Committee reported. After one particularly successful debate, Beresford crowed to General Sir John Ardagh that "The Government

⁷⁷NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/30, W.H. White, "Special Programme for New Construction, 1889-90 to 1893-94," Confidential.

have completely given into my demands and my resignation has borne good fruit.”⁷⁸ Campbell-Bannerman asked the Government on November 12 about the scope of the scheme that the Government was contemplating since the Northbrook programme was completed. At this stage Hamilton explained that there would be a “fresh and bolder start — a more sustained effort” the next year but this would not be a special programme along the lines of 1884 and there would be no additional spending in the current year (1888–89).⁷⁹ The Government would stick to the normal season for presenting defence budgets; although the Government planned a large programme of construction, it would not begin out of season, as the Northbrook programme had. In response to Parliamentary pressure to reveal the Government’s intentions, Lord George Hamilton announced that,

we desire to lay before [the House] our programme in its entirety, and with the fullest information relating to each stage, both as regards cost and rate of progress, in the hope that the continuity of a shipbuilding programme, sanctioned under such conditions, would not be affected either by a change of Government or the election of a fresh House of Commons.⁸⁰

The implication was that a Liberal Government could not be trusted with the safety of the nation, a claim based on partisan politicking rather than solid facts.

The Admiralty presented initial Navy Estimates for 1889–90 to the Cabinet on November 14, although it had been developed by the 10th.⁸¹ In order to match the construction of the previous year, compensation had to be made for the sums transferred to the Imperial Defence Act loan and in savings on stores the previous year (£600,000) before any real additions could be made. The manoeuvres had revealed inadequacies in personnel and infrastructure, so 1,800 more men were recommended (nearly two-thirds

⁷⁸NA, Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/1, C. Beresford to J. Ardagh, Nov 10, 1888.

⁷⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:330, (Nov 12, 1888), c. 911-2.

⁸⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:330 (Nov 15, 1888), c. 1230.

⁸¹NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/36, “Navy Estimates, 1889-90,” Confidential, Nov 14, 1888.

Marines) and improvements to coaling facilities in home ports, but the bulk of additional expenditure was earmarked for new construction. Hamilton emphasized the moderation of the shipbuilding programme, which entailed a £429,000 increase in shipbuilding charges in the first year and was in accord with Hood's July memorandum signed by the Board. Hamilton emphasized the efforts that would be made to reduce construction times by two years, three and a half years for a battleship instead of six years eight months. New expenditure on shipbuilding was anticipated for the 1894–95 financial year, when the vast majority of construction work would be completed.

Parliamentary navalists were concerned over whether the new programme would ensure that ships were 'battleworthy,' although the definition of this term was uncertain.⁸² Beresford was also concerned about the quality of the ships built by the anticipated new programme. The Select Committee had recommended investigation into the longstanding questions about the vulnerability of the unarmoured ends of British battleships. It was important to everyone that such a large programme of ships would be built to the highest possible standard of design. Hamilton assured Beresford that the question was under consideration of the highest authorities, but he demurred from the very expensive experiments that Beresford proposed — using one battleship as a test target to determine if perforating the unarmoured ends would compromise stability or floatation.⁸³

Navalists were undoubtedly pleased with the results Three Admirals' Committee, although its official recommendations were not made public. The Liberal *Daily News* criticized the Government's decision to withhold publication, arguing that the Report revealed that the majority of the ships involved in the manoeuvres had been “unsuitable

⁸²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:330, Nov 15, 1888, c. 1229-30.

⁸³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:330, Nov 20, 1888, c. 1649-50.

for modern naval warfare” due largely to deficiencies in speed.⁸⁴ The *Army and Navy Gazette* fully concurred with this view — the typical distrust of official secrecy — and suggested that Parliament could not properly judge any shipbuilding proposals without a clear account of the Committee's conclusions. Unknown to the public at large, the Committee had clarified the all-important 5:3 ratio, which dictated that a blockading force needed five ships to every three of the enemy’s in order to have an equal force on station and compensate for ships refueling or refitting. The Two-Power Standard was clearly stated as a foundational measure of British naval sufficiency, although efficiency remained a separate concern. The importance of this Committee is well recognized in historical accounts as foundational for the creation of the NDA, but its arguments were not original. Its value was in providing a clear and authoritative statement, whose credibility could not be questioned, of ideas that had been developed for months.

The Committee expanded on its mandate to consider the essential character of British security. They concluded that the Channel and Mediterranean Fleets should be able to blockade France and a reserve squadron should remain in Home Waters, with enough battleships and cruisers to reinforce overseas stations and replace casualties. They acknowledged that the naval vessels being constructed were of excellent quality and would greatly improve Britain's position relative to France. The problem was that “no fresh ironclads appear to have been laid down since the year 1886, and as there is nothing, in our opinion, to justify the belief that the days of ironclad battleships are over, we recommend a resumption and a steady continuance of ironclad building.”⁸⁵ The Committee concluded that the navy was too weak to act offensively to blockade even a

⁸⁴Quoted in “Naval Notes,” *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1515 (Feb 2, 1889), 83.

⁸⁵“Report of the Committee on the Late Naval Manoeuvres,” *British Naval Documents*, 614-7.

single enemy power effectively and still be capable of simultaneously carrying out its other necessary wartime duties. Cruisers had been a major point of weakness in the 1888 manoeuvres and, with the expense of providing protection for Britain's massive trade, the Committee suggested merchant vessels would have to rely on speed to evade commerce raiders, possibly moving in convoys and using ramming tactics against unarmoured cruisers.⁸⁶ Admiral R.V. Hamilton, who had served on the Committee, was appointed Second Naval Lord in December, indicating that the newly articulated Two-Power Standard was going to be official policy. Lord George Hamilton produced a significant Cabinet memorandum on December 1 that explained in detail why the shipbuilding programme was going to be an Act of Parliament, discussed below.

In the December 13 Parliamentary debates, Beresford laid out his position in clear terms. The Shipbuilding Vote in particular was the foundation of imperial and commerce defence, and should be at a size comparable to a combination of two enemies.⁸⁷ The programme that Beresford proposed was seventy ships, including four first- and ten second-class ironclads, forty cruisers and assorted torpedo craft for a cost of just over £20,000,000. Lord George Hamilton responded that the navy was not as strong as it should be, essentially conceding the alarmist case, and assured the House that the Government was preparing a “genuine and prolonged” policy. In his memoirs, Beresford claimed credit for the first statement of the Two-Power Standard, explaining that he had independently analyzed the situation and developed a programme that paralleled the internal process at the Admiralty.⁸⁸ Lord George Hamilton, in his memoirs, refused to give credit to Beresford, emphasizing the internal development of the Two-Power

⁸⁶Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 88.

⁸⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:332, (Dec 13, 1888), c. 124-45.

⁸⁸*Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, 360-1.

Standard and NDA.⁸⁹ Politicians were consistently wary of attributing any significance to the efforts of writers and thinkers outside the Admiralty. The December issue of *Punch* considered the multiple stages of the navy agitation, and concluded that if Hamilton and the Government failed to do their duty in providing national defence, they would be forced out of office by “what Lord Tennyson calls 'the wild mob's million feet.’”⁹⁰ Beresford was Oliver Twist, asking for more money, while Hamilton was described in equally Dickensian terms as the 'naval Micawber,' full of vain and irrepressible optimism. *Punch's* mockery was focused on the Government's persistent attempts to discredit the naval agitators, when all experience had justified the fears.

While Parliamentary debates gave Beresford the opportunity to express his views, he also bypassed Parliament and spoke directly to the country through an article in the *Nineteenth Century*.⁹¹ Given the political upheaval in France surrounding General Boulanger and the destabilizing of the Third Republic, Beresford theorized that France might seek a conflict with a vulnerable Britain. Beresford focused on developing the essential principles for evaluating the material strength of the navy. To Beresford, a

definite Plan of Campaign is based on the actual forces at the disposal of the country. By having such a plan the many and various shortcomings of the fleet for naval defence, so often brought before the public, would be actually and practically found out.⁹²

Naval sufficiency could only be measured by the ships required to implement the key strategy of blockading and containing the enemy fleet, for which numbers and tonnage were inadequate measures. For instance, French coast defence ships counted while similar

⁸⁹Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, II, 111-3.

⁹⁰[Edward James Milliken], “Confound Their Navy-ish Tricks,” *Punch*, (Dec 22, 1888), 293.

⁹¹Charles Beresford, “The British Fleet and the State of Europe,” *Nineteenth Century*, 25:143 (Jan 1889), 1-11.

⁹²Beresford, “The British Fleet and the State of Europe,” *Nineteenth Century*, 10.

British ships did not, because the British ships would need the range and sea-keeping necessary to conduct an offensive blockade. Cruisers had to be provided in a fixed proportion, and were equally deficient in numbers. Beresford applied a combination of internal and external forums to speak directly to both political elites and to their informed constituents, and in bypassing Parliament his message was far more difficult to ignore.

The Two-Power Standard was at the heart of Beresford's demands. At a political dinner on January 4, 1889, Beresford raised the idea that the Royal Navy should be able to “engage any two other fleets combined,” the Two-Power Standard, while the current fleet was not even at a one-power standard.⁹³ Beresford then spoke on January 12 to a crowd of workmen employed at a shipyard in favour of the political candidacy of Sir John Pender. Pender was a believer in the Two-Power Standard and the need for a new naval programme, and Beresford used the occasion to restate his arguments about the vulnerability of British trade due to the disproportion between the enormity of commerce and the meagreness of naval forces to protect it.⁹⁴ He specifically rejected the arguments for the fortification of home ports, because if Britain lost command of the sea and was blockaded, the subsequent starvation and chaos would render an invasion unnecessary.

The Government programme was fully fleshed out in February 1889, although White's February 9 memorandum outlining the distribution of work at the different dockyards and shipyards over the five years only included the sixty-five ships originally described in Hood's July memo and identical to the November 1 statement.⁹⁵ This was still unknown to the public, but speculation was rampant. The *Saturday Review* was more

⁹³“Lord Charles Beresford on the Navy,” *Times*, 32588, (Jan 5, 1889), 3.

⁹⁴“Lord C. Beresford on the Navy,” *Times*, 32595 (Jan 14, 1889), 10.

⁹⁵NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/28, W.H. White, “Special Programme for New Construction, 1889-90 to 1893-94,” Confidential, Feb 9, 1888.

confident after Goschen promised there would be a new programme in an early February speech, and as Chancellor of the Exchequer he spoke for the money.⁹⁶ The *Review* was pleased with Goschen's description of the ongoing 'tyranny' of inventors, who were able to present new inventions as revolutionary changes to the mass public and deceive them into spending massive sums on questionable technology. Goschen's example was long range guns, ironic in hindsight, because he described them as a fine technology that was irrelevant to the close-range actions envisioned by current tactical thought. Regardless, the effort to synthesize technology and tactics was a valuable element of progress.

The NDA was presented on March 7, 1889. Hamilton's introduction explained that it would implement the newly official Two-Power Standard, which had previously been the unofficial basis of British strategic thinking. £21,000,000 would be spent over five years to build eight *Royal Sovereign* first-class battleships, two *Barfleur* second-class battleships, nine *Edgar* first-class cruisers, twenty-nine *Apollo* and *Astraea* second-class cruisers, four *Pearl* third-class cruisers and eighteen torpedo-gunboats. The Act passed its third reading on May 31 after lengthy debates, mostly focusing on the financial arrangements. The NDA was constructed in two parts. Thirty-eight ships would be built in the dockyards at a cost of £8,650,000 plus £2,850,000 for ordnance, all of which would be paid for out of the normal annual Estimates, which would increase by £602,600 for the five years of the Act. Since the total shipbuilding budget for five years was £14,554,000 and the Act only required £11,500,000, it was anticipated that new construction could begin in 1892–3 and 1893–4 with the £3,054,000 remainder. The second part was thirty-two vessels built by contract in private shipyards and paid for by a £10,000,000 loan repayable in seven installments of £1,428,000 This unorthodox financial measure of

⁹⁶“Mr. Goschen's Promise,” *Saturday Review*, 67:1736 (Feb 2, 1889), 119-20.

throwing the cost of national defence onto future years, after construction ceased, was the focus of criticism. This would be at the heart of the 1892 agitation and the 1893 Navy Scare. The final total for the five years of shipbuilding, including the NDA, £1,500,000 for current construction, £3,000,000 for future building and £4,500,000 for naval ordnance, was £30,500,000 over five years.⁹⁷

In presenting the scheme, Lord George Hamilton explained that the contradiction between the previous year's cuts and the new programme was due to the opportunity now offered by the completion of the Northbrook programme. The Liberals employed similar exculpations in 1893–94. Hamilton emphasized that the programme was based on the recommendations of the Select Committee appointed in 1888, and was not the product of the Conservative party itself.⁹⁸ Still, it would bind both parties to a particular course of action, and bore some similarity to the Continental practice of multi-year construction programmes. The form of an Act was intended to reassure the public that the expertly-determined requirements of the navy, defined by the Two-Power Standard, would not be left to the exigencies of annual financial negotiations.

The response of the Liberal Party to the proposed naval scheme was inconsistent. Rosebery shared with Brett his belief that “the right thing to do is to push through the Government scheme and strengthen it, if possible” because a new Liberal Cabinet “would be sure to neglect the navy.”⁹⁹ Brett shared this information with Stead, who was already writing to Gladstone suggesting that even though the use of an Act of Parliament was distasteful, due to

⁹⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:334, (Mar 22, 1889), c. 521-4.

⁹⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:333 (Mar 7, 1889), c. 1166-9.

⁹⁹CACC, Stead Papers, STED/1/25 pt3, R. Brett to W.T. Stead, Mar 14, 1889; copy in CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/8, Esher's Political Diary.

the unfortunate attitude of the Liberal party in relation to the Navy, I am afraid if we defeat the Government upon this measure we may say 'good bye' to any hope of seeing our Navy put into a really efficient state, unless — and this is why I write at present — unless we can secure an unmistakable declaration from our leaders that the maintenance of an irresistible Navy is to form a leading posture in the Liberal programme.¹⁰⁰

The Liberals had a popular image of opposition to defence spending. It appeared that the vocal pacifism and retrenchment of the party's Radicals weighed more in public esteem than the grudgingly granted Northbrook programme. Gladstone reassured Stead of his conviction “that the naval primacy of this country is under all circumstances to be firmly assured,” but “I do not at present see what justification there can be for withdrawing the shipbuilding of the country, in any degree, from the discretion of Parliament.”¹⁰¹ Stead was pleased that Gladstone said 'primacy' instead of the more ambiguous 'supremacy.' There was good reason to overturn the Government on their inconsistency on navy issue, having cut £900,000 from the previous year's Estimates and now proposing to add £2,000,000, but Stead advised that this weapon should only be used if the Liberal Party accompanied it with their own patriotic and generous programme.¹⁰² Stead suggested that the Conservatives might try dissolution on the navy question, and advised Gladstone to “tempt them to do it: knowing perfectly well that we shall win anyhow.”¹⁰³

The NDA was, of course, commented on widely in the press. The *Times* leading article called the NDA “a comprehensive and well-considered scheme” that would increase the quality of the existing fleet by building new designs approved by a consensus of experts.¹⁰⁴ The *Saturday Review* approved of the substance of the Act, as well as the

¹⁰⁰BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, f.396-7, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, Mar 11, 1889.

¹⁰¹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, f. 398-9, W.E. Gladstone to W.T. Stead, Mar 11, 1889.

¹⁰²BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, f. 400-1, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, Mar 13, 1889.

¹⁰³BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44303, f. 402-3, W.T. Stead to W.E. Gladstone, Mar 15, 1889.

¹⁰⁴Editorial, *Times*, 32641, (Mar 8, 1889), 9.

use of an Act of Parliament to ensure that no Ministry could abandon the policy without an appeal to Parliament and the awareness of the country. Even so, it anticipated resistance on two fronts, from patriotic politicians looking for greater efforts and from economizing politicians opposed to all expenditure.¹⁰⁵ The *Review* suggested that the 'Admirals' should be patient, since the NDA was a good step and future efforts were certainly going to be made.

The NDA was a defining moment in late nineteenth-century British naval history, and receives significant historical attention as a turning point. It unites Britain with a wider historiography of rising imperialism and militarism that fed into the origins of the First World War. The course of the 1888 Navy Scare and the resulting naval expansion certainly bear out this view, but it is worth understanding that the development of militarism/navalism was a complex process. Like the best propaganda, navalism had the credibility and conviction of truth, and this was proven repeatedly to the British public by the statements of expert naval professionals representing an increasingly intellectual naval service.

Credibility and Celebrity: The Resignation of Lord Charles

Beresford

Lord Charles Beresford resigned as Junior Lord of the Admiralty on January 19, 1888. The catalyst was the proposed cuts to NID salaries, but the resignation was quickly tied in to larger criticisms of Admiralty administration. This incident is worth examining in greater detail because it offers insight into how an individual impacts the outcome of a

¹⁰⁵“The Increase of the Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 67:1741 (Mar 9, 1889), 273.

scare. On the one hand, Beresford provided the occasion to reanimate long-standing arguments about the navy and British security requirements, and to reach a larger audience than the specialist press. On the other hand, a single individual, no matter how prominent, could not spark a full-blown naval scare without practical verification that the fear was justified. The torch passed to the LCC until the Government was converted to the cause of naval expansion after the experience of the naval manoeuvres. Beresford's political and professional statement was a key catalyst, as it made public several matters of concern that had not yet penetrated mainstream news or received sustained political consideration. Beresford brought celebrity appeal to the state of the navy, and he was well aware of the value of popularity and public awareness.

Beresford was a well-known public figure after his widely publicized dash and bravery at the Bombardment of Alexandria, and was socially well-connected. Resigning over a point of principle was well-established but not common, and was bound to draw media attention. The resignation was disseminated by the telegrams of news agencies, in this case Central News, and appeared in papers throughout Britain.¹⁰⁶ This telegram noted that the NID had “unanimous and warmest approval of every newspaper in the country, as well as of every professional expert,” and when the Treasury proposed a twenty percent cut to an already minimal budget Beresford was forced to proffer his resignation rather than allow his pet project to be undermined.

¹⁰⁶ There were two days of rumour circulating before Beresford confirmed his resignation. The *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* was one of many papers publishing the story “Rumoured Resignation of Lord Charles Beresford” which was circulated by the Central News agency and the Press Association. It was confirmed by Central News and published on January 19, 1888. The Central News agency and other press agencies carried the story, and distributed it throughout the country's newspapers; it was even carried overseas in the United States (see any newspaper for Jan 28-30, 1888).

The widespread recognition of the NIDs value lent credibility to Beresford's subsequent action. Hamilton explained that the NID performed two main functions, the acquisition of foreign intelligence and the development of naval campaign plans for different contingencies. Beresford's remarks on the NID emphasized its role as a General Staff, in laying out the 'Plan of Campaign' that he believed was absolutely vital for victory.¹⁰⁷ The *Saturday Review* shared the doubts of some naval officers about the wisdom of giving the NID this duty, because "Nothing has ever been proved by a more universal experience than that the most fatal of all ways of making war is to make it on cut-and-dried plans prepared beforehand and by officers not upon the spot."¹⁰⁸ Hornby provided a nuanced analysis in the Conservative *St. James' Gazette* that argued that the DNI should be a flag officer in order to ensure the proper representation of the NID in the Admiralty, but he was less certain of the Admiralty's ability to produce predetermined war plans and direct overseas operations from London.¹⁰⁹ The DNI, Captain Hall, wrote approvingly of Hornby's resistance to the proposal, spearheaded by Lieutenant-General H. Brackenbury, Director of Military Intelligence, and *Blackwood's*, to amalgamate the two departments under military leadership. Hall requested that Hornby "continue to urge this upon the public, as I am satisfied that only by strong pressure from without can the [appointment] we both earnestly desire be brought about."¹¹⁰ The NID needed the political support in its internal struggles that an appeal to public opinion could generate.

The *Saturday Review* welcomed the opportunity to discuss naval affairs. The NID could prove its worth, and lay a claim for the head of the NID to become a Chief of Staff,

¹⁰⁷"Is the Navy Strong Enough?" *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7325 (Sep 7, 1888), 1-2.

¹⁰⁸"Some Naval Matters," *Saturday Review*, 1681 (Jan 14, 1888), 34.

¹⁰⁹"What is the Intelligence Department?," *Saturday Review*, 65:1664 (Feb 4, 1888), 120.

¹¹⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt 9/9, Capt H Hall to Admiral GP Hornby, Jan 9, 1888, reply Jan 11, 1888.

by making “a definite statement, supported by argument and illustration, of what it thought would be an adequate naval defence for this country and its commerce.”¹¹¹ The *Review* would prefer an authoritative statement of this kind, rather than the pessimistic outpourings of “professional partisans and well-intentioned amateurs.” The *Review* concluded that the core issue was a fundamental difference in how a NID was envisioned, the same lines as the conflict between Northbrook and Beresford in 1885 over the existence of such a department. Beresford did not see the FIC as a proper intelligence department; for him such a department would also take on the function of planning for war and this was the function that his colleagues opposed. The *Review* expressed its confidence in British flag officers, arguing that whatever the state of peacetime naval institutions, Beresford was not giving Admirals sufficient credit for their capacity to craft strategy and campaign plans if war broke out.¹¹² Navalists wanted these institutions, but most were hesitant to cast too much doubt on the capacity of naval officers themselves — they preferred to blame politicians.

With the credibility of the NID backing his decision, Beresford had the political wisdom to see that he needed to explain and defend his actions to both the nation and his constituents against the inevitable criticism. Beresford explained the lack of organization for war at the Admiralty, and that his initial acceptance of the salary changes in May 1887 had only been because the current staff was supposed to be exempt.¹¹³ Beresford did not deny the necessity of a political head of the Admiralty Board, but he explained that the current system obscured the views of the professionals and that “the national

¹¹¹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 65:1683 (Jan 28, 1888), 92-3.

¹¹²“What is the Intelligence Department?,” *Saturday Review*, 65:1664 (Feb 4, 1888), 120.

¹¹³Reported in “Lord C. Beresford on his Resignation,” *Daily News*, 13043 (Jan 27, 1888); and *Standard*, 19827 (Jan 27, 1888), 3. Other minor provincial papers carried abridged versions of the speech.

money would never be properly spent until the Treasury before deciding knew what the experts and the generals and the admirals thought of each plan.”¹¹⁴ Parliamentary control was a sham that could only be rectified by direct communication between the professional advisers and Parliament. At the same time, Beresford assured his constituents that he would continue to support the Government on non-naval matters.

The wider criticism of naval administration resonated with many officers and fellow travelers. William C. Brook wrote to express widespread approval, taking Beresford's resignation as proof of the “serious want of good arrangement.”¹¹⁵ This was not a unique letter, and while Beresford was certainly more likely to preserve approving letters, other sources suggest that the naval service appreciated a member of the Board making a political statement.¹¹⁶ Admiral Cooper Key was slightly more qualified, criticizing how Beresford had “made his statements in such an exaggerated form” that ignored “what a great progress had been made” since his own experience in planning operations in 1878.¹¹⁷ The old but prestigious Admiral Sir Henry Keppel thought that Beresford was too independent for the First Lord, probably because of his status as an MP, and was acting on the principal that the First Lord could not act without consulting the Admiral Board.¹¹⁸ The *Army and Navy Gazette* explained, in a similar vein, that a lengthy correspondence between Beresford and the Treasury over the NID salary question had been silenced by the authority of the First Lord. This silencing left Beresford with no choice to resign because the alternative was “to hear the First Lord go down to the House and say, ‘we’ — which the nation supposes to be the unanimous

¹¹⁴“Lord C. Beresford on his Resignation,” *Daily News*, 13043, (Jan 27, 1888), 6.

¹¹⁵BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 72-3, William C. Brook to Beresford, Jan 28, 1888.

¹¹⁶NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/35, H. Keppel's Diary, Jan 24 and Jan 30, 1888.

¹¹⁷NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, Sir Cooper Key to Admiral GP Hornby, Feb 4, 1888.

¹¹⁸NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/35, H. Keppel's Diary, Jan 9, 1888.

Board — ‘sanction this proceeding.’”¹¹⁹ Beresford was not criticizing the policy of the Government but the general system of administration in which political interests concealed or subverted the views of professionals; his position was echoed by other prominent officers, like Admiral Hornby.

The press was a willing and valuable collaborator for making the link between the NID and wider administrative problems clear to the public. The Editor of *Murray's Magazine*, Edward A. Arnold, wrote to Beresford offering to publish a piece of “plain speaking on the state of the Navy and its requirements, in such a manner as would arrest public attention and awaken the country to the real condition of our first line of defence.”¹²⁰ Beresford liked the idea, but he had already promised to write for a different periodical, a great example of the competitive nature of the press. Beresford was a credible and prominent commentator, and his articles were worth acquiring because of the readership his reputation would attract. Arnold made no attempt to hide the financial value a popular article series by Beresford would have for the magazine. This episode shows how a magazine's commercial desire for popular articles on pressing issues cooperated with the patriotic navalist drive to voice their concerns, in the belief that publicizing the defects in national security was critical to solving the problem.

The press hosted numerous articles, with a leading role taken by Hornby and his circle from the very beginning. Beresford told Hornby that he was protesting “against a system of Administration that reduced our Navy to such a state of disorganization that we could not have used what we have got.”¹²¹ He asked Hornby for support at his upcoming speech to his constituency, which Hornby willingly provided, even speaking publicly on

¹¹⁹NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/35, newspaper cutting in H. Keppel's Diary, Jan 21, 1888.

¹²⁰BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 69-70, Arnold to Beresford, Jan 21, 1888.

¹²¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C Beresford to Admiral GP Hornby, Jan 22, 1888.

Beresford's behalf and lending his impressive credibility to Beresford's cause.¹²² A fellow officer wrote to congratulate Admiral Hornby on his letter in the *Times*, stating that “The stupidity of the civil element at the Admiralty in the direction of naval business, is so gross that it ought to be thoroughly denounced and exposed” and encouraging Hornby to continue his attack on the Admiralty officials.¹²³ Beresford's friend, Admiral Sir Henry Keppel, was strongly in support of Beresford's activity in promoting the organization for war, but both the *Times* and *St. James' Gazette* refused to publish his letter.¹²⁴ Admiral R.S. Robinson wrote to the *Times* to give his own summary of Beresford's account, and reiterated what he felt to be the key point, the system of responsibility and the power of the First Lord. He was enthused that a “younger and far more powerful advocate of these principles has come on to the field.”¹²⁵

Not all commentators were convinced that Beresford's resignation had such a defensible cause. The *Saturday Review* theorized that Beresford's random timing and the fact that he had himself performed useful work while at the Admiralty meant that the resignation was due Beresford's distaste for the work, although this did not stop the *Review* from using it as an opportunity to discuss the navy. If all subordinates tried to wholly reform their departments or resign in protest, it concluded, no government business could be conducted.¹²⁶ The current burst of public discussion could not be taken as proof that the Admiralty was as ineffective as its accusers imagined. This interpretation would persist. During the 1888 scare *Blackwood's* considered the

¹²²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C Beresford to Admiral GP Hornby, Jan 27, 1888.

¹²³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 p8/9. [Bigletomian?] to G.P. Hornby, Feb 3, 1888. Reply on Feb 4.

¹²⁴HTN/35. Admiral Keppel's Diary. Feb 21, Feb 26, Feb 28, 1888. There is no identifying mark on the newspaper clipping to determine which paper it was published in.

¹²⁵Original letter from the *Times* but like many articles, it was reprinted in a summarised form, ex. see “The Navy,” *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 12391 (Jan 30, 1888).

¹²⁶“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 65:1683 (Jan 28, 1888), 92-3.

resignation to have been a real protest against partisan civilian administration of a technical department, and only had a veneer of individual petulance.¹²⁷ Hamilton's memoirs maintained that Beresford's position as Junior Lord required lots of unglamorous work that Beresford was unwilling to perform over the long term.¹²⁸ As the *Saturday Review* shows, doubts over Beresford's motivations did not prevent useful discussion about the navy from dominating the discourse. The *Morning Post* had a more difficult time; it agreed that money should be voted if any needs were identified, but also argued that ordinary expenditure should be limited. As a Tory periodical, the *Post* was playing both sides, like the Liberals, and argued that economy and security were not mutually exclusive.¹²⁹

Lord George Hamilton was compelled to respond to the charges. To the accusation that he had imposed economy on the NID against the unanimous opinion of the Naval Lords, he said "that the efficiency of the navy was never at stake, that the question of economy hardly arose, and that the Naval Lords were not unanimous."¹³⁰ In the battle of credibility, the *Saturday Review* suggested that the First Lord's claims about the state of the navy could not be relied upon in the face of such legitimate professional criticism.¹³¹ Historical opinion has been kinder to Hamilton, accepting the assertion he made in his memoirs that he tried to "reinstat[e] 'the individual Naval Lords in a position of personal responsibility for the respective departments under their control'."¹³² Hamilton's policy response was to request an internal assessment of the present organization of the

¹²⁷"Our Naval Policy," *Blackwood's*, 143:870 (Apr 1888), 591.

¹²⁸Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, II, 88.

¹²⁹*Morning Post*, No. 36065 (Jan 20, 1888), 4.

¹³⁰"Lord Geo. Hamilton's Reply to Lord Chas. Beresford." *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 10424 (Feb 4, 1888), 3.

¹³¹"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 65:1683 (Jan 28, 1888), 92-3.

¹³²C.I. Hamilton, *Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 181; Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, 15.

Admiralty for war. The February 14 memorandum argued that the Admiralty was not in a bad state, but the two issues that needed to be dealt with were “The position + functions of the Board of Admiralty in time of war” and “The organisation of the subordinate Depts for war” both of which could be dealt with in the anticipated reforms.¹³³ The Admiralty Board was burdened with routine work that interfered with its wartime role as a “standing Council of War”, and the subordinate departments needed to become accustomed to the level of routine work that would be required of them in war.

Beresford was not satisfied with these internal inquiries, and demanded a Parliamentary inquiry into the state of the navy. Admiral Mayne, MP, argued in a letter to Admiral Hornby that Beresford's motion for a Committee of Enquiry was the best course of action, since it would put “the whole question on to larger ground than if we were confined to his resignation.”¹³⁴ Mayne totally concurred with the deception inherent in the First Lord speaking on behalf of the Board, and promised to take a non-partisan stance to “show that the system has worked equally badly, no matter what individuals or party were in place.”¹³⁵ This Parliamentary effort would bear little fruit in spite of its wide base of public activism, although it did add more fuel to the eventual scare after the manoeuvres. The *Saturday Review* suggested that after Beresford had admitted in debate that the Minister had to be paramount on the Board, and the issue of NID salaries was settled internally, there was no foundation for further attacks on Hamilton's naval policy.¹³⁶ The Admirals who had written in support of Beresford agreed that the First Lord's power should be checked, but accepted the need for a single head and could not

¹³³NMM, Greene Papers, GEE/6, “On Organisation for War of Admiralty Depts. Draft of paper given to First Lord,” Feb 14, 1888.

¹³⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, Mayne to G.P. Hornby, Feb 15, 1888.

¹³⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, Mayne to G.P. Hornby, Feb 15, 1888.

¹³⁶“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 5:1690 (Mar 17, 1888), 309-10.

show that professionals would manage the navy any better.¹³⁷ Beresford was surprised that the impact of his resignation dissipated quickly.¹³⁸

When rumours of a new naval programme were circulating in September 1888, the *Pall Mall Gazette* used its New Journalism methods to help root the policy in Beresford's resignation. The scene of the interview was artistically described, emphasizing at length his character as both an astute politician and a bluff honest sailor, and the writing was both colloquial and polished in a way that suggests Stead took some literary license.¹³⁹ Beresford explained clearly and concisely that he had been forced to resign, after performing good work with the current Board, because important elements necessary for organizing the navy for war were not provided. The NID would be constantly intertwined with the vexed question of how valuable and necessary was war planning in peacetime, and where was the proper balance point between the Government or Admiralty and the commanding officer on the spot. Like in 1884, the *Pall Mall* used occasions like Beresford's September speech at the Cutler's feast, to restate key arguments, particularly the need for a clear, expert statement on naval requirements.¹⁴⁰

In January 1889, the *Army and Navy Gazette* attributed the successful agitation to Beresford's resignation in protest at excessive civilian control.¹⁴¹ Beresford's public statement had succeeded in associating his name with the new shipbuilding programme, and in his memoirs Beresford claimed the triumph for himself. In all events, the resignation was not the only factor that gave the naval agitation political power, but it was integral to opening media forums to other naval commentators, who were able to

¹³⁷“Naval Administration,” *Saturday Review*, 65:1685 (Feb 11, 1888), 158-9.

¹³⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C Beresford to Admiral GP Hornby, Jan 22, 1888.

¹³⁹“Is the Navy Strong Enough?” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7325 (Sep 7, 1888), 1-2.

¹⁴⁰“The Press on the Navy,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7325 (Sep 7, 1888), 12.

¹⁴¹*Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1511 (Jan 5, 1889), 2.

combine effectively into an agitation. This process is dealt with below in the description of the actions of Admiral Hornby and members of his circle in raising awareness, particularly through the powerful medium of the LCC. The position of the NID became very secure over time. Hall's successor, in January 1889, was Captain C.A.G. Bridge, a noted naval intellectual and a very prestigious figure.¹⁴² Bridge observed in 1891 that the “special subjects referred to the D.N.I. to be dealt with by him personally continue to increase in both number and importance...”¹⁴³ The DNI had become an automatic member of the Colonial Defence Committee.

Invasion versus Blue-Water Strategic Planning

The 1888 Navy Scare was intimately related to the simultaneous invasion scare that gained some ground in public and political consciousness. Historians tend to overrate the fear of invasion because of its prominent place in popular literature. The *Broad Arrow* simply noted that this type of story was only possible when the navy was conveniently absent.¹⁴⁴ The serialized novel *The Invasion of England* failed to mention any naval action against an opportunistic German attack in 1890, focusing entirely on the land campaign; *Capture of Dover* relied on a French fifth column.¹⁴⁵ This basic fact would become the core point of the debate on the possibility of invasion. Invasionists attempted to explain how the navy could be temporarily or conveniently absent, but these were refuted by navalists who insisted that if any weakness really existed, then money should be spent on larger naval forces. Literary works shared the military approach and

¹⁴²“Naval Notes,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1062 (Nov 3, 1888), 528.

¹⁴³ NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Dec 7, 1891. For more information on the NID's work in the 1890s, see ADM/231/25, Naval Intelligence Department – Printed Reports.

¹⁴⁴*Broad Arrow*, 41:1046 (Jul 14, 1888), 38.

¹⁴⁵W.F. Butler, *The Invasion of England*, serialized in *Merry England*, 1888-89.

offered moderately plausible pretexts for the absence of the navy before turning to their real subject, the military campaign against London. Invasion would remain a popular literary topic for adventure stories long after its strategic relevance had been lost.¹⁴⁶

While fortifications would be one aspect of the invasion question, naval thinkers were developing the nebulous concept of flotilla defence to protect ports and coasts. Admiral Elliot's 1887 proposal at the RUSI for gunboats was well received, although naval officers favoured a torpedo-boat destroyer style of vessel.¹⁴⁷

The threat of invasion was partly reinvigorated by proposals to build a tunnel under the English Channel. Critics suggested that an enemy would be able to use the tunnel to bypass the navy and establish a bridgehead, resulting in the defeat of the proposal in June by a substantial majority.¹⁴⁸ Public agitation began with alarming articles in the well-read civilian monthly magazine, the *Nineteenth Century*. One of Edward Hamley's contributions in May 1888 was "The Defencelessness of London," which argued that the prize that the capture of London represented warranted a better system of defence.¹⁴⁹ The core point here was that if an enemy could land a force on British territory, there were no established forces, fortifications or war plans to deal with such a contingency, and the vulnerability of London to a decisive stroke would tempt any aggressive Continental power. More importantly, the mass armies of Continental Europe could easily risk 100,000 men without crippling their war-fighting capacity. Massive works were unnecessary since temporary fighting positions were adequate in combination with auxiliary and reserve troops.

¹⁴⁶One provocative example was, *The Great War in England in 1897*, published during the 1893 scare.

¹⁴⁷ See George Elliot, "Coast Defence by Gunboats," *JRUSI*, 31:138 (Jan 1887): 73-93.

¹⁴⁸*Diary of William Gladstone*, Jun 27, 1888. See Duncan Redford, "Opposition to the Channel Tunnel, 1882-1975: Identity, Island Status and Security," *History*, 99:334 (Jan 2014): 100-20.

¹⁴⁹Edward Hamley, "The Defencelessness of London," *Nineteenth Century*, 23:135 (May 1888), 633-40.

The *Daily Telegraph* published an article describing “Count Moltke's Views.” The German General claimed that “invasion is possible, but that, supposing the navy to be in an efficient state, this could only be effected by surprise,” such as a French strike between Dover and Portsmouth.¹⁵⁰ Moltke explained that the “English Intelligence Department is not good,” and other sources of information, like private individuals, were neglected. Defending against a moderate sized invasion force of 20–30,000 men would require corps of observation along the coast to detect landings, and plans to rapidly concentrate troops to meet the enemy force on its way to London. Moltke doubted that the Admiralty had more than a paper plan for the mobilization of the navy. The article added that the Royal Navy was suffering from inferior armour and ordnance that was made more acute by the superior numbers of a Franco-Russian combination. In terms of practical experience with mobilization, the German army was held up as a leading example for how to organize in peace for the practice of war. Lieutenant-Colonel R.T. Higgins' “The Scare of 1888” in the *United Service Magazine* reconceptualised the *Daily Telegraph's* agitation over military deficiencies, accepting that the navy was the first line of defence, but naval weakness meant there was some justification for improving the second line of defence.¹⁵¹

Simultaneous to this public activity, a large scale correspondence developed between the Admiralty and the War Office about the detailed logistics and strategy of an attacking force. The Adjutant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, the inspiration for Gilbert and Sullivan's 'model of a modern Major-General,' argued in a May 14 speech to the House of Lords that “As long as the navy is as weak as it is at this moment, Her Majesty's

¹⁵⁰NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/21/18, extract from the *Daily Telegraph* of May 23, 1888.

¹⁵¹R.T. Higgins, “The Scare of 1888,” *United Service Magazine*, NS I, (Jul 1888), 267.

army, dispersed as it is, cannot hold its own all over the world.”¹⁵² He claimed that 100,000 men could be landed in a single day, one week after the decision to mobilize, which would be a sufficient force to take possession of London. Wolseley's claims paralleled the evidence he had given before Sir James Stephen's Commission, although in a broader context in his Lords speech. The assumption of naval weakness would prove to be the undoing of any large-scale military expansion projects, since navalists were able to redirect energies towards the strengthening of the fleet.

The *Broad Arrow* argued that Wolseley had been deliberately vague about the conditions for invasion because any large force would not in practice be capable of evading the navy.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, the *Arrow* insisted that the current military establishment should be capable of defeating an enemy force of 100,000 men because the navy was not presently sufficient to supply the 5:3 ratio of numerical superiority necessary for effective blockade or for a second-line reserve force in home waters. The *Broad Arrow* indicates that navalists were willing to accept moderate land defences while insisting not only on the primacy of the navy but on the need for continued efforts to improve its capacity. The army would find the ideological and strategic environment weighted against it, but contemporary reporting also suggests that Wolseley lacked the oratorical ability to sway his listeners.¹⁵⁴

The Cabinet became involved with the question of invasion in June when Edward Stanhope, the Secretary at War, produced a pair of memoranda explaining that he would be investigating the issue with a small Cabinet committee under the authority of the Cabinet. The focus was on the inability of the army to prevent the invasion of London

¹⁵²Quoted in NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/21/14, 'S.', untitled, Most Confidential, Jun 6, 1888, 1.

¹⁵³“The Defence Debate in the Lords,” *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 7, 1888), 1.

¹⁵⁴“Lord Wolseley at Birmingham,” *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1515 (Feb 2, 1889), 81.

that had been revealed by Wolseley's speech in the Lords and the *Daily Telegraph*'s reports of Moltke's opinions. The investigation began by posing a series of questions about the detailed conditions under which an invasion force would operate, such as the ports involved, the railway and shipping capacity required (noting that the Admiralty disagreed on this point), the length of coastline in danger and particular trouble spots, existing plans for defence with detailed troops deployments, and the organization and disposition of available military forces to resist an effected landing.

Lieutenant-General Brackenbury, DMI, reported on June 8, 1888 that the entire French army could be mobilized in seven days, and in ten days five corps, 150,000 men, 300 guns and 10,000 horses, could be concentrated at a number of northern French ports including the well-equipped harbours at Cherbourg, Havre, Dieppe and Dunkirk. Brackenbury guessed that the force could be despatched in 48 hours. The French merchant marine was large enough to readily supply, especially assuming ships could make several trips, although the margin in Brackenbury's figures was rather narrow.¹⁵⁵ Brackenbury specified some points for invasion landings, but emphasized that an invasion would only be attempted after the defeat of the fleet. He quoted Randolph's Churchill's claim that if the fleet temporarily lost command of the sea, a maritime enemy would be able to land a force of 100–150,000 men, repeating his accord with these conclusions. On June 11 the Cabinet was given an April 17 memorandum by J.C. Ardagh, the Assistant Adjutant-General, that argued that the heavy guns of modern ships rendered British coast defences obsolete, and the regular forces should assemble inland rather than resisting a landing while Volunteers trained in camps on the route to London.

¹⁵⁵NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/21/15, H. Brackenbury, "A French Invasion," Confidential, Jun 8, 1888. Shipping tonnage was based on one ton gross per man, five per horse and ten per wagon, totalled 160,000 tons gross.

Lord George Hamilton reported on June 22, 1888 the Admiralty interpretation of the logistical requirements of an invasion force. The professional advisers thought that 172,500 tons of shipping would be necessary, and agreed that this could be rapidly assembled at French ports to transport an invasion force. The Admiralty considered in detail the transfer of men, material and horses from ships to shore, which would take a minimum of two days. A speedy landing required impossibly perfect sea conditions that the Hydrographer had shown were rare around the southern coast; it also assumed the total annihilation of the Channel and Mediterranean fleets as well as torpedo boats, coast-defence vessels and other ships in the home ports while the French fleet remained in good condition. Hamilton admitted the theoretical possibility of defeat, but concluded “It is only under a simultaneous combination of all these conditions that the performance as a mechanical exploit is possible.”¹⁵⁶ The Admiralty never conceded that invasion was plausible, because it required an absence of British naval forces.

Stanhope reported the new findings to Cabinet on June 29. Stanhope's conclusion was that “the two Departments and Count Moltke agree in thinking that there are circumstances under which a French invasion may be possible... Our stake is so great that full precautions must be taken against even a distant possibility.”¹⁵⁷ More information was requested about the details for each stage of a French invasion, the concentration of troops, the crossing, the landing and the attack on London. Reserve forces should be in place to resist a French crossing even in the absence of the fleet, and backup plans in case the crossing was successful. Stanhope carefully restated the Hydrographer's evidence that

¹⁵⁶NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/21/17, G. Hamilton, “A French Invasion,” Most Confidential, Jun 22, 1888.

¹⁵⁷NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/21/18, E. Stanhope, “French Invasion,” Most Confidential, Jun 29, 1888.

half of the coastline that Brackenbury had characterized as vulnerable was actually protected by shallow sandbanks and shoals off the coast. It seemed to Stanhope that it was more feasible to resist a landing than the War Office had estimated, since ironclads could not cover the landing craft and beaches. Shallow draft vessels would wreak devastation, particularly if they were armoured. Stanhope requested extensive planning for the evacuation of transport and supplies before an enemy advance on London.

Stanhope reported to the Cabinet on November 6. At this point, he described, the debate hinged on the practicability of the French assembling sufficient transport for an invasion force at the Channel ports without arousing suspicion and thus giving warning to the fleet.¹⁵⁸ Stanhope took Moltke's figure of 30,000 men and Lord George Hamilton's figure of 1.5 tons per man, and investigated whether the French could produce the necessary 45,000 tons of shipping. Stanhope had the British Consuls in French northern ports count the tonnage of steam shipping on October 27, including British vessels, which amounted to over 110,000 tons and was verified by similar Admiralty reports from the summer. Stanhope concluded that it was entirely possible that a force could be assembled secretly and despatched quickly without significant warning. Stanhope's concerns over a possible surprise strike were heightened by the rising star of General Boulanger in France, who threatened to become a Napoleon-style adventurer. Stanhope suggested that Dover Harbour should be completed and the Admiralty station a number of craft in readiness there sufficient to resist a landing force, and communications with that area improved. He also recommended testing the theoretical 48-hour readiness of the reserve fleet. Stanhope had been converted to a blue-water position, and only requested very

¹⁵⁸NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/32, S[Stanhope], "French Invasion," Secret, Nov 6, 1888.

small increases in army manpower.¹⁵⁹ Brackenbury's November 15 update restated that a French force could be assembled and landed in under two weeks.¹⁶⁰

The agitation over the defence of London prompted a strong reaction from naval officers. In mid-January 1889 a scheme for the fortification of London was canvassing for support. A deputation from five Northern ports sent an address to the Prime Minister, claiming that there was mass support for improving the defences of ports. Lieutenant Bridger, R.N., Secretary of the Naval Volunteer Home Defence Association (NVHDA) felt obliged to correct the *Times*, because local newspapers were actually reporting that the Northern ports "are not willing to provide Volunteer fleets at their own expense."¹⁶¹ The *Broad Arrow* favoured the NVHDAs idea to use armed small craft for the local defence of ports, but was hesitant to place too much reliance on inconsistently trained volunteers.¹⁶² In spite of press pessimism, Bridger claimed that the NVHDA had actively disseminated literature to important people and institutions, generating large-scale public support for the development of local defences and for a new naval programme. A correspondent of Admiral R.V. Hamilton thought these fortifications were a "retrograde and army" proposal that had begun with a natural desire to work out field positions in case a defence, and one such position had been constructed as a test, but now an entire scheme had "been invented with the secrecy of the Gunpowder Plot."¹⁶³ The problem was not that a defence plan should be in existence, but that permanent fortifications diverted expenditure away from the only true national security, the navy. The *Army and Navy*

¹⁵⁹NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/34, E.S[tanhope], "Proposed Increase of the Army," Nov 7, 1888; CAB 37/22/35. [illegible] "Colonial Garrisons," Confidential, Nov 7, 1888.

¹⁶⁰NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/22/37, H. Brackenbury, "French Invasion," Nov 15, 1888.

¹⁶¹quoted by Bridger, "The Defence of Mercantile Ports," *Times*, 32587 (Jan 4, 1889), 5.

¹⁶²"The Volunteer Defence of Commercial Ports," *Broad Arrow*, 41:1062 (Nov 3, 1888), 516.

¹⁶³NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, letter fragment to Hamilton, Jan [19], 1889.

Gazette reminded readers that the only real solution was to keep the navy sufficiently strong, which would minimize the necessary scale of local defences.¹⁶⁴

The *Times* gave space to several writers in January and February 1889 to voice opinions on both sides of the issue. General John Adye and 'Miner' argued that land defences would protect the fleet at anchor, render invasion very difficult and were both the cheapest and most effective form of defence. Most importantly, a solid system of port defence would free the fleet for offensive action. Some army officers preferred blue-water strategic priorities. General Andrew Clarke, a former Inspector-General of Fortifications, supported the temporary earthworks suggested by Hamley because the expense of permanent works would lead to starvation of the only true defence for the nation and the Empire — the navy. Clarke wanted readers to resist the natural psychological tendency to favour visible and obvious fortifications over the invisible power of sea-going fleets.¹⁶⁵ Colonel A. Fitzroy Hart still insisted on reasonable assurance that a brief loss of the command of the sea would not result in total defeat.¹⁶⁶ On the naval side, Admiral Algernon de Horsey argued that NVHDAs requests should be rejected; they were a false salve to public opinion that would only divert energy and funds away from critical naval defences, and could not replace proper government expenditure. Horsey thought the nation would support Colomb's position that the only real defence against invasion was an effective reserve fleet stationed in home waters and port defences were only required for raids and could be manned by volunteers. Hubert Grenfell added that the impulse for the NVHDA was the Admiralty's declaration that

¹⁶⁴“Notes,” *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1511, (Jan 5, 1889), 2.

¹⁶⁵Lt.-General Andrew Clarke, “The Fortification of London,” *Times*, 32613 (Feb 4, 1889), 8.

¹⁶⁶Col. A. Fitzroy Hart, “The Defence of London,” *Times*, 32620 (Feb 12, 1889), 4.

forces could not be spared in war to defend the ports; they were not attempting to reduce naval expenditure.¹⁶⁷

Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb spoke in March at the RUSI on “The Relations between Local Fortifications and a Moving Navy.” He argued that fortifications should be designed to prevent small-scale, opportunistic attacks while the mobile navy prevented any large-scale enemy movements by sea and restricted the action of enemy raiders.¹⁶⁸ Naval power was the core of imperial and commerce defence, and would shield coaling stations and ports better than massive fortifications. Colomb moderated his position in a letter to the *Times* that allowed for some useful land defences, although the *Times* leader enthusiastically asserted that money spent on fortifications was wasted.¹⁶⁹ Major G.R. Walker, R.E., endeavoured to refute Colomb’s anti-fortification attitude in a May lecture on “Fortifications and Fleets” that laid out the cost-effectiveness of land defences and the challenges of protecting commerce.¹⁷⁰ Fortifications would free the fleet from local defence, and Walker was keen to match the level of defences with the most probable form of attack. Colomb responded in detail at the RUSI, and also wrote to the *Times* on May 31 to clarify his position. He was not arguing that fortifications or land defences should be abolished, but that it was a separate consideration from the provision of naval defences.¹⁷¹ Instead of fortifications, Colomb argued that with the fleet-in-being principle, no enemy would dare attack British ports if an equal or larger naval force was present at Portland to respond. Colomb insisted that the transition to steam had made the

¹⁶⁷John Adye, Algernon de Horsey, Hubert Grenfell, Miner, “The Defence of Commercial Harbours,” *Times*, 32590 (Jan 8, 1889), 12.

¹⁶⁸P.H. Colomb, “The Relations between Local Fortifications and a Moving Navy,” *JRUSI*, 33:147 (Jan 1889), 149-78.

¹⁶⁹“The Fortification of Our Ports,” *Times*, 32322 (Mar 1, 1888), 13.

¹⁷⁰Major G.R. Walker, R.E., “Fortifications and Fleets,” *JRUSI*, 33:149 (Jan 1889), 659-720.

¹⁷¹“The Naval Defence of the United Kingdom,” *Times*, 32400, (May 31, 1888), 12.

defending squadron proportionately more capable. Colomb pointed out that most of the supposed disagreements among experts related to how they defined terms like blockade. Colomb and Hornby agreed on three types of blockading operations, observing, masking and sealing-up, and both preferred the third method to contain commerce raiders and bring an emerging battlefleet into action.

De Horsey concurred completely. He laid down three basic truths in a *Times* letter: that Britain was dependent on overseas food supplies, that the economy depended on maritime commerce, and that this commerce could only be defended by the navy. Invasion was unnecessary if the fleet was defeated, since Britain would be starved into submission with its fortifications intact. The new programme should aim to achieve superiority over the blockaded enemy fleets, allowing for at least one third of the fleet being absent at any one time for coaling or repairs. De Horsey admonished Parliament to listen to Colomb and *Blackwood's*.¹⁷² Lieutenant-General Gerald Graham agreed in principle, but noted that Admiral Hamilton had asked for better defences at Hong Kong and Singapore to free the fleet for offensive operations. The controversy was one of degree, since there was a need for some defences against raids or temporary weaknesses.¹⁷³ It is to the credit of army officers that they took a balanced perspective to national defences, and in return naval officers conceded that some defence against single ship raids was valuable.

In 1888 the discourse shifted as invasion became a near impossibility, and the country as a whole adopted a blue-water mentality that placed responsibility for home defence squarely on the shoulders of the fleet. Army reformers endured, but there was no

¹⁷²Algernon de Horsey, "Imperial Defence," *Times*, 32640 (Mar 7, 1889), 8.

¹⁷³Gerald Graham, "Imperial Defence," *Times*, 32640 (Mar 7, 1889), 8.

longer any likelihood of military defence taking financial priority over naval defence. Public agitation in the summer of 1888 formed around what a later generation of thinkers would call the 'Bolt from the Blue' theory, a theory of the vulnerability of Britain to a rapid, but relatively small scale invasion. In the first half of 1888, an invasion scare and a navy scare would coexist in a mutually supporting relationship, until the navy surged ahead to dominate the strategic discourse.

The Public Expert: Admiral Hornby and New Agitation

The public agitation in the spring and early summer of 1888 was critical for developing the political will to carry out the NDA. The methods by which this agitation was built up are complex and worthy of detailed analyses. The success of the agitation was in coordinating a multi-venue discourse on naval expenditure. The information was not new, but, like 1884, it was presented to a new social group that had hitherto been able to rest behind a screen of complacency and emphasized aspects that would appeal to the new audience. Commerce defence, and the role of the battlefleet in providing this security, was at the heart of the discussion. Parkinson's work suggests that this emphasis was due to strategic thinking, but it is possible it was about public relations thinking; probably it was a fortunate combination of purposes that satisfied naval and propaganda needs. The LCC was an important ally for the different groups of naval agitators. It represented large taxpaying interests, and if the taxpayers were willing to pay for naval expansion, political interests would have a difficult time refusing. Whether it was Hornby's circle or the Colomb brothers, naval agitators could all agree that the navy could be improved with greater investment, although they differed somewhat on their

choice of investments. All the time that the agitation was being constructed, agitators explicitly denied any attempt to manipulate the public, instead presenting their case as a true, non-partisan statement of the state of the navy.

The development of naval history was a boon to alarmists. Popular books were growing in number as alarmists compiled their views into monographs. History could show the danger of letting the navy decline. Beresford praised Charles Dilke's *Imperial Defence* for bringing "home to the people the real state of their defences."¹⁷⁴ Bridge suggested to Hornby that "if the facts of our naval history before Rodney's time were brought before the public, our countrymen would at once see the urgent necessity of strengthening the Navy."¹⁷⁵ Naval histories of the Napoleonic Wars showed that even after the victory at Trafalgar the Royal Navy continued to field large numbers of warships to continue the blockade of France and protect British commerce. Eighteenth century wars had been won by numerical superiority and not tactical skill, which was the most likely condition in future wars. Bridge explained that "we should maintain our Navy on a scale which would ensure our fleet never meeting the enemy except when numerically superior to him."¹⁷⁶ References to naval history became a mainstay of arguments over the desirable level of force, usually to support large estimates of war requirements.

The complacency of British business interests is understandable. There had been no threats to British commerce since the end of the wars with France and the defeat of the Barbary corsairs. The 1856 Declaration of Paris offered some hope that the law of maritime capture might be able to protect commerce instead of physical force. As discussed previously, Arthur Forwood had publicly stated that British commerce would

¹⁷⁴BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43914, f. 77, C. Beresford to C. Dilke, Dec 8, 1888.

¹⁷⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C.A.G. Bridge to G.P. Hornby, Jun 1, 1888.

¹⁷⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C.A.G. Bridge to G.P. Hornby, Jun 1, 1888.

be protected by their wholesale transfer to neutral flags. Captain H.W. Brent told Admiral Hornby of a conversation he had with several 'City men'. After explaining the significant damage that “an enterprising enemy could do” to British commerce, “they smiled on me with pity as a pestilent Sailor” and assured Brent that England “would come out of it as well now as she did before’!!!”¹⁷⁷ Breaking down this complacency would be a critical step in building political will for action.

There was significant pressure on Admiral Hornby to take a leading role in the coordinated public organization of naval officers, politicians and businessmen. Beresford explained to Hornby that, “the whole Service looks to you as our big man, and you can do more than all of us together” to influence public opinion; more importantly, “the people are beginning to listen.”¹⁷⁸ Hornby had been an active navalist for years, and was widely considered to be Britain's leading 'fighting' admiral, exactly the kind of professional credibility that navalists realized was key to sustained public activism. Hornby could speak on naval issues without the stain of over-alarmism, like Symonds, or of official optimism, like those officers who served at the Admiralty. After serving as Second Naval Lord from 1874–77, Hornby pledged to never serve at the Admiralty without wholesale reform, and kept his promise.

The leg-work of organizing was left to more junior men than Hornby. Beresford, FitzGerald and James Bruce, Hornby's former Flag Lieutenant, collaborated with three 'City men' to organize a “public City meeting on the ironclads question” that they hoped “will develop into the City scarecrow to frighten the LCC into something like action.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, H.W. Brent to G.P. Hornby, May 18, 1888.

¹⁷⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Apr 23, 1888.

¹⁷⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Apr 23, Apr 26; J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, Apr 28, 1888.

Notices were put out in the *Times* that listed notable people, mainly naval officers and MPs, who had pledged their support to the cause.¹⁸⁰ The notice boldly stated the inadequacy of the navy, the unpreparedness of the country for war and the vulnerability of British commerce, while emphasizing that the meeting was to be non-partisan. Admiral Keppel confirmed in his diary that the meetings were “Enthusiastic gatherings irrespective of Politics.”¹⁸¹

There was substantial lead-up to the meeting in the press. C.C.P. Fitzgerald responded with an explicitly panic-mongering letter in the *Times*, saying that “It is far better to raise a panic now than when war threatens.”¹⁸² A follow-up letter on April 7, 1888 pointed out that the only relevant question was the strength of the navy compared to the requirements of war, not its previous condition, particularly the protection of food and raw material supplies whose loss could force Britain's surrender without invasion.¹⁸³ He defined British needs according to a two-power standard of France plus Russia, arguing that history showed that the Royal Navy usually required a fleet several times larger than its combined opponents. He conceded that Admiralty administration could be more efficient, but it was a small question beside the millions required for necessary expansion.

¹⁸⁰“City National Defence Meeting,” *Times*, 32382, (May 10, 1888), 12. The list included, Admiral Lord Alcester, G.C.B.; Captain Lord Charles Beresford, R.N., C.B., MP; the right Hon. the Earl of Ravensworth, Admiral Sir Geoffrey Hornby, G.C.B.; Admiral Sir Spencer Robinson, K.C.B., F.R.S.; Admiral Curme; Rear-Admiral R.C. Mayne, C.B., MP; Sir Robert N. Fowler, MP; Captain C.C. Penrose FitzGerald, R.N.; Sir John Pender, F.R.G.S.; Sir James Anderson, F.R.G.S. F.G.S., F.S.S.; Hon. H.A. Lawrence; Henry S. King, Esq. MP; Captain Colomb, C.M.G., MP; Penrose FitzGerald, Esq., MP; Captain J.A.T. Bruce, R.N.; Captain Britton, R.N.; Captain Bowden-Smith; W. L. Clowes, Esq.; Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb; Admiral Fanshawe; Admiral Sir J.D. Hay; Sir W. Crossman, K.C.M.G., MP; Captain Kinahan, R.N.; Captain Cotton, MP; W.J. Thompson, MP; W.H. Peat, Esq.; Lord Henry Bruce, MP; Thomas Scrutton, Esq.; Colonel Hill, C.B., MP; Sir Henry Tyler, MP, Sir John Puleston, MP; J.W. Sidebottom, Esq., MP; Edward S. Norris, Esq., MP; Leedham White, Esq.; Francis T. Barry, Esq

¹⁸¹See NMM, Hamilton Papers, HTN/35, H. Keppel's Diary, May 14, 1888, 135.

¹⁸²C.C. Penrose FitzGerald, “England's Danger,” *Times*, 32347 (Mar 30, 1888).

¹⁸³R.U. Penrose FitzGerald, “England's Danger,” *Times*, 32354 (Apr 7, 1888).

In May and June the agitation extended to widely-circulated civilian periodicals, like Beresford, H.M. Hozier and Edward Hamley's articles in the *Nineteenth Century*.¹⁸⁴

The heavily attended May 28 meeting was highlighted by a lecture by Admiral Hornby on "The Defence of Merchant Ships in the Case of War."¹⁸⁵ Beresford insisted that there was no intention of raising panic but simply that, "The public should know the truth and then decide for themselves." He distinguished between the two separate questions of the battlefleet and commerce defence, because the latter could still be lost even if the battlefleet won. Beresford was setting Hornby up to treat commerce defence directly, since this had the greatest relevance for the audience, without getting bogged down in the thorny question of battleships. Hornby began with the difficulties of blockade under steam, because single enemy raiders could easily escape since steam made them independent of the weather while blockaders were no longer able to stay months on station. The Royal Navy had to be able to instantly occupy key chokepoints on the major maritime trade routes. Hornby used the new technique of naval history to back

¹⁸⁴Edward Hamley, "The Defencelessness of London," 633-40, and Charles Beresford, "The Admiralty Confusion and Its Cure," 760-5 in *Nineteenth Century*, 23:135 (May 1888); Hamley, "The Question of Imperial Safety," 789-98 and H.M. Hozier, "Our Actual Military Strength," 799-808 and Charles Beresford, "A Workable Admiralty," 809-16 in *Nineteenth Century*, 23:136 (Jun 1888).

¹⁸⁵The meeting and subsequent discussion was summarized in "Mercantile Marine Defence," *Times*, 32398, (May 29, 1888), 11-12. The list of attendees included: Lord Charles Beresford; Earl of Carnarvon; Admiral Lord Alcester; Lord Brassey; Sir Edward J. Reed MP; Lieutenant-General Sir F. FitzWygram, MP; Commander Bethell, MP; Sir Albert K. Rollit, MP, London Chamber of Commerce; Rear-Admiral Mayne, MP; Colonel H. Blundell, MP; Thomas Sutherland, MP Chairman P. and O. Steamship Company; Sir Charles Mills; Admiral of the Fleet the Hon. Sir H. Keppel; Admiral Sir Spencer Robinson; Admiral Sir Leopold Heath; Admiral Field, MP; Rear-Admiral Sir Michael C. Seymour; Sir L. Loraine, R.N.; Admiral Sir E. Fanshawe; Admirals Sir A. Phillimore; Admiral Sir Claude Buckle; Sir Arthur Hodgson; Sir Francis V. Smith; Admiral R.F. Stopford; Admiral R.H. Stopford; Admiral Curme; Admiral Selwyn; Admiral Boys' Rear-Admiral Scott; Rear-Admiral Bedingfield; Rear-Admiral Fitzroy; Rear-Admiral Colomb; General Erskine; Major-General Dunne; Lieutenant-General Lowry; Major-General Pritchard R.E.; Colonel Sir Charles Nugent; Colonel Alexander Moncrieff; Colonel P.R. Innes; Captain Britton, R.N.; Captain J.D. Curtis, R.N.; Captain Grenfell, R.N.; Captain Penrose Fitzgerald R.N.; Captain Bruce R.N.; Captain G. Rawlinson Vyvyan, Elder Brethren of Trinity House; E.H. Carbutt, President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers; Rev. Canon Dalton; H.O. Arnold-Forster; W. Wyley Lord, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce; Alfred J. Reed, Grimsby Chamber of Commerce; Kenrie B. Murray, secretary

up his claims, arguing that with the massive growth in British commerce over the nineteenth century it was unlikely that the navy could make do with less than the forces deployed in the wars against France. Based on these calculations, Hornby suggested that 186 cruisers in total would be necessary; there were 42 already built, so 144 new cruisers would set the navy in an ideal state. As already mentioned, Beresford suggested to Hornby that a lower number might be more politically realistic. Beresford recounts in his memoirs that Hornby had criticized his '20 millions' proposal for not including an expansion of personnel — Beresford took it for granted that men would be voted, and this did not happen after the NDA.¹⁸⁶

Key members of the audience, most particularly the non-naval men, gave enthusiastic support to Hornby's arguments. Given the “total inadequacy” of the navy, Lord Carnarvon explained that

Panics undoubtedly ... produce bad work and expensive work. But at the same time – and perhaps this is the greatest indictment against our existing system – too frequently the work we have done has been due to these scares or panics, and too frequently without these panics you would not have had any work at all.¹⁸⁷

Carnarvon was almost certainly thinking back to his own Commission, whose report had been ignored until the 1884 panic had forced the Government to take remedial action. The problem in his eyes was the partisan political administration of the navy, which had been condemned by repeated Commissions and Committees, and needed to be reformed to implement a truly responsible and consistent administration. Lord Brassey mentioned the recent £1,000,000 expansion of the French navy, and suggested that Britain should build three ships for every foreign vessel laid down. This extravagant standard probably

¹⁸⁶*Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, 359.

¹⁸⁷“Mercantile Marine Defence,” *Times*, 32398, (May 29, 1888), 11-12.

applied to the question of cruisers alone, although Brassey does not specify. Admiral Robinson was particularly pleased to see a noted civilian authority in agreement with Admiral Hornby on the direness of the present situation.

The conversion of the LCC to the navalist cause was an important victory. There were criticisms that the audience at the LCC had been dominated by naval officers and was not the honest expression of the sentiments of commercial interests. A glance at the attendance list will confirm that the navy did dominate the meetings, assuming that every attendee was listed, but there were key figures from business, including representatives from several Chambers of Commerce. Thomas Sutherland, the Chairman of the P. and O. Steamship Company stated very clearly that the navy was inadequate to ensure the command of the sea and the protection of commerce. He reminded the Chamber how inconsistent Ministers had been, such as 1884 when Northbrook stated that the navy was adequate and then demanded £5,000,000. It does show how closely the example of 1884 was being considered. Sutherland, who had been a member of the 1888 Select Committee on the Navy Estimates, thought that the people would support naval expansion, because the destruction of commerce would lead to mass starvation and defeat. Admiral Mayne, another Committee member, reminded the meeting that the battlefleet, which was only about equal to France with inferior ordnance, was necessary to the overall strategy of commerce defence.

All the commentators at the meeting deprecated the national tendency to panic. E.H. Carbutt, the President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers pointed out that it was still unclear how the £11,000,000 voted in 1884–85 had been spent, or what exactly had been achieved by such a large sum. Beresford concluded the meeting by explaining

that, “We hear time after time of panics and scares alternating with violent fits of retrenchment and economy. The cause of those alterations in public feeling is to be found in our system of administration, under which no one is responsible.”¹⁸⁸ Only a definite standard of defence could determine the proper level of naval construction and expenditure, but this was only possible if the public kept up pressure on the Government.

The Captain of HMS *Cambridge*, Cleveland, wrote in support of Hornby's demands at the LCC for a massive programme of 144 cruisers. Hornby's speech had prompted him to make a searching examination of the ideal dispositions of warships, concluding that Mediterranean fleet required strengthening due to the volume of commerce carried through that sea. Cleveland explained that “the position, the class, and the number of ships... is open to discussion and correction, but the principle, whatever the numerical result may be, is the only practical key to a sound shipbuilding policy.”¹⁸⁹ What he was asking for was an expression of the level of force that the Royal Navy should maintain vis-a-vis other powers, which would then be enacted in practical terms. He certainly saw the Mediterranean as the key to British defence, explaining why the situation in that sea would dominate debates in coming years.

In spite of all the efforts of Hornby, including his arguments for '250 cruisers' discussed in the narrative, there was still a strain of official optimism. Beresford confirmed that four third-class protected 'fast cruisers' had been laid down, which was a response to the warship built by Armstrong's for Chile that was the fastest cruiser in the world at the time.¹⁹⁰ Arthur Forwood's speech at Liverpool was a very important government statement, taken in direct response to the arguments that were at the heart of

¹⁸⁸“Mercantile Marine Defence,” *Times*, 32398, (May 29, 1888), 11-12.

¹⁸⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, Cleveland to G.P. Hornby, Jul 17, 1888.

¹⁹⁰“House of Commons, Monday, June 4,” *Times*, 32404 (Jun 5, 1888), 6.

Hornby's statements. As described in the narrative, Forwood's statements would become a frequent straw man for later navalists arguments, erected to supply a caricature of official optimism and foolishness. The *Broad Arrow* concluded that Forwood had misunderstood Hornby's ideas about the number of cruisers required for imperial defence. The enormous number he had stated was the total required if the blockade failed to contain enemy commerce raiders.¹⁹¹ Forwood's ideas proved to be long-lasting. After the First Lord of the Admiralty repeated Arthur Forwood's claim that "our Commerce was too vast and too extensive to protect," at an Admiralty dinner, Hornby was warned that Forwood "has managed to inoculate the First Lord with the same mischievous views."¹⁹² These ideas had some influence at an official level, but it appears that blue-water theories had more public credibility. Certainly the blue-water theorists were more numerous.

In what may have been Stead putting words into Beresford's mouth, the interview reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette* concluded that "in arousing the public to a sense of the peril which is impending, the Press can do the best service which it can render to the Empire."¹⁹³ Frank Harris, the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, presented a pair of issues with significant commentary on military and naval affairs; Stead was very critical of Harris's choice, fearing the public reaction to such extravagant claims.. The army officer George Baden-Powell argued in "Mosquito Defence" that an offensive defence of flotilla craft would provide an effective and economical defence for the coast, and would free the sea-going fleet for offensive action — he was talking in terms of a volunteer force of small craft like yachts, tugs and fishing boats.¹⁹⁴ The November issue of the *Fortnightly*

¹⁹¹*Broad Arrow*, 41:1046 (Jul 14, 1888), 38-9.

¹⁹²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt9/9, Sir W. [Nerud?] to G.P. Hornby, Nov 12, 1888.

¹⁹³"Is the Navy Strong Enough?" *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7325 (Sep 7, 1888), 1-2.

¹⁹⁴George Baden-Powell, "Mosquito Defence," *Fortnightly Review*, 44:262 (Oct 1888), 546-56.

Review presented a set of articles by leading naval experts, including Admirals Symonds, Hornby and Lord Alcester. The editor gave a brief historical description of the rise of the French navy after the Franco-Prussian War, which was the fundamental reason for the current naval crisis. Alcester completely supported Hornby's position, arguing that the navy was incapable of taking the initiative on the outbreak of war and required twenty first-class ironclads and forty first-class cruisers of twenty knots speed. Warship designs were currently lagging behind the French and Russians, partly due to rapid obsolescence but even new ships were lacking in speed, range and sea-keeping. Alcester told readers that the Admiralty had been paralyzed by a "dread of the Treasury and public opinion," and needed to be reminded by popular activism that the country supported them.¹⁹⁵ This important set of articles was published just in advance of the critical Parliamentary debates in November, which cemented the new shipbuilding programme.

The LCC continued its pro-navy activities into 1889. Lord Brassey was invited to speak at the Mansion House on February 1, on the topic of "The Actual Strength of the British navy, and the Expenditure required to Secure its Supremacy, and to give Adequate Protection to our Commerce." Brassey made an impassioned argument for the necessity of an exceptional effort at this particular moment to make up deficiencies, and even then, "Lord Brassey admits that there will still be a question about security even if his [Hamilton's] programme is carried out; the position which this country desires is one in which our preponderance of strength is unquestionable."¹⁹⁶ In Brassey's opinion, extra-Parliamentary pressure was always necessary for an increase in naval expenditure, without which the Treasury would automatically base spending on the sums of the

¹⁹⁵ Alcester, "What Our Navy Should Be," *Fortnightly Review*, 44:263 (Nov 1888), 579.

¹⁹⁶ Reported in "Navy Notes," *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1515 (Feb 2, 1889), 82.

previous year's Estimates. He recommended large, fast ships rather than small craft, and based spending on a 'twice-France' standard rather than the Two-Power Standard.

Brassey recommended four first-class and ten second-class vessels, but Hornby reminded the meeting about the need for a good supply of cruisers.

Scares had come to be seen as a necessary part of the preparation for war. An anonymous writer in the *United Service Magazine* reminded readers that “If advantage be not taken of the present period of wholesome apprehension of danger to effect something of a permanent character, we shall soon relapse into our usual state of unpreparedness for war” or even into “blind and unreasoning confidence.”¹⁹⁷ Part of the rationale for using an Act of Parliament was to craft a long-term solution, rather than to leave the state of the navy at the mercy of annual estimates. It may have been more important for the service press to deny any charges of panic-mongering to retain their credibility. Authors in these periodicals frequently expressed displeasure with the existence of scares along with the belief that the scares were fundamentally due to real concerns rather than manipulation. Lieutenant-Colonel Higgins' analysis of the 1888 invasion scare concluded that panics were a regrettable phenomenon but had been necessary for reform and could not be ignored simply because they were distasteful.¹⁹⁸

The work of navalist agitation would not cease, but the NDA was very successful in minimizing the level of public activity. The NDA had the appearance of a definite plan on a clear standard of measure, and the Two-Power Standard suited the new naval common sense. Moderate navalists were satisfied, temporarily, leaving only the more easily marginalized hard core of agitators, like Symonds. Some people would never be

¹⁹⁷ Anonymous, “The Defence of London,” *United Service Magazine*, NS I (Jun 1888), 153.

¹⁹⁸ R.T. Higgins, “The Scare of 1888,” *United Service Magazine*, NS I (Jul 1888), 267.

satisfied with the state of the navy, but there were other concerns to occupy public and political energies, such as the continued economic downturn or the Irish Question.

The Government Responds: Why the Act of Parliament?

The previous chapter described the development of an entrenched public critique of Admiralty administration during 1887, spurred in large part by the actions of Randolph Churchill and his resignation from Salisbury's Government. Administrative reform was seized upon by Beresford and a small sub-set of navalists as the core solution to the future sufficiency and efficiency of the Royal Navy, including its financial economy. Key navalists attempted to reform the structure of the Admiralty, and while they succeeded in clearly defining the duties and responsibilities of the Board, the wholesale revision of the system through the creation of a Ministry of Defence did not gain political traction. Instead, the Government turned to the mechanism of an Act of Parliament to embody their naval construction programme, in an effort to reassure navalists and the public that the navy would be properly supplied without repeated politicking.

The 1888 discourse, supercharged by the resignation of Beresford that had quickly turned into a general criticism of the administration, was further spurred by the substantial decrease in the 1888–89 Navy Estimates. The *Saturday Review* pointed out that Hamilton's speech at Teddington in early January 1888 offered the same assurances as every other First Lord — no official ever claimed to be reducing the effective strength of the navy.¹⁹⁹ The article looked forward to examining in more detail the exact rationale for the cuts that had been made, and how the reorganization will actually increase real

¹⁹⁹“Some Naval Matters,” *The Saturday Review*, 65:1681 (Jan 14, 1888), 34-5.

efficiency instead of just shuffling officials. The *Review* did not doubt the good intentions of Hamilton, considering the efforts that he had made in 1886–87, but could not believe that costs could be reduced while efficiency increased. Critics of the political control of the Admiralty suggested that administration would ideally be under a fully professional, technocratic (not their word) naval officer who would be held fully and personally accountable, and thus remove the navy from partisan politics.

In the frank discussion surrounding Beresford's resignation, the tension between publicity and security was significant. The *Morning Post* noted that only in Britain would such public criticism be permitted, and there was tension between the desirability of exposing flaws and the ability of individuals to use their criticisms to prey on an ignorant public.²⁰⁰ As a Conservative periodical, the *Morning Post* appealed to the natural reluctance of patriotic citizens to inform potential rivals or enemies of their own weakness, in order to undermine the position of critics by making them seem like a danger to the nation. Beresford's writings were very explicit in their description of British weaknesses. To predictable accusations that this would encourage foreign powers, Beresford insisted that the facts were well known to foreign governments and armed forces and it was the British public who needed to be educated about the “actual facts as they stand.”²⁰¹ Beresford admonished his audience to ignore the petty bickering over distribution figures or ship classification and focus on the overall lines of naval policy.

The Government appointed another Select Committee on the Navy Estimates in March. While it deliberated, administrative competence continued to be challenged and queried out of doors. For example, reports of defects in the engines and machinery of

²⁰⁰*Morning Post*, 36065 (Jan 20, 1888), 4.

²⁰¹C. Beresford, “The British Fleet and the State of Europe,” *Nineteenth Century*, 25:143 (Jan 1889), 11.

HMS *Hero* were raised in Parliament; at first the Admiralty denied any defect, but later admitted that the dockyards had to add extra strengthening around the engines at additional expense.²⁰² Still, at least in the matter of ordnance Hamilton was able to claim success in overcoming the shortage of heavy guns, although some ships were still delayed for several months.²⁰³ In a similar way to 1887, reports of defects allowed opposition Members of Parliament an opening to attack Salisbury's Ministry.

The Select Committee included a mix of leading navalists and more moderate politicians. Campbell-Bannerman was narrowly elected as Chairman, defeating Beresford's nomination of the vocal navalist MP Mr. Hanbury. The Committee chose to avoid questions about the duties of the Accountant-General and not to investigate naval finances because these had already been examined by committees in 1885 and 1888.²⁰⁴ Their investigation was primarily concerned with Vote 1, personnel, and Vote 8, shipbuilding, but through these attempted to assess the overall structure of naval policy and administration.²⁰⁵ The presence of navalists on the Committee, combined with the ongoing controversy of the invasion scare and, later in the summer, the coastal attacks during the naval manoeuvres, ensured that the investigation would expand beyond naval finances to include a broader examination of the relationship between strategy and policy.

The conclusions of the Committee supported the existing administrative structure. The Admiralty had a normal ministerial structure with a supreme First Lord acting through responsible department heads, who were expected to resign in case of serious

²⁰²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:323, (Mar 19, 1888), c. 1625; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:324, (Mar 22, 1888), c. 34.

²⁰³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:325, (Apr 26, 1888), c. 574-5.

²⁰⁴“First Report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates,” May 2, 1888, London: Hansard and Son, 1888 (142).

²⁰⁵“Fourth Report of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates,” Aug 6, 1888, London: Hansard and Son).

differences but to defer to the Minister's judgement in ordinary matters. The Permanent Secretary, Ewen MacGregor, defended the authority of the Minister because

the necessity imposed upon him of finding good officers of good standing to act with him as Naval Lords was a security to the profession, and to the public, that no measures seriously affecting the Navy could be adopted without responsible professional advice.²⁰⁶

The analysis of the distribution of work among Board members had to conclude that responsibilities were complex and interwoven. For instance, shipbuilding was shared amongst the Board, with the Board laying out ideas for the Chief Constructor to prepare as designs that would then be reviewed by the First Naval Lord and the Controller before the final approval of the Board.²⁰⁷ Not all commentators were convinced. The *Broad Arrow* thought that the appendix contained in the Second Report clearly outlined the confusing jumble of overlapping duties of Board members.²⁰⁸ The committee's investigation revealed that the size and shape of each year's shipbuilding programme was based on the preceding Estimates and the predicted wastage of the upcoming four years, and thus was determined by the amount of money the Cabinet was willing to spend. Hood insisted that if the programme was "inadequate to the wants of the Navy in such a proportion as to imperil in any way our efficiency, he, with his colleagues, would record their protest against it; and such a protest might be emphasized by resignation."²⁰⁹ Hood's assurances were unsatisfying because contemporaries had already observed Beresford's resignation and were not confident in the ability of professional advisers to resist their political overlords.

²⁰⁶Ewan MacGregor, "Fourth Report of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates," Aug 6, 1888, London: Hansard and Son), iii-iv.

²⁰⁷Board minute, Feb 15, 1887, "Fourth Report of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates," Aug 6, 1888, London: Hansard and Son).

²⁰⁸"Comments," *Broad Arrow*, 41:1045 (Jul 7, 1888), 4.

²⁰⁹"Fourth Report of the Select Committee on Navy Estimates," Aug 6, 1888, London: Hansard and Son). v.

The creation of the Select Committee did not satisfy Parliamentary critics. Bartellot presented a motion for a Royal Commission on the State of Naval and Military Defences. Admiral Field referred back to W.H. Smith's September 23, 1884 letter to the *Times*, which advocated a thorough inquiry into the navy that was not granted, suggesting that the current Government might revise the Committee's terms of reference to consider "the sufficiency or otherwise of our existing Naval Force to meet the requirements of the Empire for the better enabling Her Majesty's Government to base their Naval policy upon fixed principles."²¹⁰ Smith, now the First Lord of the Treasury, thought this would be impractical and inconsistent with the Government's responsibility for the sufficiency of national defence, but assured the House that the Government took its responsibility very seriously. The only solution to the problems of evidence that the Select Committee had run into was a clear statement of the basic principles of British strategy.

The Hartington Commission was comprehensive in its appointments. Admiral Richards represented the Admiralty (and played a leading role in drafting the report), General Brackenbury the Army, Campbell-Bannerman the political Opposition, Smith for the Government, two businessmen and Sir Richard Temple for the India Office. Smith suggested that Churchill join in order to "represent those who believe that efficiency and economy may result from a change of system."²¹¹ Admiral Field tried to get the Government to present a preliminary report of the Hartington Commission in order to properly evaluate the NDA in the spring of 1889, but was refused. The Government thought it was unnecessary since the Commission only dealt with administrative concerns

²¹⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:325, (May 8, 1888), c. 1625-6.

²¹¹W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 687, W.H. Smith to R. Churchill, May 18, 1888.

rather than general naval policy.²¹² The Commission had been shifted away from the issues that underlay the 1888 Navy Scare, which had inspired the formation of the Commission, and its purpose was essentially 'nerfed' into relative insignificance. The conclusions of the Hartington Commission are dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. For this section, its real relevance was in postponing the issue of administrative reform and separates it from the question of a new naval programme.

A Cabinet memorandum (after the Hartington Commission), unsigned but probably by Charles Dilke, MP, focused on the tension between the serious lack of public confidence in national defences and the difficulty of discussing these issues in Parliament without political partisanship. The memorandum's author intended to overcome this defect by providing a non-partisan statement from a group of thinkers engaged with national defence to leaders of the Government and the opposition. The document recognized that requirements of war had to be tempered by the nature of the British constitution, but insisted the administration of the services had been significantly changed in recent years without sufficient attention to the needs of war. War plans were the proper responsibility of the Government, so the memorandum argued that

where the government is responsible to a parliament it is indispensable either that so much of the design should be communicated to parliament as will enable it to judge of the necessity and of the sufficiency of the preparations for which supplies must be voted, or that Parliament should be able in case of need to trace to its source the design for which its confidence is asked....²¹³

A Cabinet government should have an "office specially entrusted with the consideration of war as a whole," which the author believed would end the anomaly of a maritime empire spending twice as much on land forces as on naval forces. The point was that a

²¹²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:334, (Mar 21, 1889), c. 406-7.

²¹³NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB 37/21/19, handwritten notes on Home Defence, undated, 1888.

professional man could only be employed if his opinions possessed the confidence of the Government, otherwise he could not take the responsibility for a policy he disagreed with. If an officer's opinion was given in his own name to Parliament, it would prevent the Government from speaking for its professional advisers. Parliament and the public could be confident that the national defences were adequate in the view of leading expert opinion, without impairing Parliamentary control.

When the naval scare reached its peak political effectiveness in the fall, just before the season for preparing departmental Estimates, some important navalists resisted new expenditure without administrative reform. Beresford told Hornby that both he and Randolph Churchill “with whatever following we can muster, will oppose any proposal made for money to add to the ship building vote unless a definite scheme for defence is made out shewing what is necessary and the reasons.”²¹⁴ Expenditure was not the solution unless it was taken with clear objects that would justify the expenditure to the political nation. Beresford appears to have moderated his views of administration in 1889. He maintained that the Admiralty lacked responsibility and accountability, but gave the Government credit for its efforts with the Cabinet committee and the Hartington Commission. This was a 'business-like' proposition to thoroughly investigate and define the requirements of the country, and reallocate £7,000,000 from the Sinking Fund to naval expansion.²¹⁵ Perhaps Beresford realized that the administrative reforms he sought were increasingly unlikely, but an expanded naval programme was practically a reality.

Reginald Brett asked William Stead to get involved in the ongoing naval controversy, describing the serious problems in a system that gave the Treasury ultimate

²¹⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/1 pt8/9, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Oct 10, 1888.

²¹⁵“Lord C. Beresford on the Navy,” *Times*, 32595 (Jan 14, 1889), 10.

control over the “exigencies of two services,” when the Treasury and Cabinet should either accept or reject the Estimates as a whole. Instead they were “debated point by point as is the present practice,” taking away the proper responsibility of the department head.²¹⁶ Brett asked Stead, “Do you think you can get it done?” perhaps hoping that Stead would be able to mobilize the public as he had so adroitly in 1884. With so much public activism and expert support, the situation seemed very similar to the previous scare. In this case, however, credibility shifted away from newspaper editors to the professional experts who were using multiple papers as forums to influence public opinion.

Naturally, a major motivation for the use of an Act of Parliament in a shipbuilding programme was the politicking of the Conservative Government in implying that a future Liberal Government would abandon the naval programme unless it was coerced. The Conservatives successfully reconstructed their party as the party of defence and Empire, but this claim ignored that the navy had treated by both parties in similar terms, which many periodicals, not just the service press, were quick to remind readers of. To the *Saturday Review*, Parliamentary critics of the NDA, like Randolph Churchill, were not particularly convincing. Churchill was right to point out that a new Ministry would have the right to change naval policy, but the Review thought that it was more important that the current Ministry would have great difficulty in reneging on promises made in such a manner.²¹⁷ As one of the most constant commentators in the press, the *Review* frequently took a longer view, recognizing that neither party had a consistent record on the issue of national defence.

²¹⁶CACC, Brett Papers, ESHR/2/8, Esher's Political Diary, Feb 16, 1889, Esher to W.T. Stead and Esher to Lord Rothschild; copy in CACC, Stead Papers, STED/1/25 pt2.

²¹⁷“The Increase of the Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 67:1741 (Mar 9, 1889), 273.

Lord George Hamilton's memoirs describe his personal experience of the public appreciation of the NDA, which he believed rehabilitated the Admiralty in public opinion.²¹⁸ Clearly the fixed multi-year programme was intended to achieve such a restorative effect. In reality the public response was much more cautious, and navalists shifted to new arguments relating to the practical application of the Two-Power Standard. A big part of using an Act of Parliament was the legacy of the 1884 scare. In that instance, panic expenditure had been very substantial, with poor accountability for how the money was spent. An Act of Parliament would give security and quiet critics with the assurance that for several years a consistent and generous policy would be followed.

²¹⁸Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, 112-5; Mark Hamilton follows this account in *The Nation and the Navy*, 55.

Chapter 6 — The Second Interregnum: Responding to the Naval Defence Act

A modern navy is a totally untried weapon of warfare. It is the resultant of a host of more or less conflicting theories of attack and defence. The seaman, the gunner, the torpedoist, the engineer, and the naval constructor, each has his share in the creation of the modern man-of-war, each presses the paramount claim of his own department, and the result is a marvel of theory, compromise, and complication. Nothing but experiment under conditions approximated as closely as possible to those of actual warfare can evolve order out of this chaos of conflicting theories, compromises, and complications.¹

Times, September 21, 1889

The *Times* touched upon many of the key issues that continued to perplex the Admiralty and the navy in the aftermath of the NDA. The broader public, including many moderate navalists, was satisfied with the shipbuilding provisions of the NDA and the Two-Power Standard, which had become the official standard of the Government. This did not mean that naval affairs disappeared from public discourse or that there was universal contentment. W.H. White, Chief Constructor and architect of the NDA, accurately predicted a new call for expenditure in the fall of 1892 when the bulk of NDA construction would be completed and dockyard slips freed up for new vessels. The Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, W.V. Harcourt, was able to prevent the creation of a new multi-year shipbuilding programme and postponed a major naval agitation until 1893. Historians treat the Two-Power Standard in a specific and quantifiable fashion (‘as

¹Editorial, “It is now some weeks since the Naval...,” *Times*, 32810 (Sep 21, 1889), 9.

strong as the next two naval powers combined'), but it was a fluid concept encompassing a range of practical applications that allowed persistent debate. As these debates progressed, it became obvious to interested parties that a new naval programme was required, that personnel issues would have to be incorporated and that embodying a shipbuilding programme in an Act of Parliament was not an ideal policy choice.

The navalist agitation was maintained at a low level in the aftermath of the NDA, with an emphasis particularly on qualitative elements of naval strength. Scares were more likely when the question was one of finances, of simply providing more money; on the more complex questions of naval efficiency, agitators could make claims or suggestions, but readers of the criticisms were more likely to leave the final judgment to the Admiralty. The Admiralty was becoming more self-assertive in the aftermath of the scares, because these events had proven the popularity of the senior Service and the new First Naval Lord Admiral Sir Frederick Richards was known for his tenacity and forcefulness.² Naval efficiency rested as much on the men as on the ships, and the NDA had not increased or reformed the personnel of the Royal Navy. Only when the NDA ships were being launched did the issue of personnel start to gain traction, although even then serious efforts to streamline and improve training, particularly the education of officers, had to wait until the 1900s. The after-effects of the naval expansion under the NDA did show that ships alone were not enough, and future expansion programmes would endeavour to account for the long-term expenses associated with manning and maintaining ships. For this reason, the Act of Parliament method of expansion would not be favoured by later administrators, who realized that incremental increases in ordinary expenditure offered more holistic expansion than a single construction programme.

²M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 65-6.

The NDA was a contentious policy decision. Unsurprisingly, there were still die-hards who did not accept that the NDA had gone far enough to secure British naval supremacy. Jon Sumida has recognized that there were significant problems with the finances of the NDA, including both the difficulty of adapting to higher prices after the British shipbuilding industry started to rebound from its slump in the late 1880s, and the altered costs of ships that had to be redesigned following technological advances, such as lighter armour that could be added to cruisers.³ More importantly, there was significant debate beginning with its promulgation over the definition of the Two-Power Standard. Critics suggested that the force level the NDA provided was not an effective Two-Power Standard, arguing that it should be Two-Power *plus a margin*. An additional margin would satisfy the 5:3 ratio necessary for blockade and give reasonable assurance of victory at a time of technological uncertainty, but there was no consensus on what constituted an acceptable margin. Mark Hamilton treats the margin as a natural part of the Two-Power Standard, but as this chapter will show, contemporaries disagreed.⁴ The remaining question was whether a practical standard applied only in the aggregate strength of the navy or whether it applied to each theatre of war separately. Here the Mediterranean shaped itself into a test case, particularly with a new Russian presence in the area, involving questions not just of comparative fleet strength but also the dockyard facilities, fuel supplies and other qualitative aspects supporting war fleets.

Any history of naval scares in the 1880s and 1890s must address the question of why scares occurred in certain years and not in others. The 1892 episode is the most interesting, because it tests the viability of the theory of the primacy of foreign affairs.

³Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, 15-9.

⁴M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 56.

Are naval panics caused by imperial or Great Power rivalries? The naval scare occurred in 1893, but it was in 1891 that the Franco-Russian Dual Alliance was formed. Colonial tensions abounded in Egypt, Uganda and Siam. Salisbury's attitude to the Straits question shifted in 1892, as he became aware of the great gulf that existed between the Foreign Office's policy and the practical ability of the armed forces as assessed by the DNI and DMI.⁵ Tension remained with Russia in Central Asia, when the 1891–92 Pamir dispute revived questions of Indian defence. HMS *Howe* was sunk on a reef in Ferrol harbour, raising similar issues as the 1893 sinking of HMS *Victoria*. Agitators were active in 1892, and desperately worked to remedy the serious inferiority in British naval forces that they predicted for 1893. All of the key factors that have been deployed by historians to explain the scare of 1893 were present in 1892, and yet there was no scare. In spite of all the pressures in foreign affairs, the pro-economy forces involved in the domestic political transition to Gladstone's third Liberal administration were able to use financial arguments to buy a one-year delay. For all of Gladstone's efforts, the issues raised by navalist agitators were not rectified or nullified, and his delaying action only enhanced the resulting scare. Naval officers, journalists and politicians, including more Liberals all the time, were willing to accept financial arguments for delay but not for permanent inaction.

Navalists were aided by the appearance in the early 1890s of several historical works by the American naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan has received a large share of credit for educating the British public about the importance of the navy and is part of every survey of naval history and strategic thinking. John Beeler briefly claims that Mahan's work on seapower gave new force to navalists and encouraged the press to

⁵Lillian Penson, "Foreign Affairs under the Third Marquis of Salisbury," *The Creighton Lecture in History* 1960, University of London, 1962, 10.

engage with naval affairs, such as reporting manoeuvres and ship launches.⁶ Bernard Semmel adds nuance, suggesting that Mahan appealed because he emphasized decisive battlefleet actions instead of commercial warfare against British shipping, thus reassuring the merchant classes that Colomb's policy of 'command of the sea' could protect commerce.⁷ Even so, Semmel recognizes that over time, Mahan became more convinced that commerce was a primary rather than a secondary objective of war. It is certainly true that commerce warfare continued to be a preoccupation of British strategic thinking, but navalist discourses had been exploring the command of the sea and the potential of a blockade to shield commerce for years. Mahan's work was not successful because it said anything new to British readers, and it does not substantially change the tone or character of navalism; like the 'Truth About the Navy,' it succeeded by presenting established ideas in a well-supported and comprehensible fashion.

The last chapter discussed the self-consciousness that naval agitators had developed, and their clear intentions to create a new agitation for a naval expansion programme. This chapter shows how the manipulation or even guidance of the public was a difficult task. Critics and lobby groups were not united, since each had its own area of expertise or pet projects to promote. Nor was the public so gullible as to believe any alarmist statements without credible verification. The two lessons to take away from the chapter are the continuity of agitation, which adapted smoothly to the post-NDA political climate, and the severe challenges that public agitation would have to overcome in order to catalyze a scare. Naval scares were not haphazard or casual events; they were the outcome of dozens if not hundreds of influential individuals in the government, naval

⁶Beeler, *Naval Policy in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli*, 269. See also Ruger, *The Great Naval Game*.

⁷Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy*, 89-91.

service and press working to craft a credible belief that the nation supported increasing armaments. The need for better security was a genuine belief, but the vast majority of citizens had other concerns; the minority would speak on behalf of the majority, if a credible claim of representation could be constructed.

Narrative of Events, 1889–92

The NDA defined the naval discourse for the rest of Salisbury's Administration. A new First Naval Lord, Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, was appointed to replace Admiral Hood, who had gained a poor reputation from his apparent complacency over the condition of the navy in 1888. Hamilton would preside over the implementation of the NDA, which was a very difficult and heavily debated process. Even the length of time that it was taking to initiate the NDA became a point of controversy although it was actually quite rapid; by July 22, 1889, eighteen out of twenty dockyard ships had been commenced and half of the contract ships had been tendered.⁸

With such a large number of battleships to be built at once, it provided an opportunity for the revival of the discourse on warship design. E.J. Reed had been the leading critic of ship design in the early 1880s, focusing on the vulnerability of the unarmoured ends of battleships to small-arms fire, which was only exacerbated by quick-firing guns. During the 1888 Navy Scare, Beresford continued to raise the issue in Parliament.⁹ The question of design is dealt with in more detail below, but new developments in metallurgy were starting to reduce the controversy. Thick, heavy

⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:338, (Jul 22, 1889), c. 979.

⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:294 (Mar 2, 1885), c. 1752-4; Beresford supported Reed's position during the 1888 scare, *Hansard*, 3:330 (Nov 20, 1888), c. 1649-50; *Hansard*, 3:335 (Apr 12, 1889), c. 363-4.

wrought-iron armour plates were replaced with increasingly sophisticated steel armour that provided equal or superior protection at a fraction of the weight. These developments made it possible to cover more area on warships for the same tonnage cost. The eight new first-class battleships of the *Royal Sovereign*-class had complete waterline belts, although the thickness of the armour tapered towards the ends.

Controversy lingered after the presentation of the NDA, and it was natural for navalists to look to the 1889 summer naval manoeuvres for lessons that could inform policy. Responding to the French development of the *jeune école* strategic school, with its emphasis on commerce raiding, the manoeuvres were designed to test the attack and defence of commerce, including the ability of the navy to blockade raiders.¹⁰ The manoeuvres repeated the experience of the previous year, including the inability of the blockading fleet to contain enemy cruisers engaged in coastal depredations just as Tryon had in 1888. The reality of manoeuvres, dealt with in greater detail below, was a debatable point, but lessons were learned for improving future efforts.

Lord George Hamilton summed up the naval situation in a November 1889 speech at Liverpool. He said that the NDA had successfully embodied a standard of naval strength that could not be ignored or modified without Parliamentary approval and in full view of the public. He admitted that close blockade had proven difficult in the manoeuvres, and the sustained speed of British cruisers was not satisfactory. The *Times* commentary on the speech clearly identified these shortcomings and the lack of specific solutions from the Admiralty.¹¹ If close blockade was impossible, then an alternate

¹⁰Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 88.

¹¹Leader, *Times*, 32869, (Nov 29, 1889), 9.

strategy had to be devised; if such a blockade required greater forces, then a new standard was required.

Hamilton intended to reassure the public, but core navalist agitators took the speech as a sign that new advocacy was urgently required. Beresford and Hornby coordinated a counter-offensive in the *Times* and other civilian periodicals. To Beresford, the navy was still numerically weak, since the NDA had not yet produced any vessels, and even that measure did not take into account the full range of wartime needs, such as provision for the 'wastage' of war, ships repairs or modernizations.¹² The NDA was overly fixated on numerical comparisons, so Beresford and Hornby argued for a more thorough consideration of the needs of war. Hornby wrote his own letter to the *Times*. Beresford considered it represented the view of leading Admirals, including Hoskins, Hotham, Vesey Hamilton and Lord Alcester, and claimed it was worth twenty letters from less well-known and respected officers.¹³ Beresford planned an article in the *Nineteenth Century* that would make a case for modernizing and rearming older ironclads, since the new French Army Bill would take effect before the NDA and give the French the strategic advantage. Admiral Robinson accepted the current administration's claims that it had done more for restoring naval supremacy than previous governments, but characterized the entire system as one of "total irresponsibility and concealment," particularly in the leadership of "a civilian without practical experience in Naval affairs, and without any qualification for organising warlike operations...."¹⁴ Robinson was restating the basic points of Hornby's 1888 activism, but these claims lost some traction

¹²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt5, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Nov 29, 1889.

¹³NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt5/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Private, Dec 3, 1889.

¹⁴BL, Martin Papers, Add MS 41413, ff. 322-5, [Aug] 1889, R.S. Robinson, "Are We Content to Lose Our Naval Supremacy?"

as the NDA suggested that, with active public awareness, the current administrative system could be responsive to professional advice. Robinson certainly believed that it was the actions of naval officers like Hornby in rousing business interests to support naval supremacy that produced such an important Act.

Administrative issues, such as those identified by Robinson, lingered on in 1889 navalist discourse, but were muted while the Royal Commission under Lord Hartington slowly gathered its evidence. The Commission was progressively delayed even though its mandate has been restricted solely to the administrative structures of the Admiralty, with explicitly no consideration of wider strategic or technological issues.¹⁵ The Commission reported in March 1890 with Randolph Churchill producing his own minority report. The main recommendation was to give the Cabinet and the Prime Minister a more direct role in defence policy through a Naval and Military Council under his leadership that could solve the vexed problems of coordinating with the self-governing colonies and the interrelationship between defence and diplomacy. The need to involve the dominions more closely in defence affairs was raised at the 1887 Colonial Conference, although the Admiralty was never particularly favourable to small dominion navies.

Winston Churchill's biography of his father emphasized the importance of his father's minority report's recommendations, even though the commission as a whole did not adopt them. He traced the reform of the administration back to Randolph's agitation and resignation in 1886 for showing that economies could be made in the Admiralty, and the "unseen influence which severe public criticism exerts upon the working of a great

¹⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 1, 1889), c. 70-1; UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:341, (Feb 18, 1890), c. 577.

department.”¹⁶ Randolph's assessment concurred with the longstanding administrative criticisms, concluding that professional advisers could hide behind the technical responsibility of the political Ministers, while Parliamentarians faced no real consequences for mismanagement. The solution was for professional military and naval officers, qualified to make technical and scientific decisions, to be given seats in the Lords for five year terms. They would participate in Privy Council and Cabinet meetings with voting rights for defence subjects only, and be directly responsible to Parliament for national defences. They would have a ministerial 'Secretary of State and Treasurer' who would settle expenditure, audit accounts, control the Ordnance Department and contracts, and present the Estimates to Parliament.

Churchill's arguments were in line with Beresford's agitation for a better and more responsible organization for war at the Admiralty.¹⁷ Arnold-Forster was working in the press to draw attention to the contrast between the rising expenditure on the navy and the lack of reform in the administration, but, in Churchill's words, “official opinion is obdurate.”¹⁸ Later, in 1894 these recommendations would be resurrected by Dilke, Chesney, Wilkinson and Arnold-Forster, to form an argument for a Ministry of Defence. At this stage such a Ministry was intended to put the Services in direct contact with Parliament rather than uniting the two services in one organization. At the same time, the more critical opinion of Admiral Bridge, who was less interested in riling up public opinion, judged Randolph's Report to be “as inane a document as they make them.”¹⁹

¹⁶Randolph Churchill's minority report in Appendix IX, W.S. Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 688.

¹⁷BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49713, ff. 6-12, C. Beresford to A.J. Balfour, May 15, 1890.

¹⁸BL, Arnold-Forster Papers, Add MS 88953/1/1, R. Churchill to H.O. Arnold-Forster, Apr 21, 1890.

¹⁹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Mar 24, 1890.

Agitation persisted for military defences against invasion, the so-called 'Two-Army-Corps-and-a-Cavalry-Division' school of thought. Bridge thought that this was trying to “prejudice the public mind in favour of an insane strategic plan” that was distracting from the real need for a proper Mediterranean policy.²⁰ Admiral Vesey Hamilton was asked to produce a memorandum on the possibility of an invasion force striking at Thames Haven, and felt compelled to make a special point of stating the “extreme improbability” that any such attempt would be made, so that the memorandum would not be misused to imply that he was actually concerned about the issue. Any force large enough to brave the forts and hazards could not be despatched in secret without a British naval response.²¹

The reaction against the lingering invasion scare centered on commerce defence. Sir George Tryon, one of Britain's leading Admirals, wrote in the May *United Service Magazine* arguing that the defence of the merchant marine should be considered as national insurance. The article was passed on personally to Dilke and Balfour from their naval correspondents, thus ensuring that these politicians would be affected by an article in the service press.²² Bridge argued that the “brick-laying passive defence Engineers” school of thought, represented by the London newspaper and periodical press, emerged during any public strategic discussion, threatening to divert funds from the navy.²³ While invasion was still considered as a possible threat by strategic thinkers, it did not have the political weight that had marked its 1888 high point in public consciousness. Invasion

²⁰NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 12, 1890.

²¹NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/7/D, “Thames Haven,” memorandum by R.V. Hamilton, Apr 1890.

²²BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43914, f. 256, G. Tryon to C. Dilke, May 14, 1890; BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49713, ff. 6-12, C. Beresford to A.J. Balfour, May 15, 1890.

²³NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 15, 1890.

continued to have a literary presence in juvenile adventure stories, but future invasion concerns would be met solidly with blue-water solutions.

The 1890–91 Navy Estimates were passed over largely without comment. The NDA would spend slightly more than double the previous year’s total, £6,486,741 on hulls and machinery and £1,700,000 on armament. The shipbuilding portion of the Imperial Defence Act (IDA) was less than half, at £179,793, than the previous year, while over £450,000 still remained for military works and armaments under the IDA. As the *Saturday Review* noted, the sums for shipbuilding had already been decided, and no other vote was heavily debated, leaving most of the Parliamentary debates as “aimless talk — unofficial and official.”²⁴ Technical problems persisted, such as the quality of dockyard work and the production of heavy ordnance, which the *Review* argued cast doubt over the quality of naval material, citing Hamilton's reluctance to discuss the failed 'M' class cruisers and *Sharpshooter*-class scouts. For the *Review* the solution was obvious, to have naval officers decide “what kind of ship is satisfactory to fight in, and then [compel] the ingenious mechanic to build it.”²⁵

Naval opinion seems to have been generally content with the strength of the navy in the spring of 1890. Bridge and Custance agreed that there were sufficient British ships at home and in the Mediterranean to match all sea-going foreign ships, except for some of the smallest unarmoured ships, which could be easily procured if needed; Bridge offered to extend the comparison to despatch vessels, coal, store and ammunition ships, if Custance thought it valuable to include the full variety of ships required in war.²⁶ Britain

²⁴“The Estimates of the Services,” *Saturday Review*, 69:1794 (Mar 15, 1890), 310-1; “The Navy, *Saturday Review*, 69:1795 (Mar 22, 1890), 343.

²⁵“The Navy, *Saturday Review*, 69:1795 (Mar 22, 1890), 343.

²⁶NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Mar 24, 1890.

was only deficient in cruisers, with about 20 additional vessels required. An 1890 Cabinet report compared the naval expenditure of the major European powers between 1882 and 1888, before the NDA boosted British construction budgets. For the seven years in question, Britain spent £63,989,468, France spent £62,201,214, Russia spent £32,993,815, Italy spent £19,010,107, and Germany £12,648,172.²⁷ From these figures, even with the somewhat cheaper shipbuilding costs in Britain, the millions spent on the NDA were still insufficient for a Two-Power Standard in naval spending, reaffirming the challenge of how such a standard should be measured in practice.

Some of the most vocal agitators, such as Admiral Elliot, were slackening their activity in the spring of 1890.²⁸ A few, however, remained actively involved in raising public awareness. Admiral Symonds made a new foray in the press in the summer of 1890, focusing as usual on the French threat and urging large increases to the navy. The *Saturday Review* was not impressed by this activism, since Symonds had a “way of arguing his case... which makes us suspect he would always find matter of complaint, whatever the Ministry did,” suggesting that Symonds' credibility had been seriously damaged by his constant agitation.²⁹ As one example, the *Review* recounted how the French fleet had run out of coal during naval manoeuvres, belying Symonds' claims that the French were far better organized for war. The *Review's* point was a qualitative one, that while Symonds was focusing on the numbers of ships fielded by each power, the current issue was ensuring a sufficient supply of effective personnel. Personnel aspects were prominent in non-scare years, but could be quickly subsumed beneath fear about the quantity of ships.

²⁷NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/28/37, May 1890.

²⁸BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49713, ff. 6-12, C. Beresford to A.J. Balfour, May 15, 1890.

²⁹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 70:1813 (Jul 26, 1890), 103.

Following the NDA, a burst of important strategic works were produced that encouraged the development of blue-water strategic views in the British public. In the summer of 1890, the United States Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan published his extremely important work, *The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660-1783*.³⁰ Mahan emphasized the importance of maritime power throughout history, and articulated the key concept of 'command of the sea.' J.K. Laughton, probably the most important naval historian of the late Victorian period, thought "it quite the most important contribution to naval literature which has appeared for many years...."³¹ Reginald Brett, Rosebery and John Morley read the book and exchanged copies, and even Gladstone noted in his diary that he was reading it.³² Laughton and Admiral Bridge were both impressed by Mahan's grasp of strategic principles and naval policy, but thought that the actual history was lacking in depth to back up his generalizations.³³ Laughton reviewed the book in the well-read *Edinburgh Review*, while Brassey published a review in the *United Service Magazine*. Laughton and Bridge shared the opinion that reviews in large-circulation civilian journals were more valuable than notices in the service press.

Admiral P.H. Colomb's 1891 *Naval Warfare* appeared shortly after Mahan's work, although it was based on essays previously produced for the *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine*.³⁴ Colomb's approach was more historically rigorous, giving specific detailed examples rather than the great sweep of Mahan. Colomb's point was the same as Mahan's, the necessity for command of the sea based on fleet action by battlefleets rather

³⁰A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, London: Methuen, 1965.

³¹*Letters and Papers of Professor Sir John Knox Laughton*, 67-8, J.K. Laughton to S. Luce, Aug 3, 1890.

³²*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Dec 13, 1890; NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10006, ff. 89-90, R. Brett to Rosebery, Sep 25, 1891.

³³*Letters and Papers of Professor Sir John Knox Laughton*, 67-8, Aug 12, 1890, J.K. Laughton to S. Luce; NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Jun 5, 1891.

³⁴P.H.Colomb, *Naval Warfare: Its ruling principles and practice historically treated*, (London: W.H. Allen, 1891).

than commerce or coastal raiding, a commonality that the *Saturday Review* was quick to emphasize.³⁵ To both authors, the French emphasis on commerce raiding during the Age of Sail had cost them the strategic initiative and forced them to fight at times and places chosen by the British. The *Review* was disappointed in Colomb's work, finding it overly pedantic while being unclear or inconsistent about the difference between maritime operations and mere 'cross-raiding'. The *Review* suggested that Colomb was stretching his evidence to support his current political stance in favour of a blue-water fleet rather than fortifications, when history showed many instances of attacks on ports. Taken together, both books confirmed for contemporaries the historical validity of a strategy based on total command of sea communications by blockading the enemy in his ports, thus protecting commerce, preventing invasion and safeguarding expeditionary forces.

Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson's 1892 *Imperial Defence* was well-received by critics, and seems to have been an important work in establishing a naval-centric basis for imperial strategy. Admiral Colomb was pleased with the book, partly because "you put forward all the views for which I have contended" but coming from such a prestigious author "I think they will henceforth be 'Current views.'"³⁶ Colomb defended the 'fleet in being' concept, claiming that an enemy could not land forces, "as long as his operations may be interrupted by a fleet even considerably weaker than his own."³⁷ Beresford complained to Dilke about the public bias towards the army and fortifications, blaming it on the fact that "nothing maritime is represented in the House, at Court, in Society Clubs, or the country," and criticized Dilke's work for furthering that

³⁵"Naval Warfare," *Saturday Review*, 72:1864 (Jul 18, 1891), 86-7.

³⁶BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 56-7, P.H. Colomb to C.W. Dilke, Feb 22, 1892; Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson, *Imperial Defence*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892).

³⁷Emphasis in original. BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 56-7, P.H. Colomb to C.W. Dilke, Feb 22, 1892.

impression.³⁸ Dilke, Colomb and Mahan produced significant strategic analyses in the aftermath of the 1888 Navy Scare and the 1889 NDA, and these works have been popular historical reference points. Their importance in the development of navalism was in giving greater rigour and historical depth to the study of naval strategy that provided important ammunition for future navalist agitators.

Public opinion did not return to ignorance about naval affairs in the aftermath of the 1888 Navy Scare and NDA. There was a small panic over the Mediterranean fleet in October 1890. The French fleet planned to visit Malta on October 29, but the British Mediterranean fleet was scheduled to be at sea until November 5, thus raising the spectre of a French surprise attack on the undefended naval base. The situation was quickly resolved by having the Mediterranean fleet return earlier on October 26.³⁹ As usual, there was a burst of commentary in late 1890 and early 1891, as the next year's naval policy was being determined. Admiral Bridge attended a lecture on "Our Empire of the Sea: how we won it and how we have maintained it," at Shoreditch Townhall to see how its ideas were received by the working-class people of London's East End, and thought that "the enthusiasm of the audience... was wonderful" even if the information was not always perfectly accurate.⁴⁰ That such material was being delivered, and favourably received, shows the effect of blue-water naval theories on the national consciousness. The working classes were becoming more concerned with national defence, mainly through arguments about Britain's reliance on food and raw materials from overseas.

Admiral Symonds produced another inflammatory piece in December 1890 that was sent directly to Admiral Hornby in an effort to garner his support and coordinate

³⁸BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 71-4, C Beresford to CW Dilke, Jun 8, 1892.

³⁹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, Oct 15, 1890.

⁴⁰NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 20, 1890.

their actions. He flipped his position to argue that the number of battleships was satisfactory, but that the NDA had not fulfilled the primary need of the service, which was the six fast cruisers by 1890 — the same six that Hood had mentioned in his testimony before the 1888 Select Committee. The NDA cruisers were slow and weak; there were only 63 cruisers instead of the 300 that Hornby had estimated for the navy's total requirements, and only ten of the 63 were capable of foreign service. Symonds added that British torpedo craft should be twice as numerous as those of the French.⁴¹ Symonds believed that fewer cruisers were needed than in the past because “The days of convoy are passed,” except for coal convoys to the Mediterranean, but patrolling trade routes still required numerous warships.⁴² It should be noted that convoys were dismissed because strategists believed that steam power made them too vulnerable and difficult to organize given the enormous scale of modern commerce.⁴³ To serving officers like Bridge, the “exaggeration of Sir T. Symonds, Sir G. Elliot, and others... [meant] No one will now believe the facts.”⁴⁴ Symonds was so firm in his convictions that he wrote directly to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, to restate the points he made in the press and impress on Salisbury the lack of cruisers to protect overseas stations and trade routes.⁴⁵ He told Salisbury that the navy had been starved since 1860, and recent increases had not made up the slack — twenty battleships and fifty cruisers should be ready to replace losses in combat. To a die-hard like Symonds, the NDA simply could not satisfy the magnitude of the quantitative and qualitative issues affecting the material or personnel of the fleet.

⁴¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt2, Ad T. Symonds to the Press, Dec 18, 1890.

⁴²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt2, Ad T. Symonds, statement on the coal supply, undated.

⁴³Parkinson, *Late Victorian Navy*, 241-2.

⁴⁴NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 26, 1890.

⁴⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt2, T. Symonds to Salisbury, Jan 20, 1891.

After its initial release, the Report of the Hartington Commission became an important foundation for the naval debates and the discussion on administration that followed the manoeuvres. Churchill's report did not lead to rapid or sustained reform in the administration, although it would be a mistake to assume that all naval officers were discontent. James Bruce thought that the system was so frustrating that it was driving the best officers out of the service, although Custance lectured him for two hours on how "it was practically impossible to devise a better class of governing machine than our Admiralty."⁴⁶ Lieutenant-General Sir W. Drummond Jervois' *Nineteenth Century* article, "Home Rule for the Navy," built on the Hartington Commission's recommendation for greater harmony in the organization of the two services to rectify the current absence of "settled and regular inter-communications or relations between them."⁴⁷ Jervois favoured Churchill's suggestion of a supreme Minister of Defence and a single supreme professional officer for each Service sitting in the Lords, rather than the more moderate official recommendation of a naval and military council under the Prime Minister. Jervois thought the Commission had not sufficiently recognized the primacy of the navy. Coast defences required personnel with naval experience of gunnery, the movements of ships, mining and boat work, and thus the defences of ports and coaling stations should be placed under naval control. Garrisons would rely on Marines, Royal Garrison Artillery, and he also recommended a specialist garrison branch be created for the Royal Engineers.

P.H. Colomb's response to Jervois focused on what he perceived as a strategic fallacy. Sir Richard Temple had argued in February 1890 that coaling stations were of

⁴⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, Oct 15, 1890.

⁴⁷W.F. Drummond Jervois, "Home Rule for the Navy," *Nineteenth Century*, 29:167 (Jan 1891), 34-44. In the discussion of the RUSI lecture, Jervois stated that the title was not chosen by himself (W.F. Drummond Jervois, "The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence," *JRUSI*, 35:162 (Aug 1891), 907).

vital importance to command of the sea, and this understanding underlay Jervois' analysis. His main example was the port of Aden, and how it commanded the route to the East and protected trade.⁴⁸ Colomb argued that this treated coaling stations as intrinsically valuable, when their true strategic role was in supporting mobile naval forces; a station's value could only be determined by the specific operational and strategic considerations of a particular conflict.⁴⁹ Fortified stations could not protect trade, since enemy cruisers could easily bypass them and attack trade between stations. Colomb doubted the likelihood of even single ships raids, since there was no intrinsic value in the stations themselves and land assault could only be prevented by mobile naval forces. He expected that the Admiralty would station ships at important stations in wartime to repel or deter enemy action and increase the scale of an enemy attack, pointing out that the radius of action for a steam-powered warship made it easier for naval power to shield coaling stations. Colomb was an important force in pressing a blue-water approach to strategic questions, and worked hard to make sure that all questions led back to naval increases.

Jervois repeated his arguments in June in the prominent forum of the RUSI, focusing on the contentious issue of naval control of fortifications for naval bases and coaling stations.⁵⁰ The initial discussion was not favourable to Jervois' proposals, Admiral Vesey Hamilton, with the support of Lieutenant-General Sir Lintorn Simmons, taking the lead in rejecting it as "revolution, not reform," arguing that the navy was required for offensive operations that would themselves effectively protect naval

⁴⁸Sir Richard Temple, "Our Naval Coaling-Stations in the Eastern Seas," *New Review*, (Feb 1890), 151-60.

⁴⁹P.H. Colomb, "Fallacies Respecting Coaling Stations," *United Service Magazine*, 750.

⁵⁰W.F. Drummond Jervois, "The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence," *JRUSI*, 35:162 (Aug 1891), 869-912.

stations.⁵¹ Admiral Tryon concurred, adding that the constitution of the country actually provided a unified command structure, with the Prime Minister as the real head of both services.⁵² Admiral Fremantle, Admiral Colomb, Admiral Sir E.G. Fanshawe and Sir John Colomb were more forgiving, and while rejecting the wholesale transfer of all coast defences, accepted that there were reasonable grounds for increasing naval responsibility; Colomb, backed by Admirals Colomb and Fanshawe, reiterated his own belief that Marine garrisons in overseas naval stations could act as an effective local naval reserve and strike force.⁵³ Lord Thring spoke in favour of Jervois, rejecting the criticisms as missing the point, because Admiralty control over coast defences did not dictate the *form* in which the defences would be organized or administered, and Jervois had not suggested alterations to the numbers or role of the fleet; Thring was also more optimistic about naval and military cooperation in wartime.⁵⁴ Newspaper commentary estimated that the confusion caused by such a massive reorganization would outweigh any administrative rationalization, for a minor strategic benefit.⁵⁵

The navalist circle around Admiral Hornby worked up a new commentary on Admiralty administration between March and May 1891, with the unrealized intention of generating a new scare. Beresford was preparing a “Definite Policy of Defence” with the assistance of Hornby, because he was “confident that there is no plan of campaign ready made out in black and white at this moment at the Admiralty which we could at once act

⁵¹“The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence,” *JRUSI*, 880-5. In reply, Jervois dismantled Vesey Hamilton’s and Simmons’ arguments in detail and defended his interpretation and evidence (907-10).

⁵²“The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence,” *JRUSI*, 885-6.

⁵³“The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence,” *JRUSI*, 887-96, 900-3.

⁵⁴“The Supremacy of the Navy for Imperial Defence,” *JRUSI*, 896-8.

⁵⁵“Home Rule for the Navy,” *National Observer*, 5:112 (Jan 10, 1891), 189-90; “Naval Supremacy,” *Saturday Review*, 72:1862 (Jul 4, 1891), 9.

upon if war was declared.”⁵⁶ Beresford was hoping to take more direct action by getting re-elected to Parliament, but until then he was in communication with key Unionist MPs, like Arthur Balfour.⁵⁷ It appears that Beresford was changing his line of attack from a general critique of the Admiralty to focus on a more specific weakness. James Bruce suggested to Hornby that the best means of counteracting “civilian mismanagement” would be for six prominent Admirals to make a unanimous memorandum describing what the service required, and thus achieving maximum public impact.⁵⁸ He admitted that this could be defined as 'collusion,' “but Collusion for a good object is a righteous cause.” Bruce is remarkable for his faith in the political value of favourable public opinion and Hornby probably shared these sentiments, although it is unclear whether this specific letter was actually created. The suggestion also shows how naval officers had achieved substantial public credibility over several years of activism, and many had become nationally recognizable names that carried political weight. As the agitation began to lay new roots, a primary focus was on the state of the Mediterranean fleet as the test case for measuring how close the navy was to reaching the Two-Power Standard.

Admiral Bridge was not confident that the Admiralty would respond positively to the criticism coming from Hornby’s circle, in spite of the rank and prestige of the critics. He felt that the Admiralty was obstructing reform, not because they lacked the “perception of what ought to be done, but feebleness of intention.”⁵⁹ One specific fear of Bridge's was the influence of Colonel Frederick Maurice, a prolific military writer, on the

⁵⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, May 4, 1891.

⁵⁷BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49713, ff. 13-4, C. Beresford to A.J. Balfour, Mar 11, 1891; NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, May 4, 1891.

⁵⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, May 14, 1891.

⁵⁹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Apr 10, 1891.

Queen's opinion, skewing her in favour of fortifications to the neglect of naval power.⁶⁰

The *Saturday Review* was more favourable to the Admiralty than Bridge, noting that corruption, theft, poor living conditions, bad discipline and incompetence had a long history; reform was still an important goal, but changes had to be carefully considered.⁶¹

Contemporaries shared a desire for naval progress, but no consensus existed as to the desirable rate. Reformers, both inside and outside of the naval service, intentionally engaged with the challenging nuances of practical naval policy and accepted that the ideal quantity and quality of naval forces was a long-term creative process.

The 1891–92 Navy Estimates were not anticipated to be controversial. There was very little surplus in the budget, and both Harcourt and Gladstone expected a 'humdrum' budget without “substantive proposals like those of last year to attack.”⁶² The budget actually had some contentious elements, but the naval component was predetermined by the NDA and not subject to major controversy. Hamilton's highly optimistic “Statement Explanatory of the Navy Estimates” declared that all NDA ships but one were on track to be completed by April 1894 as promised, and the programme was only £607,000 over budget due to upgrades on dockyard ships.⁶³ The *Saturday Review* mocked the Committee for its “enormous buffoonery” in financial administration, since the Act did not have the flexibility to balance sums from areas of surplus to deficit.⁶⁴ Such criticisms influenced future governments choices to use the method of an Act of Parliament.

In committee discussions the Liberals made some half-hearted personal attacks in a wide-ranging debate on naval policy and the NDA. Resurrecting a previous statement

⁶⁰NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Aug 14, 1891.

⁶¹“Naval Supremacy,” *Saturday Review*, 72:1862 (Jul 4, 1891), 9.

⁶²BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 11, ff. 237-8, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Apr 7, 1891.

⁶³Brassey, “The Naval Defence Act,” *New Review*, 4:25 (Jun 1891), 510.

⁶⁴“Nonsense and Sense about the Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 71:1846 (Mar 14, 1891), 315.

by Lord George Hamilton in a June speech to the National Union that the NDA had been made necessary by the parsimony of the Liberal Government from 1880–85, Harcourt accused Hamilton of making false statements for electioneering purposes. Politicians of both parties criticized the impact of partisan politics on national defence policy, and frequently employed the accusations of politicking in Parliamentary skirmishes. Hamilton defended himself in the *Times*, restating his claim that the “perilous state of naval unpreparedness in June, 1885” was the motivation for a new Act, and accusing Harcourt of sneaking these comments into an unrelated question in his absence.⁶⁵ This type of personal attack was fairly irrelevant to large scale navalism, since navalists were more concerned with real reform initiatives than assigning political blame for existing deficiencies that both parties were responsible for.

Lord Brassey analyzed Admiralty policy for the *New Review* in June, concurring entirely with Hamilton's positive assessment of the current naval warship designs, while simultaneously laying out figures that showed Britain to be quantitatively inferior to France and the Triple Alliance. On balance, he concluded that after the NDA “it must be evident to the most anxious alarmist that the position of Great Britain in the scale of nations has been greatly raised,” even if there was still room for improvement.⁶⁶ Brassey's arguments were summaries of the in-depth material included in his *Naval Annual*, but the *New Review* allowed him to popularize his perspective among wider Liberal audiences. Other publications emphasized the importance of personnel. Robert Scott's analysis of the Navy Estimates for *Murray's Magazine* focused on the navy's need for mobilization planning and substantial increases in manpower — particularly through

⁶⁵Lord G. Hamilton, “Sir William Harcourt and the Naval Defence Act, 1889,” *Times*, 33337 (May 29, 1891), 8.

⁶⁶Brassey, “The Naval Defence Act,” *New Review*, 4:25 (Jun 1891), 518.

the training and organization of the merchant marine and Royal Naval Reserve.⁶⁷

Hamilton's promise to raise the regular force strength to 75,000 from its present level of 68,800 did not satisfy Scott's sense of urgency.

The 1891 Royal Naval Exhibition was important in raising public awareness about the Service. It was open for 151 days and received almost 2,500,000 visitors, making it a widely experienced phenomenon. The original September 1890 proposal was for a joint army-navy public exhibition, but naval officers were unwilling to pair the greatest navy in the world with a second-rank military spectacle.⁶⁸ The army's event inspired the navy to hold its own event, which promised to be a "great success," but even then Bridge thought "that the scale, even enlarged as it now is, is not commensurate with our Naval position."⁶⁹ In the end, Bridge did not think that the Exhibition helped naval affairs as much as the "recently aroused popular interest in the Navy."⁷⁰

The Exhibition took a confident line in its portrayal of the fleet, and included exhibits on naval art, history and technology. As Admiral Elliot explained in his description, "The value of national insurance should stand before all other questions of political importance..."⁷¹ Important armaments firms showcased their inventions, including Whitehead's torpedoes, heavy guns from Armstrong, and exhibits by Mitchell, Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding, Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering, and P & O Steamships. One of the Exhibition's purposes was to give the public an understanding of the requirements of the navy and the expense involved in provided all the necessary appliances of war produced by advanced technology. The Exhibition was advertised and

⁶⁷Robert A.E. Scott, "The Fighting Power of the Navy," *Murray's Magazine*, 9:53 (May 1891), 620-1.

⁶⁸NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Sep 28, 1890.

⁶⁹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, May 6, 1891.

⁷⁰NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/41, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 22, 1891.

⁷¹George Elliot, "The Naval Exhibition, 1891," *United Service Magazine*, 750 (May 1891), 182-92.

memorialized in order to capitalize on the exposure of new audiences to the state of the navy, and enhance the pro-navy political attitude of the lower classes. Like many other international exhibits from the 1880s up to the First World War, the Royal Naval Exhibition was commemorated by picture postcards, although the amount of these was limited by the Post Office's monopoly before 1899.⁷² A pamphlet entitled the *Royal Naval Exhibition: The Illustrated Handbook and Souvenir*, which was produced by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, shows how patriotic and commercial motives could coincide. The pamphlet's cover illustrated a mock battle between a barbette and a turret ship, with the turret ships winning the fight as well as sinking the attacking torpedo-boat.⁷³ This subtle propaganda assured the public that the Admiralty's decision to invest in turret battleships was correct and that they were not overly vulnerable to torpedo attack.

A new Admiralty Board was appointed in September 1891, and Admiral R.V. Hamilton was replaced as First Naval Lord by Admiral Hoskins. Hoskins was less favourable to large shipbuilding programmes and would be a restraining influence on the combined agitation of naval officers, politicians and journalists. Officers of Hornby's circle expected Hoskins to play the political game in order to retain office, and did not expect him to stand up for naval interests.⁷⁴ Hoskins was probably aware of these criticisms, and explained his position directly to Hornby. He argued that even though ultimate authority still rested with the "power of the purse" held by the First Lord and Cabinet, which Hornby so strongly disapproved of,

If everyone resigns and refuses to take office because he can't get his own way in all things it would be a bad thing for the country indeed. My idea is to do what I

⁷²John Fraser, "Propaganda on the Picture Postcard," *Oxford Art Journal*, 3:2 (Oct 1980): 39-47. Fraser gives a broad account of the mass craze for postcards in the early 1900s.

⁷³*Royal Naval Exhibition: The Illustrated Naval Handbook and Souvenir*, 1891. PMG Office.

⁷⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt3, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, Oct 19, 1891.

can to improve things and if an indispensable requirement is refused, then to resign, and I have let this be known.⁷⁵

Hornby might maintain a principled opposition to serving at the Admiralty, but Hoskins was realistic and decided to work within the system. Civilian dominance over their professional advisers was not likely to change, and Hoskins comforted himself that the state of the navy in 1891 was far better than in 1885.

Agitation was brewing in late 1891, beginning with Beresford's activism over the strategic situation in the Mediterranean. The French were expanding their navy under the 'Gervais' programme, which led to new navalist efforts in Britain. Beresford intended to return to Parliament to agitate for a comprehensive defence policy. He told Arthur Balfour that war was probable in 1891 since “in that year the Russian Black Sea Fleet will be ready, the army re-armed, the French will have 300.000 men added to their First Reserve.... [while] We are lamentably weak out here in numbers....” Beresford also claimed that twenty French battleships opposed eleven British, many with obsolete unarmoured ends, which meant that Britain had to rely on the assistance of Italy, whose “ships are good but the personnel are absolutely useless.”⁷⁶ Beresford was successful in converting Balfour to the navalist cause. Balfour wrote to Hamilton in support of the “somewhat disquieting” conclusions contained in the recent Return describing the balance of naval power.⁷⁷ These verified Beresford's fears that Britain's current bare equality in first-class battleships would decline to an inferiority of twenty to fourteen when the current programmes were completed, although Britain would remain superior in first-class cruisers at eighteen to ten.

⁷⁵NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt3, A.H. Hoskins to G.P. Hornby, Oct 21, 1891, reply Oct 22.

⁷⁶BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49713, ff. 15-8, C. Beresford to A.J. Balfour, Nov 21, 1891.

⁷⁷BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49778, ff. 13-8, A.J. Balfour to G. Hamilton, Dec 29, 1891.

Russian activity drew substantial attention in late 1891 and into early 1892. *Times'* correspondents in European capitals reported rumours in September 1891 that Turkey had conceded to Russia the right to pass warships through the Straits following French diplomatic pressure.⁷⁸ The thought that France could change the balance of power in the Mediterranean was a fearful thought, and one that raised the old fear of a Russian descent upon Constantinople. Subsequent reports clarified that the Ottoman government had detained a Russian Volunteer Fleet vessel, and these ships would not be stopped in the future; there was no change in the refusal of Turkey to permit the transit of warships or soldiers through the Bosphorus.⁷⁹ The German press seized the opportunity to publish supposed Russian plans and readiness for an instant descent on Constantinople, but the *Times* Berlin and St. Petersburg correspondents explicitly identified these threats as exaggerations and scare mongering to provoke British action.⁸⁰ The *Times* leader of September 25 emphasized the military character of RVF passengers and duties, and that they had scored an advantage with the free passage of these ships – readers were reminded that Russia never failed to press an advantage in expanding the Empire.⁸¹

The whole episode was given sustained examination in M. Rymaeljc-Suwarof's "The Russian Navy in the Black Sea" in the *United Service Magazine*.⁸² He examined Russia's 1880s naval buildup in the Black Sea, focusing on the long-term strategic planning and patience of Russian expansionism, such as the commercial harbour at Sevastopol that was now a naval facility. The Russian Volunteer Fleet vessels were

⁷⁸Vienna Correspondent, "Russia and the Dardanelles," *Times*, 33422 (Sep 5, 1891), 5; St. Petersburg Correspondent, *Times*, 33424 (Sep 8, 1891), 3.

⁷⁹Constantinople Correspondent, "Turkey," *Times*, 33427 (Sep 11, 1891), 3.

⁸⁰Berlin Correspondent, "Russia and Turkey," *Times*, 33428 (Sep 12, 1891), 5.

⁸¹Leading article, "The Dardanelles Question," *Times*, 33439 (Sep 25, 1891), 3.

⁸²M. Rymaeljc-Suwarof, "The Russian Navy in the Black Sea," *United Service Magazine*, 4:759 (Feb 1892), 395-405.

actually subsidized commercial vessels akin to British merchant auxiliaries, and thus could not be legally denied passage through the Straits. Rymaeljc-Suwarof concluded that the Turkish decision to allow the Russian ship passage nevertheless proved that Turkey was being diligent about restricting the passage of warships, which was in Britain's interests, although he insisted that Britain should maintain suitable counter-measures to the Russian Black Sea fleet. The most important part of the concern over Russian forces would be the consequences it would have on the interpretations of the Two-Power Standard as it applied to the Mediterranean. The Russian navy was seen as a genuine strategic concern until its weakness was revealed by British naval intelligence at the turn of the century, which was then confirmed during the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War.⁸³

Numerical inferiority was the focus of scares, but the agitation in 1892 was more concerned with qualitative matters like personnel or warship design. At least one of Hornby's correspondents urged him to spearhead a new agitation. After all, "the country should be grateful to the 'Conspirators' for putting the Navy, as far as ships are concerned, on a substantial footing and more especially the Admiralty, but... the time is ripe for another conspiracy, to provide officers and men for the ships."⁸⁴ The manoeuvres had stripped the coastguard and reserves to man the ships, leaving no margin to replace the inevitable wastage of war. With the previous efforts of writers like Symonds drawing clear distinctions between merchant sailors and bluejackets, the simple expectation that the merchant marine would make up the shortfall no longer held credibility.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, now out of Stead's hands as he turned to work on *Review of Reviews*, tried to trigger a minor scare over mechanical reliability of naval boilers. "A

⁸³ See Matthew Seligmann, "Britain's Great Security Mirage: The Royal Navy and the Franco-Russian Naval Threat, 1898-1906," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 35:6 (Dec 2012): 861-86.

⁸⁴NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt3, J. Homer to G.P. Hornby, Nov 31, 1891, reply Dec 1.

Serious Naval Scandal: Breakdown in Important War Vessels, An Extraordinary Story of Blundering” from January 5, 1892 argued that enormous sums of money had been wasted on defective boilers, and criticized Hamilton for limiting himself to crediting the Engineer-in-Chief for addressing the issue and not stating who was responsible for such errors. If the boilers were untested, the article argued, then they should have been installed in fewer ships and properly tested.⁸⁵ When the problem of failed steam trials was raised in the discussion of the Navy Estimates, Arthur Forwood, the Secretary to the Admiralty, argued that there had been enormous advances in the power-to-weight ratio of the new triple-expansion steam engines, but it was impossible to devote as much space to engines in cruisers as was possible for merchant ships and this resulted in a slightly lower speed.⁸⁶ In an exchange of private letters Dilke argued that Royal Navy ships should always have superior speed, but Admiral Colomb preferred “Should not have an inferiority of speed” because superior speed might require too many sacrifices in other aspects of the design.⁸⁷ Naval thinkers constantly debated the issue of speed, particularly in the twentieth century Fisher Era, but no thinkers argued for slow warships; the conflict focused on whether superiority in speed was worth the consequent sacrifice of protection or fighting power. Such qualitative issues were an important part of the evolution of the navy, but they did not spark major public engagement.

The Navy Estimates were subjected to mild Parliamentary debate in March, initially over the abolition of the RNav and the state of the reserves, to which Hamilton confidently asserted that Admiral Hoskin’s committee had provided recommendations the Government were following expert Committee recommendations that were not “made

⁸⁵“A Serious Naval Scandal,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8359 (Jan 5, 1892), 7.

⁸⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:2 (Mar 14, 1892), c. 803-13.

⁸⁷BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 56-7, Sir P.H. Colomb to Sir C. Dilke

for the purpose of currying favour either in this House or with the public.”⁸⁸ This discussion was quickly redirected by Admiral Mayne and others into a general discussion of the necessity of a new naval programme; both sides in the discussion pressed for a commitment that the Navy Estimates would not be delayed till the end of the Session but this was not given.⁸⁹ MPs James Picton and Alpheus Morton criticized the extravagance of naval spending, focusing on particular details including spending on official residences, but Hamilton shrugged off or ignored many of these statements.⁹⁰ George Shaw Lefevre, at least, was happy that the rumours of a large new naval programme in the current year turned out to be false, but criticized the NDA for going over budget and reducing the promised £3,000,000 surplus; he suggested the wiser financial course was to provide yearly shipbuilding votes.⁹¹ Harcourt, speaking at Ringwood, mocked the surpluses that Goschen had declared in each of his budgets, pointing out that this had been due to borrowing an even larger sum to produce a paper, or imaginary, surplus.⁹²

Navalist activity in public forums continued at a moderate pace, reflecting growing concerns over the adequacy of the Royal Navy in the aftermath of the NDA. There were some critics who even rejected the Two-Power Standard, such as Admiral Elliot who told readers that “that standard, even if strictly preserved, would not afford adequate protection to our vast Imperial interests.”⁹³ Most thinkers took issue on more subtle points of the Two-Power Standard. In Beresford’s personal assessment, he told Dilke that “You are absolutely right in assuming that we are altogether short of the Force

⁸⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:2 (Mar 14, 1892), c. 779-98. Quote c. 795.

⁸⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:2 (Mar 14, 1892), c. 760, 767-78, 779-

⁹⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:2 (Mar 14, 1892), c. 791-2, 796-8.

⁹¹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:2 (Mar 14, 1892), c. 820-8. The discussion continued along similar lines on March 24 and 25.

⁹²Editorial, “Sir William Harcourt does himself much...,” and “Sir W. Harcourt at Ringwood,” *Times*, 33618 (Apr 21, 1892), 9-10.

⁹³George Elliot, “The House of Lords and the State of the Navy,” *Morning Post*, 37739 (May 26, 1893), 3.

in Battle Ships that would be necessary for carrying out a proposed policy of shutting up the French in their ports in the event of war.”⁹⁴ This illustrates the main problems: should the Two-Power Standard include cruisers, for which a rational argument could be made that the extent of Britain's trade and overseas communications required more than a Two-Power Standard? Was it enough to simply have a bare numerical majority in battleships, or did the Two-Power Standard mean that Britain should have a fleet large enough to ensure the defeat of the next two powers combined; i.e. did it involve Two-Power plus a margin? Strategic experts estimated that a 5:3 ratio of superiority was required to effectively blockade the enemy in port. Beresford estimated that the fleet was twenty ironclads short to perform such a strategy and even the seven additional ships proposed by Dilke would not be enough. The agitation used the test case of the Mediterranean to argue that the navy was quantitatively insufficient for the practical requirements of a full-scale naval war. The navalist movement was gathering momentum, but the political upheavals following the 1892 election offered limited opportunities.

The General Election held on August 4, 1892 turned largely on the failed efforts of the Conservative party to reform the United Kingdom's free trade policy towards imperial preference. The Conservatives won the election but not a majority of seats, while the Liberals and Irish Nationalists gained seats. Salisbury refused to resign, and waited for the inevitable vote of no confidence that came on August 11. Gladstone's new Cabinet was not as radical as onlookers might have expected, with peers occupying important posts like Foreign Minister and First Lord of the Admiralty. Spencer was hesitant to accept, partly because it was becoming the norm for the heads of the great spending departments to be in the Commons and partly because he was “appalled at the

⁹⁴BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915 ff. 71-4, C. Beresford to C.W. Dilke, Jun 8 1892.

large questions involved in the administration of the Navy” and felt his ignorance of the “great subjects involved.”⁹⁵

In the fall of 1892, Spencer and W.V. Harcourt began the first round of a lengthy correspondence on the state of the navy as the 1893–94 Navy Estimates were being formulated. Larger programmes of destroyers were planned to counter the French torpedo boat threat, and thus neutralize French coast defences as part of an offensive blockading strategy.⁹⁶ Harcourt approached the question of sufficiency from the perspective of a one-power standard of France alone. The available evidence supported Harcourt’s assertions that the navy currently possessed a Two-Power Standard of superiority, but it was the future relative strength of the navy that concerned agitators. Harcourt insisted that a one-power standard was sufficient guarantee against future vulnerability, but he was fighting a tide of political and public opinion that had adopted the Two-Power Standard as an intelligible and logical measure of national defence.

Harcourt turned back the Admiralty's demands for a small increase in the 1893–94 Estimates, but it was a Pyrrhic victory. The Navy Estimates would be maintained at the previous level, and would not be reduced as NDA expenditure began to decline. It was the first step to turning the 'exceptional' expenditure of the NDA into the normal level of spending. After lengthy deliberations over the financial aspects of the NDA, the Treasury concluded,

That the Naval Defence Act is open to objection on several points of financial policy, that it has in the main fulfilled the object with which it was passed of

⁹⁵BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44314, ff. 46-7, Spencer to W.E. Gladstone, Sep 2, 1892; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44774, f. 29, Gladstone to WV Harcourt, Jun 17, 1892; also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

⁹⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 16-7, copy of Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Nov 28, 1892.

ensuring the completion of a certain programme in a certain time, and that it is not expedient to extend it in either time or amount.⁹⁷

The conclusion of the NDA would not be met with a new multi-year programme embodied in an Act of Parliament. Such a proceeding had its merits, discussed in the last chapter, but by its conclusion this method had lost its attractiveness. Large naval budgets could be produced out of the ordinary Estimates, and avoid the trap of borrowing or throwing costs onto future years.

In spite of the political importance of the topic, as the previous decade of agitation had clearly indicated, Gladstone was unwilling to intervene in what he saw as purely departmental questions. Regarding the issue of modifying the linked battalion system in the army, and the possible disbanding of two Guards battalions, Gladstone told Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary of State for War, that it was a Treasury question and would only involve the Cabinet if it could not be settled between Campbell-Bannerman and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁹⁸ A consistent theme is Gladstone's efforts to hide behind the department heads and the Cabinet, to pretend that he had no power over government policy in these matters beyond that of Cabinet. This abrogation of responsibility left a power vacuum, and ultimately made it easier for the 1893 Navy Scare to gain traction with the public.

Because of Gladstone's personal influence, however, it was inevitable that he would be incorporated into the debates, both internal and in Parliament. In mid-November his diary notes that he was meeting with Spencer, Hoskins and Brassey, but

⁹⁷BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 1, "Treasury Minute 18027-92- The Naval Defence Act, 1889," Dec 19, 1892.

⁹⁸BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 41215, f. 42, WE Gladstone to H Campbell-Bannerman, Nov 2, 1892; also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

his Cabinet notes do not include anything relating to defence affairs.⁹⁹ It would seem that there was concern, but Gladstone was able to successfully relegate it to a confrontation between Spencer and Harcourt, the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as part of the regular fight for the Estimates. Perhaps Gladstone even thought this to be a successful tactic, and it certainly did prevent naval affairs from becoming a dominant political question in his Ministry's first year. But this delay would only strengthen the agitation in 1893, since delaying the response to navalist concerns only lent them greater potency.

The Navy Estimates for 1893–94 were becoming more controversial, since the NDA had started to wind down. The First Lord's statement explaining the Estimates proposed a large-scale programme of defensive works spread over several years because new conditions and technology, such as the increasing size of warships and the torpedo threat, demanded improved harbour defences.¹⁰⁰ Infrastructure had been an important part of previous agitations, and the provision for naval works would be crucial in future years. Lord Brassey was not particularly pleased with the situation, making it widely known that he would be drawing attention in the Lords to the “state of the Navy in relation to ships building and resources for manning the Fleet.”¹⁰¹ The equal emphasis on ships construction and manning shows the depth of understanding about the real war requirements of the Fleet that had emerged from the analysis of the NDA.

On May 6, 1893 the *National Observer* published “A Suggestion” for a society of naval officers to fund the publication of important naval documents, and asked

⁹⁹*Diaries of William Gladstone*, entries for Nov 15, 16, 19, 21, 28 1892.

¹⁰⁰*British Naval Documents*, 675-6, “Extract from the Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty explanatory of the Navy Estimates for 1894-95.”

¹⁰¹For example, it was reported in the *Morning Post*, 37669 (Mar 6, 1893), 4.

for some official funding for the organization and cataloguing of naval material at the Admiralty Record Office.¹⁰² The *Observer* argued that few good works of naval history had been produced, such as Mahan's books or Laughton's *Army and Navy Gazette* articles, and this was due to the lack of available or accessible material on which to create rigorous histories. The idea that history should be based in documentary evidence was a new trend in historical writing, but contributed heavily to the belief that good history served a didactic purpose for the navy. Navalist developments between 1889-92 were important for consolidating and systematizing the lessons of the 1884 and 1888 naval scares and the NDA, proving that there was a need for good information to ground both political discourses and guide public education. The result was the Navy Records Society that continues to publish collections of naval documents and support valuable research.

Battleship Design and Technological Improvement

Technological change has been a constant theme throughout this dissertation. It is also one of the aspects of the navy that has received the majority of historical attention, which benefits this project because it is a massive subject in its own right. This section will examine how technology entered the public discourse, although its role in naval scares was constrained by the public's confidence in the naval profession's ability to make technical decisions. The political role of technological discourse was in lending credibility to navalist arguments for naval investment, although in some instances it pursued dead-end ideas like the ram.¹⁰³ This section considers two elements of the material question. The first was the controversy in the 1880s over battleship design,

¹⁰²“A Suggestion,” *National Observer*, 9:233 (May 6, 1893), 614.

¹⁰³G. Elliot, “The Ram – The Prominent Feature of Future Naval Victories,” *JRUSI*, 28 (1885), 357-78.

particularly the arrangement of armour, which resulted in the stabilization of designs with the *Royal Sovereign*-class. The second was the criticism of the Admiralty's ability to build ships quickly and economically, leading to the growing reliance on private shipyards for new construction.

The 1880s were very important in establishing the seemingly obvious principle that naval officers should play a leading role in determining the characteristics of warships. Captain C.C.P. FitzGerald argued that it was the officers who would fight the ships that knew the relevant tactical and strategic characteristics.¹⁰⁴ Manoeuvres provided practical lessons for the profession. Bridge noted that important work like clearing casualties during action was very difficult in some modern designs, implying that the real practical requirements of war needed to be at the foundation of ship design.¹⁰⁵ Politicians were perhaps more willing to concede the necessity for expert opinion in technical matters. Edmund Robertson, the Liberal Civil Lord of the Admiralty, informed Spencer in this spirit on January 29, 1893, suggesting that technocratic ideals were starting to become more pervasive, as well as the idea that naval officers were the best judges.¹⁰⁶

In the 1880s the arrangement of armour was the pet project of Sir E.J. Reed, MP and constant commentator on naval affairs. He was deeply critical of the partial armour belts on most of Britain's battleships in 1884 because they would be easily perforated by new quick-firing weapons.¹⁰⁷ FitzGerald's January 1885 lecture at the RUSI showed the tendency of naval officers to support a complete armoured belt for the sake of stability

¹⁰⁴C.C.P. FitzGerald, "Side Armour versus Deck Armour, from a Naval Point of View," *JRUSI*, 29 (1885/6): 63-73.

¹⁰⁵NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Aug 14, 1891 and Sep 17, 1891.

¹⁰⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77380, E. Robertson to Spencer, Jan 29, 1893. Robertson thought it was going to be difficult implementing the recommendations of the Select Committee.

¹⁰⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:334 (Mar 28, 1889), c. 1033-4.

and seaworthiness.¹⁰⁸ During the lead up to the NDA Lord George Hamilton refused to specify whether the Admiralty had adopted complete belts. Beresford argued that the concerns over unarmoured ends were genuine and a serious qualitative deficiency, and recommended that experiments be conducted to fully test this vulnerability. Hamilton professed ignorance, saying that “I am not aware that any distinguished naval officer with a knowledge of modern ordnance has advanced the opinion stated...”¹⁰⁹ The concerns were certainly real, and were frequently debated in Service circles. The naval officer James Ferguson was very specific in his criticisms of the armour protection of the *Anson*, which gave ineffective protection to both the barbets and the secondary armament.¹¹⁰

As the first NDA battleships were nearing completion, Hamilton was able to confidently proclaim in the discussion of the 1891–92 Navy Estimates that the new first-class battleships designs offered the “highest practical development [of] both offensive and defensive power.”¹¹¹ Lord Brassey loudly praised the new designs, including those for fast seaworthy cruisers and torpedo-gunboats, stating they were “the best types which, in the existing state of the science of naval architecture, can be designed within the prescribed limits of tonnage.”¹¹² The NDA warships did not end up having particularly long service lives, but this should not obscure the widespread contemporary approval of the designs as the best compromise between advanced technology and immediate reinforcement of the fleet with homogenous classes of vessels.

A ship of war was only as powerful as its guns, so it was unsurprising that the issue of ordnance recurred through the 1880s and 90s as the navy went through the

¹⁰⁸C.C.P. FitzGerald, “Side Armour versus Deck Armour,” *JRUSI*, 63-73.

¹⁰⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:335 (Apr 12, 1889), c. 363-4.

¹¹⁰NMM, Fremantle Papers, FRE/138/C, J. Ferguson to E.R. Fremantle, Jun 13, 1889.

¹¹¹Reported by Brassey in “The Naval Defence Act,” *New Review*, 4:25 (Jun 1891), 510.

¹¹²Brassey, “The Naval Defence Act,” *New Review*, 4:25 (Jun 1891), 514.

problematic transition to breech-loading guns firing smokeless powders. In 1886, Wolseley was investigating reports that in the 1882 Bombardment of Alexandria the fleet had almost run out of the right gunpowder and there had been insufficient stocks in Malta or England.¹¹³ The Director of Artillery rejected this anecdotal evidence, trying to shift blame to the navy instead of the military for any lack of supplies, and reporting that supplies were ample and almost instantly replaced.¹¹⁴ The *United Service Magazine* presented a series of articles by 'A Flag Officer' on "Weapons of War and How to Improve Them" between February 1889 and January 1890.¹¹⁵ The series described the ongoing problems with British ordnance, and argued for scientific design methods and the creation of tactical principles that would dictate size, number and variety of weapons carried on ships. In November 'A Flag Officer' used the manoeuvres to connect his critique of ordnance with the larger problems of free board, sea keeping and other necessary characters.¹¹⁶ He cited Symonds on the problem of coal endurance. Even critics, like 'A Flag Officer,' were cautiously optimistic, noting that the Three Admirals' Committee had already begun improvements in design. One pamphlet of articles from *St. James' Gazette* argued that the 67-ton and 110-ton guns were not effective for use at sea, an idea that gained credibility in the press when Hamilton stated that no more of these guns would be ordered and refused to subject one to thorough testing. The *Scots Observer* thought the 29-ton gun would be an effective replacement, but was "sorry to see supposed Parliamentary and official necessities drive him into talking what he must

¹¹³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77878, Wolseley to Alcester. Private, Jul 1, 1886.

¹¹⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77878, enclosure, Director of Artillery memorandum, Jun 30, 1886.

¹¹⁵'A Flag Officer,' "Weapons of War and How to Improve Them," *United Service Magazine*, in the issues for February, April and May of 1889 and January 1890.

¹¹⁶'A Flag Officer,' "Practical Results of our Mimic Warfare," *United Service Magazine*, NS 4 (Nov 1889), 1-11.

know in his heart to be nonsense,” since more money was absolutely needed for ordnance.¹¹⁷ Hamilton claimed that full-power testing would erode the gun barrels, which the *Saturday Review* thought would be poor comfort for men expected to use the guns in war.¹¹⁸ Both the Admiralty and its critics wanted to avoid undue risk to sailors in peacetime, but critics demanded better quality ordnance rather than inferior training.

This issue would not be settled until the events of 1888 reformed the organization of naval ordnance by placing it under naval control. Committee reports described inefficient practices at the War Office manufacturing establishments and offered Hamilton and the Admiralty the opportunity to take control of ordnance and equipment manufacturing and ordering.¹¹⁹ Naval control over its own ordnance would further rationalize the Estimates. A Cabinet memorandum of December 13, 1889 concluded that the ordnance issues had been solved through the acceleration of production and the improvement of testing and inspection facilities. The only negative point was a censure of Armstrong's for allowing foreign contracts to supersede British orders.¹²⁰ Hamilton informed Parliament that the real block in the supply of heavy guns had been overcome, but ordnance issues would recur after reports of gun accidents.¹²¹ The *Review* saw it as another example of partisan hypocrisy for the Conservatives to argue the situation was solved when little had changed since the Liberal administration that the Conservative

¹¹⁷“Lord George's Mistake,” *The Scots Observer*, 3:73 (Apr 12, 1890), 566-7.

¹¹⁸“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 69:1795 (Mar 22, 1890), 343.

¹¹⁹NMM, Vesey Hamilton Papers, VHM/9, G. Hamilton to R. Vesey Hamilton, Dec 27, 1886.

¹²⁰NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/25/47, E. Stanhope, “Heavy Gun Construction,” Dec 13, 1889.

¹²¹See for example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:337 (Jun 24, 1889), c. 535-6; (Jun 28, 1889), c. 1016-8; (Jul 4, 1889), c. 1459-60; “The Estimates of the Services,” *Saturday Review*, 69:1794 (Mar 15, 1890), 310-1; Report of Hamilton's speech, *Times*, 32869 (Nov 29, 1889), 9.

Opposition had criticized. By 1891, ordnance supply and design was less problematic and faded from public presentation.¹²²

The Admiralty's success with the NDA warships did not mean that battleship designs were controversy-free. Lord Brassey's March 1891 speech at the Institution of Naval Architects supported the quantitative aspects of the NDA, but criticized the low freeboard of recent designs and the reliance on few heavy guns instead of more lighter pieces. The *Saturday Review* thought that during a scare his speech “would have been commented upon at large, and would no doubt have met with a good deal of criticism and contradiction,” but would be ignored in the placid state of public opinion.¹²³ Civilian and service journals kept alive the discussion of warship design, considering the constantly evolving characteristics of armour and ordnance.¹²⁴ The discourse on warship design in the 1890s turned towards the size of warships. Admirals Bridge and Colomb used the example of the 74-gun ships-of-the-line to argue that larger numbers of moderate sized ships were better than larger and more powerful vessels, which would necessitate new larger docks and port facilities.¹²⁵ Bridge concluded that, “Huge dimensions are unquestionably a product of an inexperienced age.”¹²⁶

After years of rapid change in battleship design, the NDA provided a degree of stabilization over designs. Parkinson argues that the 'Royal Sovereign' class represented over a decade of consistency in warship design, based around mixed armament of heavy and quick-firing guns, steel hulls and extensive armouring. Richard Humble suggests that

¹²²See for example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:353, (May 5, 1891), c. 140.

¹²³“Lord Brassey on the Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 71:1847 (Mar 21, 1891), 347.

¹²⁴H.O. Arnold-Forster, “The System of Mounting and Placing Guns on Board Ships of the Royal Navy,” *JRUSI*, 37 (Jan 1893): 91-111; James Eastwick, “Possible Developments in Naval Armament,” *Contemporary Review*, 66 (Sep 1894), 374-9.

¹²⁵NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 12, 1890 and Feb 24, 1890.

¹²⁶NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Apr 24, 1891.

they had a fairly short service life, because the next *Majestic*-class transitioned to cordite charges, but the basic design features proved consistent.¹²⁷ Without the experience of war to prove the new designs, however, the discourse remained uncertain on whether the new ships were best suited to the unpredictable nature of modern warfare.

Technology was changing so quickly with the new ironclads in the 1870s and 80s that ships could undergo multiple design modifications and consequently lengthy construction times that increased expense. Critics in Parliament frequently asked questions intended, “to show the loss of money that resulted to the country from the dawdling over shipbuilding.”¹²⁸ Excessive weights also became part of the criticism of the administration, which was characterized as “a system for the avoidance of personal responsibility.”¹²⁹ In the mid-1880s, the option of using private shipyards to build warships under contract was being developed, particularly after the Ravensworth Committee on the relative merits of dockyard and private shipbuilding concluded that contract work was faster and cheaper, on the condition that designs were not altered.¹³⁰ For navalists, the margins of superiority in future years were so small, that the rapidity of naval building was a real issue.

One example from 1886–88 will indicate the problems of dockyard construction. The armoured cruiser HMS *Imperieuse*, launched in 1883, drew two feet more of water than designed and sailed very poorly in her trials.¹³¹ The masts were removed, but the public remained in the dark about the defective design until 1887. When this was revealed, Randolph Churchill delivered a vicious attack describing Chief Constructor

¹²⁷Humble, *Before the Dreadnought*, 162; Black, *British Seaborne Empire*, 239-40.

¹²⁸See for example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:293 (Nov 7, 1884), c. 1215.

¹²⁹Minute by G. Hamilton, Feb 1, 1887 in *British Naval Documents*, 698-9.

¹³⁰“Shipbuilding by Contract,” *Broad Arrow*, 33:861 (Dec 27, 1884), 827-8.

¹³¹NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt2/6, M. Culme-Seymour to G.P. Hornby, Oct 6, 1886.

Nathaniel Barnaby as incompetent and worthless, which was supported by Reed in the *Times*. Barnaby's response defended Admiralty shipbuilding policy in general and found favour in the *Times*, leading Churchill to claim the *Times* misrepresented his case. The *Saturday Review* thought that the personal antagonism had overshadowed the real point, which was that in a period of technological uncertainty nothing could be taken on trust, there had to be thorough enquiries into naval design.¹³² Looking back on Churchill's resignation, the *Review* concluded that his proposals amounted to leaving the same people in charge with less money.

FitzGerald defended the Royal Dockyards, noting that yards could not be easily reopened once closed and these were vital war establishments whatever their peacetime problems. While Reed was equally guilty of misdirecting public attention, Churchill's conclusions were taken apart systematically. Criticisms of the lack of continuity in Admiralty policy were false because of the frequent changes of government; claims of businesslike administration of the dockyards would fail because there was no means of determining the concrete value of the articles produced; the idea that ships would be completed and sent to sea according to their original designs could be invalidated by any number of new technologies.¹³³ P.H. Colomb was more analytical, attributed the *Impérieuse* to the difficulty of transitioning from sail to steam for cruisers, particularly in terms of coal endurance.¹³⁴

Reed responded to Hamilton's June 23 speech in the Commons and Fitzgerald's letter to the *Times* on June 24. Reed repeated his arguments that Hamilton was deliberately understating the additional weight added to the cruiser *Impérieuse* and thus

¹³²“Our Ships,” *Saturday Review*, 63:1652 (Jun 25, 1887), 899-900.

¹³³C.C.P. Fitzgerald, “The Navy,” *Times*, 32134 (Jul 26, 1887), 3.

¹³⁴P.H. Colomb, “The Navy,” *Times*, 32134 (Jul 26, 1887), 3.

intentionally deceiving the public about the ships ability to undertake war operations by focusing on the cruiser's ability to perform in peacetime.¹³⁵ To his own critics, Reed implied that they were simply dismissing a serious issue as the “old battle of the Montagues and Capulets,” when in fact he had actually warned Barnaby about the problem of overloading. Reed wondered if there was any point to writing publicly, since “The Naval Minister of the day may always be relied upon to put a good appearance upon matters, and there is sure to be a naval officer ready to avow that the Navy are more than satisfied.”¹³⁶ Naval officers continued to defend the necessity of modifying ship designs. After the debates on Vote 6 on July 19, W.B. Robinson wrote from his own experience, describing the many spasmodic and ineffective efforts to reform dockyard management. He argued the same line as Fitzgerald that designs had to be modified to adopt key technologies, like the torpedo, searchlights and quick-firing guns. Robinson suggested that the core problem was that the Royal Dockyards were managed by naval officers who did not possess the required engineering and shipbuilding education and experience to earn the respect of the dockyard workers.¹³⁷

Churchill levelled another attack on the management of the dockyards in July, but with little effect. The *Saturday Review* remarked that the promises of politicians like Churchill had proven to have little hope of making the dockyards more efficient or cheaper.¹³⁸ While public discussion and pressure on Hamilton would have inherent benefits, the *Review* did point out problematic elements of Churchill’s information, including the simplistic assumption that private shipbuilding was more economical when

¹³⁵E.J. Reed, “The Navy,” *Times*, 32120 (Jul 9, 1887), 18.

¹³⁶E.J. Reed, “The Navy,” *Times*, 32120 (Jul 9, 1887), 18.

¹³⁷Admiral (ret.) W.B. Robinson, “The Navy,” *Times*, 32134 (Jul 26, 1887), 3.

¹³⁸“Naval Reform,” *Saturday Review*, 64:1656 (Jul 23, 1887), 105-6.

the Admiralty consistently spent additional sums on contract ships and the dockyards offered a check on pricing. Churchill's criticisms of the wastefulness of starting and then stopping ship construction, or of changing designs, were not new or original, but had been made for decades. The Royal Dockyards had to maintain a permanent staff, for unavoidable reasons, and Churchill did not offer, in the *Review's* opinion, any real solution to the practical problems. The *Review* suggested that dockyard expense was related to the political weight of these establishments after workmen received the vote.

The 1880s and 90s were an important time for the interaction of public opinion with naval policy, and this extended beyond strictly political questions to touch on the tactics and technology of the fleet. Important lessons were learned that defined future policy, such as the power of private yards to completely construct warships, which was shown by their successful completion of NDA cruisers and other vessels. Warships themselves would be evaluated on their combat capabilities and constantly fine-tuned; this process supports John Brook's interpretation of the *Dreadnought* as a natural evolution of warship design, rather than a revolution.¹³⁹ The *Saturday Review* understood the situation best when it dismissed Reed's passionate arguments about warship design as too technical for the public, preferring numerical comparisons that were adequate to ensure that the Admiralty was fulfilling its responsibilities.¹⁴⁰ Certain elements were more fruitful for public discourse, and technology was not the preferred subject for commentators appealing to the 'man in the street.'

¹³⁹John Brooks, "Dreadnought: Blunder or Stroke of Genius?" *War in History*, 14:2 (2007): 157-78.

¹⁴⁰"The Navy," *Saturday Review*, 63:1639 (Mar 25, 1887), 429-30.

Personnel and the New Agitation

The naval scares focused on the material of the fleet, particularly its quantity relative to the fleets of other Powers and to its wartime duties. Nevertheless, public attention was also increasingly drawn to the equally substantial issue of personnel. Like that of warships, this is a subject that has received more attention from social-naval historians, enabling this section to look solely at how the personnel issue grew from an insignificant and technical aspect to a core principle of the work of the Navy League. At no point were naval officers or newspapers disparaging of personnel, even while condemning claims of British naval supremacy the 1883 *Saturday Review* still insisted that “the navy never was more splendidly manned than it is now.”¹⁴¹ Admiral Lord Alcester wrote to Ripon in 1886 describing how, “the officers as a rule are better... educated than they were in 1834... [and] The men are better and the drunkenness which was the curse of the old navy is fast disappearing from among them.”¹⁴² The real change was that by the 1890s professional sub-groups were using new methods, such as newspaper writing and political lobbying, to agitate and raise public awareness in order to achieve their ends.

The expansion of the Royal Navy entailed increasing demands on the personnel of the fleet. There were concerns over the number of Lieutenants, verified by the manoeuvres, since the surplus on half pay had fallen to only 37, although plans were being developed to add almost 150 new officers.¹⁴³ Sailors were also in short supply, with an additional 20,000 men estimated for the new ships built by the NDA. By 1890 the

¹⁴¹“Seamen,” *Saturday Review*, 56:1464 (Nov 17, 1893), 638-9.

¹⁴²BL, Ripon Papers, Add MS 43636, ff. 51-2, Alcester to Ripon, Apr 14, 1886.

¹⁴³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:338, Commons, Jul 22, 1889, c. 983-4; Commons, *Hansard*, 3:339, (Aug 12, 1889), c. 1030.

Admiralty had to double its expenditure on officers, and Hamilton explained to the House that without these additions, “a large proportion of the magnificent fleet we shall have at home, will at the outset of war, for want of men, be ineffective” and possibly delay vital war operations.¹⁴⁴ The need to expand naval personnel while restricting expenditure encouraged the formation of volunteer units. *All the Year Round* for August 1, 1885 carried an article proposing an “Auxiliary Navy” that could be recruited from the local seafaring populations for coast defence on torpedo- and gun-boats which would prevent raids, bombardment and invasion, as well as “put an end to the periodic scares and panics which are so undignified in a strong and wealthy nation.”¹⁴⁵ The RNAV was formed, but its exact role in naval planning was very uncertain. In 1891 Parliamentary debates revealed that a plan was being formulated to turn the RNAV into an auxiliary of the Royal Marine Artillery, since the RNAV could not get enough sea time to be considered proper seamen.¹⁴⁶ There were numerous objections from the RNAV presented through Parliament and the press, but Hamilton argued that Tryon's report on the capabilities of the RNAV justified this measure.¹⁴⁷ By the 1892 Estimates this was abandoned, and, in spite of protests, the RNAV units were transferred to Submarine Mining detachments.

Reserve forces offered another economical source of manpower.¹⁴⁸ As previously discussed, the Merchant Marine was no longer widely considered to be a reliable reserve because of the specialization of naval training and the declining number of British

¹⁴⁴NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/29/3 1891, “Estimates for Manning and Victualling Votes for Navy for 1891-92 and subsequent years,” Jan 3, 1890.

¹⁴⁵“The Auxiliary Navy,” *All the Year Round*, 36:870 (Aug 1, 1885), 467-70.

¹⁴⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:353 (May 7, 1891), c. 270. See also Command Paper, C. 6382 (1891) “Navy. Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers: Report of Committee presided over by Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, K.C.B.”

¹⁴⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:353, (Jun 8, 1891), c. 1823.

¹⁴⁸ See Command Paper, C. 6609 (1892), “Navy (Royal Naval Reserves): Report of the Committee presided over by Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, K.C.B., on questions connected with the Royal Naval Reserve, together with Appendices.”

seamen. Alarmists like Symonds were starting to favour a military-style reserve system of retired bluejackets.¹⁴⁹ Hornby wrote publicly advocating a system of nucleus crews for reserve warships to improve combat efficiency. This would later be a keystone of Fisher's 1904 'naval revolution.' It received favourable commentary from the Service as a real measure to increase efficiency.¹⁵⁰ Some men of the regular crews of the Channel fleet could be changed for a proportion of Coastguard and Naval Reserves, and the regular force men deployed to the Reserve squadron, which would become a strong squadron whose crews could be completed for sea in twenty-four hours. The value of having crews accustomed to their ships was widely recognized; it was obvious to thinkers that sending crews into unfamiliar ships would make it difficult for them to fight effectively.

The transition to steam changed the nature of naval personnel. Robert Davison's recent work, *The Challenges of Command: the Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, begins with the transformation of the officer corps in the 1880s. He recognizes the importance of these early decades in forming the dichotomy between materialist and historical-intellectual schools of thought.¹⁵¹ Some thinkers believed that cruisers should keep their masts and sails for strategic mobility and independence from coal supplies, but by the late 1880s battleships were stripped of their auxiliary sail power.¹⁵² FitzGerald argued at the RUSI that steam manoeuvring should be a standard part of naval training, using old gunboats for tactical experiments, concluding that, "in the event of war, it would be better to have twenty-six ironclads skilfully handled than to

¹⁴⁹T. Symonds, "The Navy," *Morning Post*, 37741 (May 29, 1893), 2.

¹⁵⁰NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1, [?] to GP Hornby, Dec 7, 1886.

¹⁵¹Davison, *Naval Executive Officers*, 2-3.

¹⁵²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, Brent to G.P. Hornby, Aug 6, 1886.

have twenty-seven clumsily handled, or even doubtfully handled.”¹⁵³ Committee reports regularly recommended more experience at sea for cadets. Balanced naval expenditure had to recognize that personnel were just as much of an investment as material. Sail training was an important sub-set of this discourse that by 1902 was a dominant part of the public discourse. Naval officers, including intellectuals like Bridge and Noel, felt that sail-training gave qualitative benefits; Bridge argued that sailors were better gunners than the Marines, and, since some Marines spent more time at sea than sailors, he concluded that it was diligence and acrobatics inherent in working under sail that were responsible for the difference.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, two months later Bridge passed on to Custance the rumour that the Training Squadron was going to be abolished, since the training benefit did not justify the time that the men were kept away from general service.¹⁵⁵ Naval officers were uncertain how mechanical training could produce the same expertise and discipline as the old training system, but the fight for sail training was a losing battle.

Naval education was improving in its higher aspects. In 1886 R.N. Custance was anxious to see Greenwich naval college create a course of lectures covering naval tactics, signalling, manoeuvring, fleet management, principles of attack and defence, and foreign developments in tactics, preferably by Admiral Colomb.¹⁵⁶ He believed that “evidently the only people who can adequately shape the public opinion of the country on this point are the experts” and so he requested Admiral Hornby contact anyone who might further the project. Hornby responded promptly and pressed for the employment of John

¹⁵³C.C.P. FitzGerald, “On the Necessity for the Systematic Training of Naval Officers in the Art of Manoeuvring under Steam,” JRUSI, 28, (1885), 81-105; FitzGerald, “Naval Education,” JRUSI, 29 (Jan 1, 1885): 181-211.

¹⁵⁴NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 26, 1890.

¹⁵⁵NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Jan 15, 1891.

¹⁵⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, R.N. Custance to G.P. Hornby, early Nov 1886.

Colomb, which Hoskins apparently agreed with.¹⁵⁷ Custance was an admirer of Colomb, whom he thought was a much superior lecturer to John Laughton, gushing that while an Admiral's influence might be limited to his ships, Colomb's "power for good is quite incalculable, since he is the spring from which flow numberless rivulets" of ideas.¹⁵⁸ This contrasts with Fisher's 1893 characterization of Colomb as 'Column and a half', for his frequent pieces against the new large cruisers that Fisher favoured.¹⁵⁹

The nature of professional relationships was changing. Naval officers were becoming a professional entity, but so too were other ranks influenced by the changes in professional and trade union organization. The Victorian belief in self-improvement was evident in the eager participation of sailors in education and with organizations like the Naval Warrant Officers' Friendly Society (1792 and 1877) and the Royal Naval Artificer Engineer and Engine-Room Artificers' Club and Benevolent Fund (1872). The corporate identity of these organizations extended through retired servicemen to begin creating a working-class naval political lobby. This was necessary, because in 1860 the Admiralty had forbidden any combinations of naval personnel, so only retired or pensioned members could present petitions or contact MPs.¹⁶⁰ Two professional sub-groups that are worth examination are naval warrant officers and naval engineer officers.

The organization of naval warrant officers began in the 1870s with the formation of a benevolent society, but it was in the late 1880s that they began to actively campaign for reforming their professional status. Beresford asked for opinions in 1887 about commissioning deserving warrant officers. Vice-Admiral E.H. Seymour thought it was a

¹⁵⁷NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, R.N. Custance to G.P. Hornby, reply Nov 9.

¹⁵⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt1/6, R.N. Custance to G.P. Hornby, reply Nov 12.

¹⁵⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, J.A. Fisher to Spencer. Apr 12, 1893. not answered.

¹⁶⁰Anthony Carew, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 1900-39: The Invergordon Mutiny in perspective*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 2.

bad idea, since these officers would not be able to command ships or achieve higher ranks.¹⁶¹ Bridge compromised, recognizing that the measure was inevitable and delay would only cost the gratitude of warrant officers, but also realizing that ships were “crammed with hydraulic and electric machinery of the most delicate nature” that required lengthy technical and scientific training for the officers that precluded enlisted men from performing the duties of commissioned officers. Instead, Bridge suggested a Naval Defence Force be created to protect coasts and harbours, which could give commissions to non-commissioned officers.¹⁶² Seymour’s class discrimination was partly due to social class and partly because he was a product of a school of thought that emphasized that long training from boyhood at sea was necessary for naval officers and new technology had only increased demands.

In 1888 the society bought a small magazine, which became the *Naval Warrant Officers' Journal*, to act as their public organ. In the 1890s the society would campaign openly for the opportunity to achieve promotion to commissioned ranks. Retired Gunner Henry Capper took a leading role in organizing letter-writing, beginning in the service press before being the story was picked up by major newspapers. Questions were raised in Parliament, but Hamilton and the Board were unwilling to approve of commissioning warrant officers.¹⁶³ In 1891 Capper took it another step, writing an appeal that the Tory MP Captain Price would present to Parliament. It was ineffectively presented, and the warrant officers helped to unseat Captain Price in favour of the Liberal candidate. Anthony Carew argues that the petitions were ineffective in changing naval policy because the societies did not have sufficient public awareness, they did not represent a

¹⁶¹BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 10-4, EH Seymour to C Beresford, Mar 23, 1887.

¹⁶²BL, Beresford Papers, Add MS 63117, ff. 15-8, CAG Bridge to C Beresford, Mar 30, 1887.

¹⁶³See for example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:349, (Dec 5, 1890), c. 642-3.

large portion of service personnel and their parliamentary allies were not very well informed.¹⁶⁴ The public concern for the navy was deep, but it was also shallow. These matters of detail had little traction in the short term scares, but would benefit more when larger organizations like the Navy League could take up their issue as part of a coordinated navalist effort.

Naval engineers had a more strongly developed sense of corporate identity, and their agitation was much more prominent because they formed such a large proportion of the personnel. During the 1888 Navy Scare the MP Knatchbull-Hugessen brought attention to the glaring discrepancy between the increasing responsibilities of this branch of the service and the pay and position accorded to these officers compared to other specialist branches. In this case Hamilton claimed that the issue had been dealt with by the 1886 Special Committee and it would not be raised at the moment.¹⁶⁵ John Colomb spoke in the Commons about the discrepancy between the responsibilities that fell on these officers, while they received less pay than accountant officers, which Colomb considered to be in general an increasing drain on resources.¹⁶⁶ Taking the opportunity of the 1889 manoeuvres to draw attention to the vital importance of the engine-room staff and stokers in the practical working of warships, 'E.R.A.' wrote to the *Army and Navy Gazette* advocating improved pay, prestige and living conditions for Engine-Room Artificers.¹⁶⁷ Hornby turned his attention and activism to the issue of engineering departments in late 1889.¹⁶⁸ For Hornby and Beresford, the initial focus was on the

¹⁶⁴Carew, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 3:331 (Nov 26, 1888), c. 130.

¹⁶⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*. 3:339 (Aug 8, 1889), c. 767; Aug 15, 1889, c. 1332.

¹⁶⁷'E.R.A.'s,' "Engine-Room Artificers," *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1546 (Sep 7, 1889), 710.

¹⁶⁸NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt5/6, C. Beresford to G.P. Hornby, Sep 8, 1889.

quantity of engine-room complements, which was bolstered by the reports of mechanical defects.

The other part of the engineering issue was the value, in terms of monetary compensation and disciplinary authority, that the Admiralty placed in its engineers. In the debates on the Navy Estimates in August 1890, Hamilton admitted that they had greatly increased in value and in their importance for fleet operations, but he refused to grant greater pay and position because the training of engineers was more costly than for executive officers, and because they were not part of the creative process of warship design. He even went so far as to suggest that engineer officers could be replaced by non-commissioned Engine-Room Artificers. A letter to the editor of the *Times* slammed Hamilton. 'Observer' claimed that Hamilton was dead wrong, because engineer students had to pay for their own training, that the cost was due to its intricacy and thoroughness, that with the NDA the number of engineers would most likely increase, and that it was unjust to draw distinctions between engineers serving at the Admiralty and those on board ships. He argued that Hamilton was advocating non-expert control of the engineering branch, which should instead be replaced by an engineer on the Admiralty Board, not to interfere with warship design, but to ensure that this critical branch of the personnel was properly administered.¹⁶⁹ Against claims that the conditions in the engineering branch were bad enough to deter sufficient candidates, Hamilton insisted there were twice as many applicants as positions. A December minute by Engineer-in-Chief A.J. Durston informed the Board that between the reduction in numbers of the engineers, and their constant detachment for "clerical duties, hydraulic and torpedo work, and for general supervision," in short the multitude of duties that fell on the men who

¹⁶⁹'Observer,' "Naval Engineers and the Navy Estimates," *Times*, 33094 (Aug 19, 1890), 8.

operated and maintained all the mechanical systems, meant that watch-keeping, experience and efficiency had all been sacrificed.¹⁷⁰ In this case, the coordination of Parliamentary, public and service opinion did not result in significant policy change.

Naval engineers were themselves becoming far more organized as a lobby group, significant enough that Earl Spencer's papers at the British library include an entire folder devoted largely to the subject. Gladstone received a notice of a resolution by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in support of the cause of naval engineers that he thought "seems to demand from me more than a mere acknowledgement" and passed on to Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman.¹⁷¹ Another deputation, under George Howell, sought and received a conference with Spencer in April and May, to discuss the position of Engine-Room Artificers and express the grievances over the treatment of engineers in the navy.¹⁷² One civilian engineer named Allan, from the Scotia Engine Works in Sunderland, sent a fifteen-page typed memorandum to Spencer describing how in the Age of Sail the men in charge of the motive power of the ship commanded the vessel, but the engineers who ran the engines of modern ships had no role in command. He argued that it would be easier to teach engineer officers the executive duties of navigation, discipline and fighting than to teach executive officers the multitude of complex mechanical systems on board modern warships. The greatest injustice, for Allan, was that other specialist officers like doctors and paymasters were given higher pay and better accommodation, while engineers were still forced to pay for their own training. Its recommendations, which would be repeated for a decade until the entire officer system

¹⁷⁰Minute by Engineer-in-Chief A.J. Durston, Dec 12, 1890 in *British Naval Documents*, 737-8.

¹⁷¹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Dec 9, 1893. Also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

¹⁷²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77424, George Howell to U. Kay-Shuttleworth, Apr 6, 1894; Add MS 77424, George Howell to Spencer, Apr 26, 1894.

was reformed by the Selborne Scheme in 1902, were that engineer officers should be given full disciplinary authority over stokers, improved pay, rank and accommodation on par with other officers, an engineer on the Admiralty Board, and the abolition of the 'With but After' rank division.¹⁷³ Civilian engineers were an effective tool of agitation on behalf of naval engineers who were unable to speak out so directly. External political pressure was well recognized as a critical tool for internal reform efforts.

A new approach to enlisted personnel was taken up simultaneously with the question of engineer officers. Harry Williams, Chief Inspector of Machinery, argued in June 1890 that stokers should be trained in deck duties and gunnery and thus boost the fighting capabilities of warships.¹⁷⁴ C.P.P. FitzGerald returned to Williams' point in the April 1891 *United Service Magazine*, writing in general approval of the desire to create a general service rating, but thought it would be undesirable to make gunnery and other qualifications a factor in stoker promotions.¹⁷⁵ Williams accepted this detail, but reemphasized his points in the next issue. He claimed that ten thousand stokers could be turned into combatants without a loss of efficiency. Williams proposed that stoker would be more valuable if they were entered as boys and be given the same training as sailors — progressing through training ships, Reserve warships and the training squadron. What these thinkers clearly recognized was that men required investment just as much as ships, but reformers were also quick to claim that their proposals would increase efficiency without substantial cost increase.

¹⁷³ BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77424, Allan to Spencer, Apr 26, 1894.

¹⁷⁴ H. Williams, "On Increasing the Fighting Power in Ships of War, by training non-combatants in combatant duties," *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine*, (Jun 1890). A RUSI lecture in February 1891 argued that all enlisted men should receive broadly similar initial training, with subsequent specialization based on aptitude.

¹⁷⁵ C.P.P. FitzGerald, "War Training of the Navy: A Reply to Sir Geoffrey Hornby, G.C.B.," *United Service Magazine*, 3:749, (Apr 1891), 1-8.

The Service was not as united in reforming naval personnel as FitzGerald and Williams would have liked. The *United Service Magazine* published the opposing views of Captain Gerard H. Noel in July 1891. Noel started from what he claimed was a basic principle — that personnel must be divided into executive and engineer branches, with executives in command. In this case, stokers would never be employed at the guns or on deck, and did not require the same lengthy training. Noel explained that the best engineers realized that their duties took all their effort and time, and, “They have no wish to usurp the authority of the executive, but naturally look to their commanding officer for support and assistance in carrying out their duties.”¹⁷⁶ Expert opinion was too divided for a clear victor, but the mechanical school was gaining the upper hand.

Personnel would only increase as a focus of navalist discourses, as qualitative superiority began to be more appealing as quantitative superiority continued to increase in cost. The *Saturday Review* took upon itself the position of a voice of reason, and frequently reminded readers of the importance of capable, experienced personnel to effective naval forces. During the 1893 Navy Scare, it suggested that navalist advocates were deliberately deceiving the public by focusing entirely on shipbuilding policy and neglecting the long-term costs of manning and maintaining the ships.¹⁷⁷ The lack of officers remained a problem right up until the First World War, and would be for several years until the intake of new cadets caught up with needs. The problem was that a sudden massive intake would create a massive promotion block and disincentive for zeal.¹⁷⁸ The 1894–95 Navy Estimates included an increase of 6,000 men in response to concerns over manning levels. The *Saturday Review*, unsurprisingly, reported that the Service

¹⁷⁶G.H. Noel, “The War Training of the Navy,” *United Service Magazine*, 3:752, (Jul 1891), 377.

¹⁷⁷“Scares,” *Saturday Review*, 76:1986 (Nov 18, 1893), 563.

¹⁷⁸See for example, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:21 (Feb 19, 1894), c. 725-6; (Feb 20, 1894), c. 834-5.

considered personnel, especially engineering, was the weakest part of the Spencer programme, although a start had been made.¹⁷⁹ For the 1890s, smaller-scale efforts would be made to improve the relative mechanical capacity of executive officers, rather than grant equivalent rank and prospects to engineering officers. The grievances of engineers festered until the 1902 Selborne Scheme attempted the comprehensive reformation of the entire naval training system through the common entry and training of all naval officers.

The Spencer-Harcourt Debates over Battleship Tables

The formation of the 1893–94 Estimates was extremely rocky, and marked by an intense dispute between the Admiralty and the Treasury. Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was faced with the first stage in completing the NDA, which, as W.H. White had noted in his 1888 memorandum, meant new construction expenditure was expected since only a few NDA ships would still be on the stocks. As described above, there was significant agitation among naval intellectuals for a new Act to respond to recent foreign naval efforts and the Franco-Russian alignment. In this case, W.V. Harcourt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, put up a vicious fight against any increases to the Navy Estimates, and unlike Churchill he succeeded, although Spencer would prevent any cutbacks. The effect was to postpone a new naval programme by a year, in spite of the failed scare of 1892.

The process of this fight is revealed in detail in the comprehensive archives of Spencer and Harcourt, who were in direct correspondence over the issue. It demonstrates the internal Cabinet decision-making process, and the personal avenues through which

¹⁷⁹Referenced in “The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 77:2003 (Mar 17, 1894), 277-8.

public discourses impacted government policy. The conflict also shows Gladstone's intention to stay out of the heated dispute and not exercise his executive authority. In 1894, when Gladstone was dragged into the mess following the 1893 Navy Scare, his inability to deal with the situation led to his final resignation from politics.

Certain economy-minded members of the Liberal Government, like Harcourt, had been critical of the excessive expenditure of the Conservative government. Even then, Harcourt realized that the trend of increasing defence expenditure was not likely to decrease while the national wealth was increasing and “the nation is disposed to 'live like a gentleman.’”¹⁸⁰ The problem was that there was no definitive agreement over the classification of warships into first, second and third-class ships, and thinkers realized that the “present unsatisfactory system [of classification] merely allows schemers to cook Parliamentary returns.”¹⁸¹ Wooden-hulled French warships were one example; the Admiralty paired them with more modern and better armoured British warships because the ordnance was modernized, whereas Harcourt's tables discounted them as obsolete. The NID report for August 1891 concluded that the French and British fleets were evenly matched at ten first-class battleships apiece, although Britain was inferior in second-class battleships and cruisers. Professional opinion was backing a new naval programme, but it had to pass the political stage before it could be enacted.

Conservative politicians had dealt with uncertainty in their 1891-2 assessments of the relative strength of the Royal Navy. Balfour, for one, rejected the argument that the Russian Black Sea Fleet be excluded from calculations, because “It might under imaginable contingencies take less than that time [four years to build a first-class

¹⁸⁰A.G. Gardiner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, vol II, (London: Constable, 1923), 121.

¹⁸¹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 31, 1891.

ironclad] to give full access to the Mediterranean of the full Russian strength now cut off at Sebastopol.”¹⁸² Lord George Hamilton was not convinced, because he believed armoured cruisers would neutralize third-class battleships and that the reports of French and Russian construction were exaggerated.¹⁸³ These issues continued to form the basis of the Liberal discourse after the transfer of power in 1892. Since this coincided with the end of the NDA, the issue took on a more potent character than in 1891-2.

Spencer and Harcourt began their debates during the formation of the Navy Estimates starting in November 1892. Their correspondence quickly expanded beyond a financial discussion of the budget as Harcourt delved into technical matters of naval sufficiency and efficiency directly. Harcourt requested that the Admiralty draw up a comprehensive table comparing the strength of the Royal Navy with foreign navies in order to justify the requested increase in budget. Harcourt was pursuing the reduction of the Navy Estimates, and was vociferously advocating Treasury input in matters of national defence.

The first tables that Spencer provided, on November 28, excluded British second-class battleships because their armament had been rendered obsolete by the new 12-inch breech-loadings guns on NDA battleships. The Admiralty rejected the use of gross tonnage as the basis of comparison on the rationale that British ships were larger to provide the coal endurance required for offensive operations like the blockade, rather than because they possessed greater fighting power.¹⁸⁴ The Admiralty, including the DNI Bridge, recommended that “official dates for completion... [of warships] should be

¹⁸²BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49778, ff. 13-8, A.J. Balfour to G. Hamilton, Dec 29, 1891.

¹⁸³BL, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49778, ff. 13-8, G. Hamilton's notes on A.J. Balfour's letter, Dec 29, 1891.

¹⁸⁴BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 16-7, Copy of Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Nov 28, 1892.

accepted.”¹⁸⁵ This produced the same pessimistic picture that Bridge had provided in 1891, where temporary naval sufficiency was not secure and would not last long.

Harcourt's response was strong, immediate and negative. He demanded that a clear distinction be made in the figures between those ships which were complete and those still under construction. Harcourt emphasized the current superiority of the Royal Navy, which he estimated at nineteen battleships to eleven French and Russian. Britain had 21 first-class cruisers against nine foreign ships completed, according to Harcourt, and these were qualitatively superior as well. Only the French navy really counted, and Harcourt refused to count on a Franco-Russian combination.¹⁸⁶ The growing strength of the navy encouraged navalists to base their arguments around anticipated deficiencies, rather than on the less credible argument that Britain was currently inferior.

From the beginning of the exchange, Harcourt believed that his real opponent was the malign influence of the professional naval advisors. “The Admirals are up to their well-known 'tricks and manners',” he told Spencer, and were manipulating the figures to create the impression of great inferiority.¹⁸⁷ Spencer did not challenge Harcourt's main point, that the navy was currently superior, but this did not justify neglecting projected ships altogether, particularly since Harcourt had listed British ships that were under construction or major refitting.¹⁸⁸ Both sides believed that the other was forging deceptive statistics. The onus was on Harcourt to prove his case, because the Admiralty had the advantage of expert advice. Harcourt did not feel that he was undermining the navy; in fact he claimed to be “as great an advocate of British maritime supremacy as any

¹⁸⁵BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, [?] to W.G. Greene, Nov 11, 1892.

¹⁸⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 18-23, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 29, 1892; BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, Harcourt's comments on the Admiralty Memorandum.

¹⁸⁷Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, II, 201-2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 29, 1892.

¹⁸⁸BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, Spencer to W.G. Greene, Dictated, Nov 30, 1892.

jingo, for I regard it as the great security for our neutrality, but I like to know what the actual facts are and to confound the panic-mongers.”¹⁸⁹ For a time Harcourt’s arguments, supported by the remaining NDA expenditure, forestalled any new increases.

After the initial exchange of tables between the Admiralty and the Treasury had revealed serious points of disagreement, a meeting was arranged which included Spencer and Harcourt and the 'Admirals', the First Naval Lord Hoskins, the DNI Bridge and the Controller Fisher. Hoskins was unable to attend, but promised Spencer his full support, which was a notable show of confidence in Spencer’s leadership.¹⁹⁰ Harcourt pressed the old concept of coast defence ships as a solution, but the Admirals rejected them because the navy planned an offensive strategy, not one of strategic defence. There was no agreement after the meeting, but Spencer did credit Harcourt with keeping his temper under control.¹⁹¹ Tension within the Liberal Party was rising, but Spencer had won the respect of the Admiralty Board because he had supported its recommendations.

Harcourt presented a new set of tables to the Admiralty on December 5, before circulation to the rest of the Cabinet. Spencer thought it very irregular that a Chancellor of the Exchequer would be circulating a paper on ships rather than confining himself to responding to the Admiralty's proposals.¹⁹² Harcourt conceded the point. Harcourt's analysis concluded that Britain would have a superiority of ten first-class battleships over France in 1894, which was enough of a margin that Britain was effectively “superior to all the world in first-class Battle ships.”¹⁹³ This was passed on to the NID who, in

¹⁸⁹Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 201-2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 29, 1892.

¹⁹⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Dec 3, 1892.

¹⁹¹BodL, Kimberley Papers, MS 10247, ff. 47-8, Spencer to Kimberley, Dec 5, 1892.

¹⁹²Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 202, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 5, 1892; W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 5, 1892.

¹⁹³Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 202, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 5, 1892.

consultation with the Controller and the Director of Naval Construction, concluded that Harcourt was overly optimistic, and had failed to include several warships that would be completed by 1895.¹⁹⁴ Harcourt's motives were becoming suspect, and Spencer, supported by the Permanent Secretary Graham Greene, recommended that anything sent to Harcourt should be copied for Admiralty records to prevent misinformation.¹⁹⁵ A new set of tables was produced on December 17, the Admiralty again moderating Harcourt's figures to a more pessimistic level.¹⁹⁶ The exchange of tables stopped without the departments reaching any real consensus. Harcourt sarcastically suggested that Britain should just fight the entire world, and "Then we shall have no further trouble."¹⁹⁷

The financial state of the NDA was integral to determining the available funds for the 1893–94 Estimates. The overall sum would remain the same, so the magnitude of the residual commitments of the NDA would determine if a new construction programme was possible. Harcourt, like other economy-minded Liberals, thought the expenditure simply too large.¹⁹⁸ Harcourt assumed that the £10,000,000 allocated to contract shipbuilding under the NDA was going to be greatly exceeded, but Spencer corrected him, since the extra charges for hulls and machinery was offset by savings on armaments.¹⁹⁹ The dockyards had been allocated £11,500,000 in the budget, not the £10,000,000 that Harcourt claimed. Spencer argued that far from the NDA preventing any new construction, over £1,000,000 remained for 1893-94 as the NDA had predicted.

¹⁹⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.G. Greene to C.A.G. Bridge, and Bridge's notes, sent to Spencer, Dec 9, 1892

¹⁹⁵BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, notes from Spencer and W.G. Greene, Dec 11-12, 1892.

¹⁹⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 17, 1892.

¹⁹⁷BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 42-3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 19, 1892.

¹⁹⁸BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 92, ff., 154-5, G. Trevelyan to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 8, 1892.

¹⁹⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 1, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 5, 1892.

After all of the debate between Spencer and Harcourt over the state of the navy, the Navy Estimates were settled fairly easily. The Admiralty initially asked for a £400,000 increase, but the Financial Secretary immediately reduced it to £200,000. As a best-case scenario, Spencer suggested that the Navy Estimates be maintained at the level of the previous year, even though he expressed sympathy with Harcourt's desire to minimize expenditure to the lowest level necessary.²⁰⁰ Spencer preferred to reduce the Estimates in-house before dispatching the final statement to the Treasury. Spencer likely resented Harcourt's interference — his position at the Treasury had the responsibility of deciding the financial aspects of the Admiralty's proposals, not to dictate to the Admiralty its professional naval opinions. Spencer, as First Lord, tried to run a tight administration, which decided exactly what was needed and asked for it, no more and no less. This time Spencer was in accord with Harcourt's efforts, the next year would be a different story.

A Treasury Minute of December 19 laid out the finances. The NDA comprised three funds, one for £10,000,000 spent over five years and paid for over seven, one for £8,650,000 for dockyard ship construction spread over five years and paid out of the ordinary Estimates, and one of £2,850,000 for armaments also for five years paid out of ordinary Estimates. The savings in one fund were not transferable to other funds, in order to ensure financial accountability, nor could the Admiralty borrow in anticipation, although the Law Officers of the Crown thought minor financial adjustments to the NDA were matters of practical administration rather than legality.²⁰¹ All ships would be completed by March 31, 1894, and only one contract ship and six dockyard vessels were delayed. Annual NDA expenditure had been about £2,650,000 for hulls and £600,000 for

²⁰⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 9, 1892.

²⁰¹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 1, R.E. Welby to U. Kay-Shuttleworth, Dec 30, 1892.

armaments for the dockyard ships, although some years, like 1892–93, would be less than this sum. The contract ships were on budget, but dockyard prices for hulls and machinery had increased, particularly for smaller warships, and were only partially offset by reduced costs for armaments, resulting in £1,127,610 over budget. The financial rigidity of the NDA meant that the Treasury did not recommend renewing the Act, and was not supportive of embodying a new shipbuilding programme in an Act of Parliament.²⁰²

Spencer argued that the Act had said ships should “as far as is practicable to be completed for sea by 1 April 1894,” and that 'practicable' meant the dates were somewhat flexible, and in that case the sums required for completion could be deferred past that date. The remaining £485,000 for armaments could be incorporated within the ordinary Estimates without raising the total Vote, or the sum simply deferred till the ships were completed, and the need for providing more substantial reserves of ammunition and torpedoes was denied, since large reserves only increased the impact of obsolescence.²⁰³ Upon enquiry, the Accountant-General concluded that any modification to the NDA which would extend its spending into 1894–95, or transfer substantial funds, would require new legislation, which the politicians at the Admiralty, Spencer and Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, accepted. These modifications to the NDA would provide enough room for a small programme of shipbuilding in the 1893–94 Estimates.

In January the discussion shifted to include the new French naval budget. First reports indicated that the shipbuilding portion would be reduced from £3,100,000 to

²⁰²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 1, Treasury Minute 18027-92- The Naval Defence Act, 1880, Dec 19, 1892.

²⁰³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 1, Dec 1, 1892, Spencer's notes on Harcourt's memorandum; Memorandum by Compton-Domville, Dec 21, 1892.

£2,685,000, due mainly to the inevitable delays in construction.²⁰⁴ The final sum was a compromise at £2,918,000. Combined with either the £947,725 spent by Germany or the £1,692,124 by Russia, it put Britain well behind a Two-Power Standard in expenditure, since the total value of Britain's construction budget was £2,982,086.²⁰⁵ Harcourt, who was only concerned with the French forces, argued that the French were focused entirely on Germany and Italy, and they were no longer adding large supplementary estimates, making their figures more reliable.²⁰⁶ Harcourt reasoned that rapid obsolescence should deter over-spending on warships, and since Britain could build faster than France there was no need to anticipate — Britain had twenty battleships to ten French and even in four years it would only be twenty to fifteen. “It would be difficult for the most alarmist Admiral to get up a panic out of this material,” he concluded.²⁰⁷ It is significant that Harcourt instinctively assumed that it was the professional naval element that was the driving force behind public panic, thus implying that it was a manipulation or perversion of the public's attitudes rather than a genuine reflection of a growing belief in nationalism and imperialism. The only class of warship that Harcourt thought could be increased was large cruisers for the “command of distant seas.” Only commerce defence would tempt Harcourt to accept new shipbuilding expenditure.

The Admiralty could not accept inaction. The French might have 21 battleships in commission, but six ships that had been removed from the Navy List could be quickly recommissioned, plus their forces were more concentrated in the Mediterranean.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.H. White Memorandum, Dec 8, 1892.

²⁰⁵BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, two undated fragments of Spencer's notes, Jan 1893.

²⁰⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Jan 29, 1893, W.G. Greene passed it to the DNI on Jan 30; W.G. Greene to Capt. Barry, with Harcourt's notes, Feb 1, 1893.

²⁰⁷BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Feb 7, 1893.

²⁰⁸BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, “Notes on French Navy Estimates, 1894,” Feb 7, 1893.

Where the Treasury wanted to delay new construction because it took France five years, not four, to complete a battleship, the Admiralty believed the French could build more rapidly if necessary. The small shipbuilding programme of two battleships in 1893–94 meant that “we should only be equal to France + Russia in 1897, assuming that neither Power lays down additional ships,” but France had already started an additional programme.²⁰⁹ The Admiralty accepted that Britain could build faster than France, but this did not justify waiting for supremacy to be lost before action was taken.

Spencer's unwillingness to make an issue out of the 1892-93 Estimates snuffed out any hope of generating a full-blown naval scare. This did not end public agitation, which quickly regrouped and pressed even harder in 1892. It does show that a scare could not fully develop out of the background commentary without some official support. The Government was perfectly capable of tactical political action to diffuse and delay. A navalist core would remain active, but their claims to represent public opinion were hollow without political speeches, daily newspapers, public speaking and related gossip which would constantly reaffirm and renew the navalists credibility. For a scare to become truly effective in penetrating political decision-making, it required internal allies in order to champion the cause. The difference moving into 1893 was that professional politicians saw the benefits of appealing to public opinion.

²⁰⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.H. White's notes on “Notes on French Navy Estimates, 1894,” Feb 7, 1893.

Chapter 7 — The 1893 Navy Scare and the Fall of W.E.

Gladstone

I deem [the new shipbuilding programme] to be in excess of public expectation. I know it to be in excess of all precedent. It entails unjust taxation, it endangers sound finance. I shall not minister to the alarming aggression of the professional elements, to the weakness of alarmism, to the unexampled manoeuvres of party, [and] not lend a hand to dress Liberalism in Tory clothes. I shall not break to pieces the continuous action of my political life, nor trample on the tradition received from every colleague who has ever been my teacher. Above all I cannot & will not add to the perils and the coming calamities of Europe by an act of militarism.... The smallest of all the present evils is the probable disparagement of myself... great and certain evils are the danger to the party, and new uncertainties for Ireland. But these in my opinion are inherent to the plan itself, and would not be averted were it possible for me to say aye to it.¹

William Ewart Gladstone, January 20, 1894.

At the end of his third Administration, the Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone, was in no mind to approve of a new naval expansion programme, let alone the largest yet proposed. Gladstone pulled out all of his biggest political guns, harkening back to the age-old principles of Liberalism, like good finances, low taxes, and anti-militarism. The reference to the “aggression of the professional elements” explains much of Gladstone's attitude. To Gladstone, the forces of navalism were led by biased naval officers, and retrenchment was part of his personal mission. In 1893–94 he would learn that navalism had penetrated the majority of the political establishment, including the Liberal Party. When he made his party choose between a new naval programme and himself, the navy won. Gladstone retired from politics for the second, and final, time on March 1, 1894.

¹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44648, f. 145, Gladstone memorandum, Jan 20, 1894. Also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

The 1913 polemic of Frederick William Hirst attributed the 1893 Navy Scare to a cabal of armaments manufacturers who worked behind the scenes to manipulate the public through fear-mongering.² As in previous discourses, armaments manufacturers occasionally participated, but there is little indication that the diverse interests involved in public debates were animated by any single interest group. The only time that the interests of private armaments companies seem to penetrate the political level relates to the ongoing tension between state-run Royal Dockyards and private industry in the production of armaments. As previously discussed, there was a common belief in British political discourse that private business was run more efficiently and economically than government departments. This belief appealed to followers of liberal political economy since it emphasized minimal state interference in the economy. When the Spencer Programme which followed the 1893 scare was publicized, it was a matter of pride that “of this aggregate expenditure of 25,500,000*l.*, all, except the Dockyard labour (say 4,000,000*l.*), will go to the private industry of this country.”³

There was enough reality in the possibility of war to give poignancy and credibility to the discussion of national defences. Ongoing colonial rivalry with France, focused on Uganda and Siam in this period, provided a consistent level of international tension.⁴ This was greatly exacerbated by the creation of a Dual Alliance between France and Russia, which gave real force to fears of a two-power combination against Britain. The Mediterranean remained the primary focus of the naval discussion in 1893, since this

²F.W. Hirst, *The Six Panics and other essays*, (1913).

³NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/34/57 1893, *Programme of New Construction: 1894-95 to 1898-99*, Nov 23, 1893. Signed by W.H. White.

⁴Affairs in Uganda were prominent in Rosebery's 1892-94 correspondence, see NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10025-7, correspondence with W.E. Gladstone, 1892-3; MS 10035, correspondence with W.V. Harcourt, 1893.

was the key theatre in a naval war with France and Russia, particularly if Russia succeeded in her aim of gaining a warm water port. Confidence in Britain's dominance of the Mediterranean was shaky, and nuances of this strategic debate will be dealt with in more depth below. To naval thinkers, the scare was a defensive reaction to the weakness of national defences. Admiral Elliot, for instance, believed that any sign of weakness would only encourage foreign naval expansion, an attitude that he, due to his own partisan inclination, blamed on opposition to armaments from the Liberal Party.⁵

The ability of the navy to shape public opinion was becoming more developed. Ship launches, fleet reviews and other forms of public spectacle were being regularly deployed to raise public awareness of the navy, and by extension to its role in home, commerce and imperial defence. More directly, this is the period where historical accounts trace a rapid increase in public navalism. The Navy League was founded in the aftermath of the scare to regularize the spirit of agitation and produce a consistent pro-navy attitude. The use of the press continued to increase, and more prominent retired officers became involved after their active careers ended. The 1893 episode was the last distinct scare before navalism, and militarism in general, became a common feature of national and political life. Later episodes like 1909 would be so evocative because of the strong memory remaining after 1893.

The popular account of the development of shipbuilding in the 1890s makes no distinction between the NDA and the Spencer Programme, or in the important differences in their methods. The 1893 Navy Scare and the Spencer Programme were similar to the general character of the NDA, in that it was a large and comprehensive shipbuilding programme, but the choice of abandoning the Act of Parliament format was intentional

⁵George Elliot, "The State of the Navy," *Morning Post*, 37761 (Jun 21, 1893), 2.

and well-reasoned. The new programme was a “much more substantial effort” that considered the entire range of naval needs, from infrastructure to personnel, which was also easier to integrate without the restrictions of an Act of Parliament.⁶ The NDA receives disproportionate attention in surveys because it was enshrined as a single programme in a published Act, whereas the Spencer programme was more substantial but intentionally sneaky and adaptable.

The previous chapter described the lengthy correspondence between the Treasury and Admiralty over the 1893–94 Navy Estimates. The Admiralty had to be content with maintaining the Estimates at their previous level, but the groundwork was laid for new demands in the 1894–95 Estimates. This narrative begins with the discussion of naval affairs in the aftermath of the 1893–94 Navy Estimates, which were disseminated through the regular stages in February and March 1893. The events of the 1893 Navy Scare confirm that it is the interaction of discursive and experiential elements that provides the power and credibility required to give public fears political effect. The result was the largest programme of shipbuilding to date that was deliberately cast in a completely different manner to the NDA and intended to be a complete fleet expansion across all warship classes and including provisions for manning and officering the ships.

This chapter will show the distinct contribution that events of 1893–94 made in long-term naval policy, which was, arguably, the most important of the three naval scares examined in this study. For the third time, the value of public involvement in defence politics proved to be decisive, and navalists decided to regularize this agitation as a political movement. The Navy League would work consistently to educate the public about the importance of the fleet, and provide stability to the navalist lobby group. Scares

⁶M. Hamilton, *Nation and the Navy*, 67-70.

would become rarer in following decades due to this normalization, except for the exceptional burst of anxiety in 1909.

Narrative of Events, 1893–94

Navalist agitation was regenerating its energies in 1893, as the final stage in completing the NDA left a vacuum for a new naval programme. It had been possible for Gladstone's Ministry to postpone the programme in 1892, but his principled resistance to defence expenditure lost touch with the sentiments of society. To follow the NDA with another large programme, navalists worked hard to minimize the current superiority of the Royal Navy. This was done through a reference to anticipated future deficiencies, and by redefining the Two-Power Standard.

In the House of Lords debates in May over the 1893–94 Navy Estimates, Spencer reaffirmed the Two-Power Standard as the necessary level of naval strength. Admiral Lord Hood, who in the 1888 Select Committee's inquiry had proclaimed himself largely satisfied with the strength of the fleet, now changed his stance. He moved a resolution in the House of Lords for a new programme of shipbuilding to meet the growth of foreign navies, providing a pessimistic and alarmist portrayal of the state of the navy. Lord Sudeley pressed for an official assurance that the navy was sufficient for all of its duties, but was left unanswered. Spencer insisted that the NDA had achieved a suitable standard of naval strength, but admitted that the growth of foreign navies justified new efforts. Although he criticized the use of an Act of Parliament, Spencer did agree that a new programme should be comprehensive and anticipate future needs.⁷

⁷UK, Lords, *Hansard*, 4:12 (May 16, 1893), c. 1018-39.

The Parliamentary offensive was mirrored by external commentary in the newspapers. Admiral Elliot, a core navalist agitator, wrote to newspapers in May and June arguing for a new programme to replace the NDA. He explained to readers that France and Russia were increasing their forces and that the Two-Power Standard was contrary to naval experience and the principles of naval warfare. Bare numerical equality was insufficient, since the manoeuvres had shown that the fleet lacked ships and could barely take on one enemy. He suggested that since the navy was national insurance, money earmarked for paying down the National Debt could be legitimately repurposed for national defence. In a throwback to the administrative criticism, Elliot blamed the Government for hiding the opinion of the Service and “abolishing the professional responsibility of that Board to the country for the state of the Navy in order to establish pure political naval ascendancy.”⁸ Elliot anticipated that Spencer would present a large programme the next year, and directed criticism at the delay. Elliot was no longer the sharpest commentator, but he identified the political struggle between the Board and the Government. This conflict certainly existed, but it does not appear that Elliot was aware of the nuances, such as Spencer's favourable attitude to naval expansion.

While Admiralty representatives resisted calls for new expenditure in public, internally the Admiralty was already planning a new offensive against the Treasury. Spencer was initially of the impression that the French were trying to reduce their Estimates, but Admiral Bridge explained that there was actually an £800,000 increase for the navy although public opposition might result in the reduction of this sum.⁹ On May 26, the same day that Elliot wrote to the *Morning Post*, Spencer explained to Rosebery

⁸Admiral George Elliot, “The Navy,” *Morning Post*, 37739 (May 26, 1893), 3; Elliot, “The State of the Navy,” *Morning Post*, 37761 (Jun 21, 1893), 2.

⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, Spencer to C.A.G. Bridge; Bridge to Spencer, May 13, 1893.

that the fleet was currently equal to a war with France, but “If we go on a year or two to '96, France and Russia will by then have more ships and we shall only be about equal to them in power.”¹⁰ Spencer's position was shaped by Harcourt's discounting, in the 1892 correspondence, of Russian vessels, and of predictions of relative strength in future years. Spencer was convinced that he held the high ground, because in the long run ships were getting larger, and larger ships meant new docks, more men and so on, and this reality would swamp Harcourt's opposition. Spencer did not have a clear expansion programme prepared, but it seems clear that he was planning to push the issue again, harder this time. By August, the Cabinet had recognized that money was going to be required to frame a new naval scheme.¹¹ Judging from his later opposition, Gladstone was probably unaware that Spencer had become a believer in naval expansion.

The popular agitation built during the summer, although it lacked the coherence of a specific policy proposal. T.A. Brassey and Admiral Symonds offered lengthy summaries of the naval situation in the July issues of the *Nineteenth Century* and *Fortnightly Review* respectively, both of which very reputable journals with large national circulations. Brassey and Symonds were both concerned that the army was receiving too much of the defence budget, when the fleet was the basis of imperial communications and reinforcement. Brassey focused on justifying the Two-Power Standard, and investment in battleships, as the foundation of command of the sea that ensured that any large-scale enemy movements could be prevented.¹² Symonds was more direct, arguing that Britain was “dangerously inferior to France by itself; and we have literally and truly no reserve of ships or men,” because while in 1807 Britain had 206

¹⁰NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10062, ff. 85-6, Spencer to Rosebery, May 26, 1893.

¹¹*The Diaries of William Gladstone*, Gladstone's Cabinet notes, Aug 8, 1893.

¹²T.A. Brassey, “Great Britain as a Sea-Power,” *Nineteenth Century*, 34:197 (Jul 1893), 121-30.

battleships to 60 French; in 1893 Britain had 77 armoured ships to 93 French and 23 Russian.¹³ This was a common comparison for navalists, since they argued that the forces necessary for war had to be prepared beforehand in peacetime. Symonds saw deficiencies in every area of the navy, both qualitative (a comparative lack of heavy ordnance) and quantitative. He is an example of the inveterate navalist for whom national defence could never be truly satisfactory. Alarmists like Symonds could not initiate a full-blown scare, but they could keep the pot simmering.

The LCC continued to be an important forum and focal point for commercial support for naval expansion, particularly as it related to the protection of British maritime trade. Beresford spoke on July 20 on “The Protection of the Mercantile Marine during War,” in which he made his usual advocacy for a comprehensive defence system which would incorporate all branches of imperial defence in a single organization. In his view, the need for cruisers was proven by the ratio of cruisers to merchant ships, which was 1:30 for France and 1:71 for Britain, although Beresford was less concerned with the threat of torpedo boats raiding commerce in the Channel and Mediterranean, since trade could be routed away from these enclosed waters. Beresford was fully supported by the President of the LCC, Sir Alfred K. Rollit, MP, whose introduction emphasized the damage even a short war could do to trade, and concluded that “To provide for the food of our people, and for our industrial supremacy, we needed not only safety, but the sense of security, and that sense of security could only be given by the perfection of those forces that ensured it.”¹⁴ The standard required for a 'sense of security' would prove to be a moving target.

¹³T. Symonds, “The Needs of the Navy,” *Fortnightly Review*, 54:320 (Aug 1893), 282-9.

¹⁴Quoted in Sidney Eardley-Wilmot, “The Agitation in 1893 for the Increase of the Navy,” *Naval Annual*,

In response to these concerns, the LCC appointed a committee to examine the problem of trade defence, with the specific intention of organizing commercial people in support of the anticipated Government demand for a naval increase from Parliament. The Chamber asked the RUSI for aid, and the RUSI Council appointed General Lord Chelmsford, Rear-Admiral Cleveland and Sidney Eardley-Wilmot. This Committee produced a memorandum, “The State of the Naval Defences of the British Empire in 1893,” which clearly stated their doubts about the ability of the navy to perform all of the duties required in war. Eardley-Wilmot took the opportunity in his 1894 *Naval Annual* articles to explain that the Committee's main aim was to create a more universal statement than the Two-Power Standard — even though the Two-Power Standard remained incomplete, it was inherently an insufficient standard because it could not provide the 5:3 ratio necessary for supremacy.¹⁵

The loss of HMS *Victoria* on June 22, 1893 after a collision with HMS *Camperdown* during summer exercises in the Mediterranean was deeply traumatizing for the navy and the country. The news was transmitted by telegraph for immediate publication in newspapers and for Parliamentary questions the following day, demonstrating how new technologies had collapsed the psychological distance between the home public and world affairs. The accident raised concerns over the vulnerability of key fleet units and cast doubt on the ability of naval officers to command their ships. Admiral Sir George Tryon, who went down with his ship, was widely considered to be one of the most capable fighting Admirals in the navy, and the collision was an almost

(1894), 151.

¹⁵Eardley-Wilmot, “The Agitation in 1893 for the Increase of the Navy,” *Naval Annual*, (1894), 152-3.

incomprehensible error.¹⁶ John Morley, an important Liberal and confidante of Gladstone who rarely engaged directly with naval affairs, made specific note of the event in his diary. The accident drew widespread publicity in non-naval circles, and provided an easy opening for navalist discourse to penetrate a wider public.

A Court Martial was held, but since Tryon and his Flag Captain had gone down with the *Victoria*, it was Tryon's second-in-command Rear-Admiral Albert H. Markham and his Flag Captain, Charles Johnstone, who were held responsible. The public and Parliament were looking for someone to bear responsibility, but Markham had been following the orders of his superior officer. There was a fine line to draw between obedience to orders and responsibility for the safety of the ship and crew. Admiral Hornby took an active role in shaping public opinion, both in the *Fortnightly Review* and *United Service Magazine*, defending the tactical innovation that Tryon was practicing and laying the responsibility on Markham and Johnstone to have taken the initiative to avoid a collision. The Court Martial acquitted Markham and Johnstone, but only partially and not in the view of fellow officers or Parliamentary critics.¹⁷ In Hornby's opinion, Admiral Tryon was suffering from illness that affected his decision-making, and placed greater responsibility on Markham and Johnstone to have acted to prevent collisions. Hornby recommended the fleet continue to exercise and manoeuvre to build confidence and experience, while also taking the opportunity to insert a plug for building more cruisers, but it was obvious to contemporaries that he could not explain why Markham and Johnstone had failed to act.¹⁸

¹⁶Richard Hough, *Admirals in Collision*, (London: White Lion, 1973), originally published in 1959, gives biographical information for Tryon and Markham without apportioning blame for the disaster.

¹⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19, (Dec 4, 1893), c. 366-7.

¹⁸Admiral Sir G. Phipps Hornby, "The Loss of the *Victoria*," *United Service Magazine*, NS 7:777 (Aug

The loss of the *Victoria* would be discussed on many future occasions, as it was tied in to many of the key discourses. The disaster revived, and on several subsequent occasions refreshed, old questions of the desirable size of battleships and the wisdom of making ships increasingly larger, which was referred by Kay-Shuttleworth to the Admiralty inquiry.¹⁹ Admiral Symonds claimed it proved that warships with unarmoured ends were defective, as well as offering other practical suggestions for improving safety.²⁰ The *Saturday Review* informed readers that naval officers had lost confidence, both in the capabilities of their ships and the regulations they served by.²¹ These questions were hard for the Admiralty to answer, and harder for politicians to effectively engage with. Even in September the Civil Lord, E. Robertson, recommended that Spencer avoid coming to a decision on responsibility while Parliament was 'rising' or producing a memorandum which might attract public attention.²² In Parliament Gladstone refused requests for time to discuss the Admiralty report, claiming the enormity of other business facing the house.²³ Larger battleships were eventually chosen by the Admiralty, to compete with ever-larger foreign warships.²⁴ Hornby justified this decision, since the vulnerability to ramming was not a design flaw and was only preventable by manoeuvring.²⁵ The naval historian Andrew Gordon argues that the *Victoria* disaster

1893): 1109-13; "Leading Articles in the Reviews: The loss of the 'Victoria,'" *Review of Reviews*, (Aug 1893), 151. After Hornby's article the social reformer Agnes Weston wrote in the *United Service Magazine* among others to appeal for aid to the families of the men that died, "Correspondence: Loss of H.M.S. *Victoria*," *United Service Magazine*, NS 7:777 (Aug 1893), 1213.

¹⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44314, f. 76, Spencer to W.E. Gladstone, Jun 26, 1893; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 99, Gladstone to C.H. Wilson, Jun 25, 1893; *Diaries of William Gladstone*, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Jun 25, 1893; UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:14 (Jun 29, 1893), c. 363-4; UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:14 (Jul 11, 1893), c. 1268.

²⁰T. Symonds, "The Needs of the Navy," *Fortnightly Review*, 54:320 (Aug 1893), 282.

²¹"The Navy Scare," *Saturday Review*, 76:1987 (Nov 25, 1893), 591.

²²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77380, E. Robertson to Spencer, Sep 20, 1893.

²³BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 159, W.E. Gladstone to E.J. Reed, Nov 23, 1893.

²⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:16 (Aug 28, 1893), c. 1209-10.

²⁵Admiral Sir G. Phipps Hornby, "The Loss of the *Victoria*," *Fortnightly Review*, 54:320 (Aug 1, 1893):

helped to entrench attitudes of subordination and deference to orders that stifled initiative when the navy entered the First World War.²⁶

Concerns were quickly raised about replacing the *Victoria*, which tied in to the wider discussion of the strategic role of the battlefleet. To the *Saturday Review*, it was illogical to slacken battleship construction in favour of torpedo craft when the fleet had been instantly weakened. The *Review* was a prominent proponent of a new battleship programme, having adopted the view of Brassey and Symonds that the Two-Power Standard was not being maintained and refusing to accept that “we should sacrifice any part of our fleet in order to increase any other....”²⁷ This logic would underpin the 1893 Navy Scare, and justify a complete fleet expansion rather than focusing on specific warship classes. The circumstances were recognised at the Admiralty; in spite of Henry Labouchere's assurances of Parliamentary apathy, Fisher (always willing to involve himself in political affairs) informed Spencer that he could expect trouble from Reed, Hanbury, Forwood and Gibson Bowles.²⁸

In August, the promising developments of a new type of warship, the torpedo-boat destroyer, offered some solution to the vexed question of blockade and home defence, both of which hinged on the ability to neutralize the torpedo boat menace. Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, the incoming First Naval Lord, produced a memorandum for the Board acknowledging that the NDA had temporarily achieved a Two-Power Standard in battleships, but had not accounted for the new French ‘Gervais programme.’ He argued that a new and more continuous programme of battleship

290-6. This article restated similar arguments as the *United Service Magazine* piece cited above.

²⁶Gordon, *Rules of the Game*, 243-74.

²⁷“The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 76:1975 (Sep 2, 1893). 259-60.

²⁸BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, J.A. Fisher to Spencer, Aug 29, 1893.

construction was necessary.²⁹ Internal discussion within the naval service supported a comprehensive building programme with a balanced emphasis on cruisers and destroyers, in contrast to public discourses that heavily prioritized first-class battleships.

Admiral Richards thought that destroyers were an immediate requirement, delegating the planning to the Controller, Jack Fisher, and the Chief Constructor, W.H. White. They proposed that the two large *Powerful*-class cruisers should be postponed and the money spent on fifty destroyers.³⁰ When HMS *Havock*, the first of a new type of 27-knot torpedo-boat destroyers, was tested in October 1893, it fully justified the policy decision. As Fisher reported, the tests showed that these warships were fast enough to catch torpedo boats, and promised to be “sufficiently seaworthy to accompany our Fleets at sea...”³¹ Newspaper reports followed the same line, and were very positive about the potential of the *Havock* to counter the torpedo boat menace.³² Later, coincidentally when public agitation was on the rise in October, Fisher asked for the Board to approve the design of the *Powerful* because “keen enquiries and evident desire to get such an order at almost any price” meant the Admiralty would get a deal from the armaments manufacturers.³³ This is the normal reference to the armaments industry at the time, when the business cycle provided the Admiralty the dual benefit of maintaining a strategic industry and getting better prices for their orders.

Two international developments in late 1893 helped to trigger the naval scare. The Franco-Russian Alliance continued to develop and deepen, including Russian naval

²⁹Minute by F. Richards, Aug, 1893 in *British Naval Documents*, 620-1.

³⁰*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 225-6, Jul 28, 1893, U. Kay-Shuttleworth to Spencer.

³¹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, Fisher to Spencer, Oct 30, 1893.

³²For the news agency article, see “The Fastest Vessel in the Navy,” *Morning Post*, (Oct 31, 1893); *The Star*, (Nov 2, 1893).

³³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, J.A. Fisher to Spencer, Oct 7, 1893.

visits to French ports. By the autumn, the Russian presence had expanded to what Rosebery called 'semi-permanent' squadron, resulting in substantial pressure from Rosebery and the Queen for the Mediterranean Fleet to undertake a diplomatic cruise to Italian ports, which was delayed first by the *Victoria* incident and then by cholera in southern Italy.³⁴ The French blockade of Siam only exacerbated British fears, and highlighted the importance of naval power for protecting British possessions, commerce and rights.³⁵ Morley's diary recorded his belief that the French were also subjected to sinister cabals of Admirals, since they were "at the mercy of admirals on the spot" which the British knew so well.³⁶ By September, A.H. Hoskins was expressing a widespread concern that if France could count on Russian support, she might "be quite ready to hazard a war with us," having much to gain and little lose in such a conflict.³⁷ With this advice coming from his chief naval advisers, it is unsurprising that Spencer would be willing to go head-to-head with Harcourt over a new programme. The French threat gave credibility to renewed navalist agitation, and initiated a new round of panic.

The Spencer-Harcourt debates reopened in September and October, along the same battle lines as the previous years. T.A. Brassey added six French first-class battleships to the totals, which prompted Harcourt to protest that six British ships should be moved up to show an effective superiority of ten first-class battleships. Harcourt considered that this margin was sufficient to match the French Mediterranean forces and have a fleet left over, in addition to qualitative superiority and even greater superiority

³⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77376, Philip Currie to Spencer, Jul 28, 1893, reply Jul 29; Rosebery to Spencer, Secret, Jul 30, 1893; Sep 29, 1893, PW Currie to Spencer enclosing Lord Vivien's telegram No. 67 to Rosebery; Sep 30, 1893, Lord Vivien telegram No. 68; Rosebery to Spencer, Oct 4, 1893, Secret; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10002, Rosebery to H. Campbell-Bannerman, Secret, Aug 10, 1893; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 95-6, Spencer to Rosebery, Jul 29, 1893.

³⁵These views were publicized in "A French Lesson," *Blackwood's*, 154:936, (Oct 1893), 574-86.

³⁶BodL, Morley's Papers, MS Eng. d. 3455 f. 76, J. Morley's Journal, Jul 19, 1893.

³⁷BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Sep 3, 1893.

regarding cruisers.³⁸ Harcourt defended himself with tables by Lord Brassey that relied on the aggregate total displacement of national fleets to compare strength. The Admiralty response, written by Fisher and supported by Bridge and Hoskins, refuted Harcourt's tabulation for being inconsistent in its qualitative evaluations. They counted nineteen built and three building for Britain against a French and Russian total of thirteen built, four completing, and ten on the stocks, which meant that Britain would be superior for 1894, but decline to bare equality in 1896 unless six new ships were begun. Concerning cruisers, the Admiralty argued that the size of British commerce meant that this class could not be excluded.³⁹ Spencer agreed that comparisons based on tonnage were flawed because British ships were larger to provide the range and sea-keeping for overseas service.⁴⁰ Spencer's letter to Harcourt fully supported the Admiralty position, and was the first step in the political division over the issue that would provide good breeding conditions for the expansion of the scare, and gave hope of success to navalist agitators.

The public discourse was invigorated in November by a notable article by Lord Armstrong promoting the inclusion of rams in battleship design. He argued that the damage done to the *Victoria* by *Camperdown*'s ram proved that large ships were vulnerable to such weapons, thereby negating the value of armoured warships and supporting the building of dedicated ramming vessels. Naval officers, including P.H. Colomb, clarified that even Armstrong admitted large ships were necessary to match foreign ironclad battleships, and that ramming appeared to be a very unlikely and even

³⁸ BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Sep 28, 1893; copy in BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 79-82.

³⁹ BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, J.A. Fisher draft reply to Harcourt's Sep 28 letter, Oct 16, 1893; BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, Oct 16, 1893, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer.

⁴⁰ BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, Memorandum, "Lord Brassey's Notes on Admiralty Lists," Oct 16, 1893; Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Oct 29, 1893.

suicidal tactic.⁴¹ What Colomb realized in this debate was that the navy had a choice to lead or follow public opinion:

The public will discuss openly, as in the example of Lord Armstrong, whether the Navy does so or not; but if the Navy fails to descend into the arena, the discussion must be carried on, and resolutions be arrived at, without the complete review which the Navy alone has the power to give.⁴²

To Colomb, who was probably aware of the support within the Admiralty for larger, gun-oriented battleships, the navy had to engage with public opinion and use its credibility to direct the political energy of the naval panic along lines approved by professional experts. Otherwise, public momentum could be shaped by outside influences and drive policies against the will of the professionals.

A key catalyst for the scare was the October 31 letter written by the *Times* correspondent in Toulon, W. Laird Clowes (a popular naval journalist and historian), that compared the inadequate British Mediterranean forces to the highly prepared French fleet at Toulon.⁴³ He estimated the French Mediterranean fleet at eight first-class and five second-class battleships, two first-class and seven small cruisers, and thirty-eight large torpedo boats. On November 6 he wrote again, urging a new shipbuilding programme to secure the command of the Mediterranean.⁴⁴ Hoskins thought that these articles had been “written to order in this case;” preferring that the public should be educated on the multitude of costs that a new shipbuilding programme entailed, such as personnel, infrastructure and administration.⁴⁵ To Charles Dilke, the revelations were so important that he wrote privately to Spencer to confirm the *Times* reports, saying “I rate very highly

⁴¹Late Captain of a Battleship, ‘Lord Armstrong on Rams,’ *Times*, 34082 (Oct 14, 1893), 10.

⁴²P.H. Colomb, ‘Lord Armstrong on Armour and Rams,’ *National Observer*, 10:260 (Nov 11, 1893), 660-1.

⁴³‘Our Special Correspondent,’ ‘Toulon and the French Mediterranean Fleet,’ *Times*, 34096 (Oct 31, 1893), 10.

⁴⁴‘The Strength of the Navy and the Need For a New Programme,’ *Times*, 34101 (Nov 6, 1893), 9.

⁴⁵BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Nov 9, 1893.

their [the French] force of material and men, the strategically efficiency of their admirals, the tactical efficiency of their captains, their artillery and new projectiles, their torpedo craft, and above all their rapidity of mobilization.”⁴⁶ Marder argues that Clowes' articles were the proximate cause of the 1893 scare, but he oversimplifies the process. Clowes' work built on a massive pre-existing discourse on the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean and the scare required the converging belief of various disparate political, professional and public opinions that naval expansion was necessary expenditure, and this process was complex both in chronology and motivation.

Parliamentary discussion turned to naval affairs in the aftermath of Clowes' revelations. Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett questioned the Government about its accuracy, but the Government refused to make impolitic statements about the strength of foreign powers with whom Britain was at peace.⁴⁷ In this case, Kay-Shuttleworth counter-accused that Ashmead-Bartlett was simply trying to embarrass the Administration. The Government's method in November was to deny any naval weakness and prevent Parliamentary discussion on the topic. Gibson Bowles was unconvinced, and on November 7 asked Gladstone to state clearly whether the Government believed the Mediterranean fleet was adequate to maintain British interests; Gladstone responded that “Her Majesty's Government are perfectly satisfied as to the adequacy and capacity of the British Navy to perform all the purposes for which it exists” and insisted that the Estimates would be presented at the proper time by the department, and the Government had no intention of devoting a day to naval discussion.⁴⁸ The Mediterranean, considered in detail below, remained the focal point of naval discussions, both in qualitative and

⁴⁶*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 229, C.W. Dilke to Spencer.

⁴⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 14, 1893), c. 865-6.

⁴⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 7, 1893), c. 348-9.

quantitative aspects. The *Victoria* accident was referenced as part of the immediate weakness of British forces and recurred in Hamilton's criticisms as well as others.

The scare would be a fully self-conscious event. *The Speaker* proudly claimed credit for identifying the scare in its November 4 issue, although it defended the Admiralty's awareness of the situation.⁴⁹ *The Speaker* had been founded in 1890 by the moderate Liberal Wemyss Reid, and like many Liberals he had shifted away from Gladstonian Liberalism towards the pro-navy Liberal Imperialism.⁵⁰ The November 16 issue of *The Star* remarked that “The condition of the Navy is beginning to excite widespread concern.”⁵¹ The November 18 issue of the *Saturday Review* contained an article entitled 'Scares' that explained that “It was inevitable that the late demonstration in Paris and Toulon should be followed by a little crop of scares.”⁵² It reminded readers that “On the Continent, too, there are scares and rumours of scares.” The political effect of this public agitation was obvious. Edward Hamilton noted in his diary that “Lord Spencer will have his work cut out for him... he will have no easy task in steering between Scylla (the British public or sector of it) and Charybdis (an impoverished Exchequer).”⁵³

By November concerns had mounted, and Rosebery was fully convinced of the possibility of war. Campbell-Bannerman was not so certain, but was willing to increase the Malta garrison if the Joint Committee recommended it.⁵⁴ Rosebery believed that “we are approaching a grave juncture in Mediterranean affairs,” and a strong position in the Mediterranean was urgently needed.⁵⁵ Although Spencer assured him that European

⁴⁹“The Navy,” *Speaker*, 8 (Nov 11, 1893), 515-6.

⁵⁰Sir Wemyss Reid Obituary, *Times*, 37641 (Feb 29, 1905), 4.

⁵¹“Our Navy,” *The Star*, 137 (Nov 16, 1893), 1.

⁵²“Scares,” *Saturday Review*, 76:1986 (Nov 18, 1893), 563.

⁵³*Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Nov 6, 1893.

⁵⁴NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10002, H. Campbell-Bannerman to Rosebery, Secret, Aug 22, 1893.

⁵⁵NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10002, Aug 26, Sep 1, Sep 2, Rosebery and Campbell-Bannerman

countries were not foolish enough to desire a war, Rosebery begged Spencer to “keep your Mediterranean fleet as strong as possible.”⁵⁶ With this kind of concern among key members of the Government, it was not surprising that the press and navalist writers would seize the opportunity to increase their agitation.

Since Lord George Hamilton had such recent expertise in naval matters, and the popularity of having initiated the NDA, he took a leading role in the pro-navy pressure that was being directed against the Government. At the Harrow Constitutional Club in November, Hamilton spoke on the importance of the fleet to all levels of society, through the food and raw materials that were imported and the overseas trade that sold finished products. For this reason, he claimed that the Conservative Government had always intended to follow the NDA with a new programme of construction to match fresh foreign building, and that the Liberal Government had ignored this programme. He blamed Gladstone specifically for starving the navy, and announced (in a striking, but not unpredictable parallel to the ideas of naval officers and the Admiralty) that “unless we made immediate and determined efforts — although our supremacy would be maintained during next year — in subsequent years, we undoubtedly... should be at a disadvantage.”⁵⁷ Hamilton's sense of urgency was given greater credibility by the slow start that had been made on the previous year's warships, and the lack of a Supplementary Estimate to replace the *Victoria*.⁵⁸

correspondence; Gordon, *Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 227, Sep 5, 1893, Campbell-Bannerman to Spencer.

⁵⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77376, Rosebery to Spencer, Secret, Oct 17, 1893; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 113-4, Rosebery Papers, Oct 14, 1893, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer.

⁵⁷“Lord George Hamilton on the Navy,” *Standard*, 21641 (Nov 13, 1893), 3.

⁵⁸See Arnold-Forster's question in UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:16 (Aug 28, 1893), c. 1227-46.

Wider press discourses mirrored these arguments. Colomb went even further, and in a letter to the *Times* argued that the navy needed to be strong enough to blockade the next two largest powers, which the *Saturday Review* estimated at double the combined French and Russian totals.⁵⁹ The *Saturday Review* reminded its readers, however, that additional ships would entail unavoidable future costs, particularly for personnel.⁶⁰ C.N. Robinson, the editor of the *Army and Navy Gazette*, approved of Colomb's basic point, that a "small margin of superiority is worse than useless," although the *Times* declined to publish his response letter.⁶¹

In the new public climate, Hamilton felt empowered to press the Government for action. Less than a week after his speech, he asked Gladstone for a clear statement of the "scope and cost of the new programme, so that the House may have an opportunity afforded it of expressing an opinion upon such proposals before they are finally settled and embodied in the Estimates of 1894–5?"⁶² He pointed out that Gladstone had set a precedent for this in 1884, since the normal Parliamentary procedure meant the House could only approve or disapprove of proposals without the ability to discuss the actual policy measure. Gladstone refused to interfere with normal procedure, claiming it reduced the proper responsibility of the Government for policy-making, while in 1884 extraordinary measures had been justified by "an apprehension, whether justified or not, in the public mind." Parliamentary critics were unsatisfied and suggested that delays in

⁵⁹P.H. Colomb, "To the Editor of the Times," *Times*, 34111 (Nov 17, 1893), 8.

⁶⁰"Scares," *Saturday Review*, 76:1986 (Nov 18, 1893), 563.

⁶¹McGill, Bellairs Papers, MS 639/1, C.N. Robinson to C. Bellairs, Nov 20, 1893.

⁶²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 17, 1893), c. 1150-1.

presenting a new programme were creating a period of relative weakness, although Gladstone insisted that the new programme would proceed smoothly and continuously.⁶³

Under questioning, Gladstone was forced to admit that normal procedure meant that no “Member [could] propose an increase in the Estimates after they are produced...” a point that Dilke made privately to Spencer.⁶⁴ Spencer agreed in principle, but suggested that in the present condition, such a discussion might do more harm than good.⁶⁵ Spencer was well aware of the public concerns, and was basing his opinion on the current state of the agitation, but Gladstone does not seem to have appreciated the growing power of navalists outside of Parliament. To these people, claims of Parliamentary procedure or the technical details of ministerial responsibility would have little weight against the perceived national interest. There was serious discontent among both Liberal and Conservative MPs over the lack of Parliamentary, rather than ministerial, input in creating naval policy, which was further bolstered by previous years of criticism over the administrative structure of the Admiralty. Administrative issues were not a major part of the 1893 scare, but the navalist public was still not fully confident in the civilian political leadership at the Admiralty.

Hamilton took his arguments to the public in December through the “well-known periodical” the *National Review*, arguing for a naval increase to maintain the Two-Power Standard.⁶⁶ Stead's *Review of Reviews* called Hamilton's piece a non-partisan assessment, and blamed the severity of the naval peril on the combination of the “ignorance or indifference of the public, combined with the delays consequent on change of

⁶³UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 24, 1893), c. 1704-5.

⁶⁴Gordon, *Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 229, C.W. Dilke to Spencer, Nov 17, 1893.

⁶⁵Gordon, *Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 229, Spencer to C.W. Dilke, Nov 19, 1893.

⁶⁶Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, II, 222.

Administration and the Coal War...”⁶⁷ *The Speaker*, on the other hand, thought the piece was rife with partisanship. The charges of inconsistency that Hamilton laid against the Government were no different than his own about-face in 1888 over the NDA, the article explained, and there had been no intention for a second Act that Hamilton now claimed had existed.⁶⁸ Even then, the press was criticizing Hamilton's personal consistency, not resisting renewed efforts to ensure future naval supremacy.

The periodical press was not dominated by die-hard alarmists, but by reasoned articles that attempted to balance strategy, finance and politics. *The National Observer*, along with other periodicals, felt that British warship construction had not kept pace with the numerous warships laid down abroad.⁶⁹ It made the interesting point that the real conditions of naval warfare were unknown, and since there was no reason to expect Britain to have more naval geniuses than other nations, the only guaranteed security was in quantitative superiority. It suggested that Gladstone could acquiesce gracefully and make a new programme through an Act, or in the yearly budgets, and suffer no political repercussions for satisfying public demands. *The Economist* took a financial perspective, mirrored in *The Speaker*, noting critically that the previous Government had created £5,000,000 in debt for the NDA and IDA based on the promise that it was a one-time effort, but current conditions showed that it had not kept pace with actual needs or the growth in foreign expenditure.⁷⁰ It was a direct attack on the hypocrisy of the Unionist opposition for not fully funding their programme out of ordinary revenue and were now

⁶⁷“Are We to Lose Command of the Sea,” *Review of Reviews*, (Dec 1893), 608.

⁶⁸“The Need for Increasing the Navy,” *The Speaker*, 8:206 (Dec 9, 1893), 629-30.

⁶⁹“We’ve Got the Ships?,” *National Observer*, 11:262 (Nov 25, 1893), 30-1; see also “The Navy Scare,” *Saturday Review*, 76:1987 (Nov 25, 1893), 591-2.

⁷⁰“Naval Defence Finance,” *Economist*, 2622 (Nov 25, 1893), 1397; “The Need for Increasing the Navy,” *The Speaker*, Dec 9, 1893, 629-30.

claiming that they had always envisioned a successive programme. These journals concluded that the Liberals would be justified in shifting outstanding NDA sums to the national debt in order to craft their own construction plans.

Simultaneously to the public debates, the Admiralty Board had formulated their own proposals, which were doubtless influenced by their awareness of the popularity of the navy. Kay-Shuttleworth warned Spencer on November 18 that the Naval Lords were contemplating something like £22,000,000 over four years, slightly more than the NDA, although it could probably be stretched over five years. He suggested that Spencer decide what programme he would be willing to provisionally approve so that planning could begin immediately.⁷¹ Three days later a meeting at the Admiralty decided on a two-fold proposal, the 'minimum' and the 'desirable' programme. The first was seven first-class battleships, 30 cruisers, 80 destroyers and 30 first-class torpedo boats, costing in total £23,225,000, while the second would add three more battleships and twelve cruisers for a total cost of £30,095,000. The Naval Lords probably realized that by crafting the programme in this manner, it would highlight the dichotomy between what they believed was necessary to achieve a margin of superiority (the 'desirable') and what the Government could be made to pay for (the 'minimum'). By setting up the 'minimum' programme as the bare essentials, it would be harder for the Treasury to trim.

On December 8 the *Programme of New Construction, 1894–95 to 1898–99* was produced by the Admiralty, laying out the 'minimum' programme of £25,500,000 over five years, noting with pride that all of the money except £4,000,000 for dockyard labour would be spent in private industry.⁷² All the battleships and would be laid down in the

⁷¹*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 229, U. Kay-Shuttleworth to Spencer, Nov 18, 1893.

⁷²NCCO, Cabinet Documents, CAB/37/34/57 1893, *Programme of New Construction: 1894–95 to 1898–*

first year, and 42 destroyers completed by the end of 1894–95, while Admiral Richards and Kerr agreed that cruisers would be constructed later in the programme.⁷³ This was strictly confidential, and was not officially disseminated to satisfy the country that the Government was dealing with the situation. Thus, the public agitation did not abate even though the Admiralty was following the same path.

The combination of public and internal pressure for naval expenditure infuriated the Harcourt and invigorated his struggle with Spencer, which is explored in greater detail below. In spite of the Naval Lords' complete rejection of Harcourt's assessment of the state of the navy, he still wrote to Spencer,

I do not consider the Admiralty are acting fairly towards the country in allowing panic to be created with reference to the condition of our Naval Defence by false statements circulated by persons interested in getting up a scare without any official statement of the true facts of the case...⁷⁴

This uncompromising stance mimicked Gladstone's own resistance, making the crux of the navy scare the breaking of Gladstone by the Liberal Party itself, rather than a Liberal-Conservative conflict. In the previous year, an accommodation had been reached, but there would not be an amicable solution in this round.

At this point, the only programme that the public and non-ministerial MPs were aware of was the current 1893–94 Navy Estimates, which consisted of two battleships, four cruisers, as well as sloops and destroyers. The Government was subjected to criticism over the amount of work that had been done on these ships, Arnold-Forster in particular was concerned with what he felt, and the Admiralty denied, was unsatisfactory

99, Dec 8, 1893, Strictly Confidential. W.H. White.

⁷³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, J.A. Fisher to Spencer, Dec 19, 1893. Private. Fisher was always willing to be the confidential informant to anyone who would listen, but there is little indication that his advice was specifically requested, although he probably would have saved such gratifying letters.

⁷⁴BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 97-8, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 9, 1893.

progress on the six large ships.⁷⁵ With no information forthcoming, Lord George

Hamilton moved in the Commons on December 12,

That, in the opinion of this House, it is necessary, for the maintenance and security of this country and the continued protection of British interests and commerce, that considerable addition should at once be made to the Navy; this House, therefore, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make before the Christmas Recess a statement of their intentions, in order that immediate action may be taken thereon.⁷⁶

Hamilton claimed that he intended to question Gladstone about the Government's naval policy, but moved the motion in his absence. Gladstone may have missed the debates intentionally, or simply not realized the importance in relation to other issues.

Hamilton's motion was further reinforced by a large and enthusiastic, but non-partisan, meeting of the LCC under A.K. Rollit, which passed an unopposed resolution,

That this meeting views with deep concern and anxiety the present state of our Navy, and urgently presses upon the Government the necessity of taking immediate steps to provide such additional means of defence as shall afford that security which our Empire and our commerce demand.⁷⁷

More importantly, the meeting also passed a motion stating the willingness of the commercial community to support the financial provision for a new shipbuilding act.

Gladstone was immediately planning on treating the motion as a Vote of Censure and an attempt to remove responsibility from the Ministers of the Crown.⁷⁸ Harcourt was in full support of this course, and recommended that the question of expenditure be kept from discussion “either in the Cabinet or in the House of Commons.”⁷⁹ Harcourt was

⁷⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 8, 1893), c. 813-4; (Dec 11, 1893), c. 1048-9.

⁷⁶*Hansard*, 4:19, Commons, Dec 12, 1893, c. 1170.

⁷⁷reported in Eardley-Wilmot, “The Agitation for the Increase of the Navy in 1893,” *Naval Annual*, (1894), 153.

⁷⁸First mentioned in Parliament, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 14, 1893), c. 1382.

⁷⁹Emphasis in original copy kept by Harcourt. BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 13, ff. 219-20, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Secret, Dec 13, 1893.

willing at this point to “throw up the cards” and test whether the party rank-and-file would follow Gladstone. Robertson considered that in response to the motion,

We can... refuse to have a policy forced upon us by the Opposition; we can refuse to declare our policy in an unusual way and at an inclement time at their dictation. But in an equally peremptory way we should repudiate the insinuation that we are not alive to the utmost necessities of the situation.⁸⁰

His position reflected the views of other Ministers, like Spencer and Rosebery, who concurred with the basic points of Hamilton, although not his partisan motives. Gladstone was out of step with party feeling.

The Cabinet met on December 14 and 18, and was also faced with an alarmist letter from the Queen on the military and naval situation. Gladstone observed that “economy appeared to be not dying but dead,” and admitted to his confidant John Morley that Spencer's proposals, “indicate another of these irrational and discreditable panics which generate one another & to which Spencer will probably feel himself obliged to bow; or will think himself so.”⁸¹ Much to Spencer's concern, Gladstone refused to commit himself to the Admiralty proposal, and would reserve his 'liberty of action.' Spencer acquiesced, much to the disappointment of Robertson.⁸² Morley appears to have tried to moderate Gladstone's attitude, telling him that there may be a valid case for naval increase, and suggested that Spencer's position was a natural tendency of a First Lord of the Admiralty.⁸³ That such a close ally as Morley was acting as a voice of reason shows how far out of step Gladstone had become with his colleagues. Gladstone was forced to take a personal role in the conflict between Harcourt and Spencer, dealt with in more

⁸⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77380, E. Robertson to Spencer, Dec 12, 1893.

⁸¹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 166, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Dec 14, 1893. Also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

⁸²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77380, E. Robertson to Spencer, Dec 18, 1893.

⁸³BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44527, f. 137, J. Morley to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 17, 1893. Also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

detail below, but for all his efforts could not sway the Admiralty position or Spencer's resolve, or add anything new to Harcourt's arguments.

Gladstone took Harcourt's advice on Parliamentary strategy, and moved an amendment on December 14 that focused on the responsibility of government ministers, stating "It is a primary duty of the responsible Ministers of the Crown to make adequate provision for the naval defence of the Empire and the protection of its interests; and this House relies on Her Majesty's advisers to submit to Parliament definite proposals in due time and measure to secure that end."⁸⁴ As he became more personally involved in the 1893 Navy Scare, Gladstone met resistance from Spencer and the Admirals who were not falling into line behind Harcourt's interpretation of the state of the navy. After Gladstone admitted that "there is more folly in the world *re* Naval scares than I had given it credit for," Rosebery suggested to Gladstone that if he was "prepared to fall in with the general anxiety for the increase of our fleet" then he should make it very clear in his Parliamentary response to Hamilton's motion. He also opined that expenditure now might save even greater expenditure by preventing Continental delusions of defeating Britain at sea and thus preventing war.⁸⁵ Robertson seemed surprised that Spencer was not going to insist on Gladstone including a statement of policy, observing pointedly that he had received no instructions to draw up the necessary statement.⁸⁶

Hamilton made another incendiary speech in Parliament during the debate on his motion on December 19, which was partly intended to defend his actions in writing publicly to the *National Review* and driving the agitation. He focused entirely on

⁸⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 14, 1893), c. 1382.

⁸⁵NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10027, ff. 97-8, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Dec 18, 1893; MS 10027, ff. 99-100, Confidential, Rosebery to W.E. Gladstone, copy, Dec 18, 1893.

⁸⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77380, E. Robertson to Spencer, Dec 18, 1893.

quantitative issues, claiming that qualitatively the ships and men were satisfactory, and noted that prices for shipbuilding were temporarily low, so a programme should be declared and initiated without delay.⁸⁷ Hamilton insisted that the Conservative Government had not intended for the NDA to be the final measure, and in order to match foreign efforts the mechanism of an Act of Parliament would be an effective tool. Arthur Balfour and Forwood supported Hamilton, arguing that the real question was the situation in 1896, and it was necessary to make immediate efforts to prevent future inferiority. Dilke, supported by Joseph Chamberlain, focused on the inferiority of the British Mediterranean fleet compared to the French forces in that sea, especially in light of the 5:3 ratio for blockading. Rollit also spoke on behalf of the Chambers of Commerce insisting that trade could not simply transfer to neutral flags or abandon the Mediterranean route.

On behalf of the Government, U. Kay-Shuttleworth explained that delays were inevitable after the *Victoria* disaster and were partly inherited, but battleships were being pressed forward and a new shipbuilding programme was being contemplated before the recent scare, not in consequence of it. Harcourt's speech proved to be the most controversial. He described how he had met with naval advisers on the topic of comparative naval strength and had arrived at fourteen French and Russian battleships against nineteen British in European waters. This meant that the scare was based on a total misunderstanding of the naval situation, and that the Government was perfectly capable of maintaining naval supremacy. Harcourt's speech was extremely controversial,

⁸⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 19, 1893), c. 1771-8; also summarized in Eardley-Wilmot, "The Agitation for the Increase of the Navy," *Naval Annual*, 1894.

and triggered a heavy-handed response from the Naval Lords, who objected to being quoted as satisfied with the condition of the navy.⁸⁸

Gladstone's speech took the approach of distinguishing the current situation from his precedent of 1884, denying that there was any danger since the navy had superiority in battleships and assuring the House that the Government would continue responsible shipbuilding.⁸⁹ His, as planned, treated the motion as a Vote of Censure, and defeated it with a small majority of thirty-six. Nevertheless, he pessimistically noted afterwards that "The situation [is] almost hopeless when a large minority allows itself to panic and joining hands with the professional elements works on the susceptibilities of a portion of the people to alarm."⁹⁰ He was right that naval panic had not consumed the entire nation, and that a full scare had taken the cooperation of civil and naval activists, but he underestimated its extent and credibility.

The December 19 speeches were hotly debated. Beresford thought the majority of the speeches, except for Dilke and Chamberlain, were focused on "the mean, contemptible, and egotistical narrow circle of party argument," and was particularly critical of Hamilton's "weak, pointless, and evidently unprepared" speech.⁹¹ To Beresford it was proof that the methods of direct assault against the Government, such as that employed by Hamilton, deflected attention from naval security to a partisan conflict. Rosebery thought that Gladstone's methods were "admirable perhaps from the point of view of House of Commons tactics, but ambiguous, obscure, and therefore disastrous..."

⁸⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 19, 1893), c. 1853-63 for Kay-Shuttleworth; c. 1877-84 for Harcourt.

⁸⁹ UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 19, 1893), c. 1789-803.

⁹⁰*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Dec 19, 1893.

⁹¹BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 140-5, C. Beresford to C.W. Dilke, Dec 22, 1893.

both for the peace of Europe and naval policy.⁹² Spencer agreed, since Gladstone “fell into arguments which I implored him not to touch and I thought the key note of what he was saying was not in tune with the feeling of the House, or with the views which you [Rosebery] and I hold about the future of the Navy.”⁹³ Rosebery pressed Gladstone to make a declaration of naval policy regardless of the defeat of the motion, but Gladstone thought that such a move would reignite the public controversy that he claimed “we rolled up with great labour.”⁹⁴ Rosebery continued to press Gladstone, believing strongly that the only means of ensuring peace was to make clear to foreign powers Britain's determination to remain supreme at sea.⁹⁵ Gladstone may have believed that his Parliamentary defence was a good decision politically, but it did not satisfy his colleagues' concerns about national defence and led to a growing rift between Gladstone and the Liberal Party.

Gladstone's distance from his colleagues is perhaps most evident in Rosebery's efforts to build a consensus between the War Office, Foreign Office and Admiralty through the creation of a Committee of the Cabinet on imperial defence.⁹⁶ It was not likely a coincidence that the Treasury was excluded from a group intended to coordinate between government agencies and the Services. Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman were not particularly enthusiastic about increasing the scope of the current Defence Committee, but agreed that a direct meeting between the department heads would be

⁹²*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 232-3, Rosebery to Spencer, secret, Dec 20, 1893.

⁹³NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 130-1, Spencer to Rosebery, secret, Dec 20, 1893.

⁹⁴NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10027, ff. 102-4, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Dec 21, 1893.

⁹⁵See NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10027, ff. 116-8, Rosebery to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 28, 1893.

⁹⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77376, Rosebery to Spencer, Dec 19, 1893.

beneficial in settling the issue as soon as possible.⁹⁷ Parliamentary pressure continued, most intently on the issue of the Mediterranean, which is dealt with below.

Another Cabinet meeting on December 27 dealt with what Gladstone now acknowledged as “the great admiralty scare.”⁹⁸ Gladstone was mainly concerned with his own political consistency; because he had already denied the need for a new naval programme he was hesitant to adopt an even stronger scheme only a month later.⁹⁹ Spencer’s statements prioritized the seven first-class battleships, but when Harcourt criticized this Spencer lashed back that “I was fully prepared to tell you my story, but whenever I attempted to do so, you checked or stopped me, or you only accepted information in your own favour, and did not let me unfold what I wished as to cruisers or torpedo-boat destroyers.”¹⁰⁰ Harcourt fixated on the maximum programme, but Spencer reminded him that it was the minimum programme that had his support and was acceptable to the Admirals.¹⁰¹ There was some confusion over the figures, which is dealt in more detail with Gladstone’s resignation below.

After the naval debate on December 19 had been diverted into partisan politics, Dilke repeated his 1889 method of a non-partisan essay sent directly to leading political leaders, with the cooperation of fellow MPs General George Chesney and H.O. Arnold-Forster, as well as the scholar Spenser Wilkinson. They carefully composed the letter in late December and January and sent it on February 12 to the major political leaders, Gladstone, Salisbury, Balfour, Devonshire and Chamberlain, and to the Prince of Wales

⁹⁷NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 130-1, Spencer to Rosebery, Secret, Dec 20, 1893; MS 10062, H. Campbell-Bannerman to Rosebery, Dec 20, 1893.

⁹⁸*Diary of William Gladstone*, Dec 27, 1893.

⁹⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 170, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Dec 28, 1893, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

¹⁰⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 46, ff. 138-45, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 28, 1893.

¹⁰¹*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 233, excerpt from the *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Dec 28, 1893.

hoping that it would reach the Queen. They set out a plan for reforming the governance of the armed forces in light of the “wide-spread uneasiness with regard to the defences of the Empire.”¹⁰² They argued that a single professional head for the combined services would be more responsible, efficient and economical, whether this was done through a Ministry of Defence, the direct oversight of the Prime Minister or even Balfour's concept of a Defence Committee of the Cabinet. They claimed that Parliamentary authority over expenditure would be unimpaired, in fact it would be improved by clear and direct advice to Parliament, while the professional head could resign if his advice was ignored. Mainly, they argued that the armed forces needed to be treated in a non-partisan, nationalist perspective, because war required careful forethought and consistent planning.¹⁰³ The letter clearly demonstrates the primacy of blue-water thinking, where the overall balance of expenditure is interpreted as too weighted to the army when the navy should take primacy in expenditure. The letter and replies were published on February 28, although Gladstone referred the matter to colleagues rather than troubling himself, claiming poor eyesight.¹⁰⁴ The one figure that needed convincing was not listening, and the rest of the party was already on board with naval expansion.

Gladstone's preoccupation with the navy question continued to increase in 1894. His methods, dealt with in detail with the account of his resignation below, focused on the financial aspects of the question in isolation, without regard to analyses of the state of

¹⁰²BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43945, ff. 16-7, Draft letter, Feb 12, 1894.

¹⁰³This position was developed after lengthy correspondence, although its main points remained consistent. There is a copy of the letter in NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, Letter by C.W. Dilke, G. Chesney, H.O. Arnold-Forster, and S. Wilkinson, [late Dec 1893]. For the authors' private discussion and development of the letter see, BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 148-9, C.W. Dilke to S. Wilkinson, confidential, Jan 5, 1894; Add MS 43915, ff. 150-1, G. Chesney to C.W. Dilke, Jan 9, 1894; Add MS 43915, ff. 16-29, Draft Letter, Feb 12, 1894.

¹⁰⁴BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 43875, f. 297, W.E. Gladstone to C.W. Dilke, Mar 1, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

the navy or its strength relative to other powers. He assumed Harcourt's arguments even as Harcourt was becoming less combative and more compromising. At the same time, Harcourt quickly abandoned Gladstone. He hit upon revising the Death Duties to provide the money for both the residual NDA payments and the minimum programme proposed by the Admiralty. Gladstone scabbled to find some sort of compromise position, but the Cabinet and Admiralty were unwilling to negotiate. The Cabinet meeting on January 9, examined below, was the decisive defeat of Gladstone, clearly revealing that he had lost the support of his party. Gladstone would delay the inevitable for two months, but he could not concede the Admiralty demands and without conceding he could not remain as leader of the party. To his credit, he retired on the excuse of old age and poor health, rather than attempting a new political crusade that might split the party.

In Parliament arguments were tailored to meet the anticipated resistance of leading Liberals on the financial viability of a new construction programme. Major Jones, MP for Carmarthen, stated in Parliament that with the current industrial depression it would be cheaper to order warships, and that there was a strategic benefit to giving the workers at private shipyards experience in constructing warships.¹⁰⁵ Kay-Shuttleworth could not give the details of the distribution of work, but agreed that the principle of dividing work between public and private yards was valid. Pressed further, Kay-Shuttleworth explained the next day that gun contracts were being placed to ensure there would be no delays in arming new ships, and that tenders for large warship contracts were restricted to firms that were known to be capable of the work.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:20 (Jan 10, 1894), c. 1245-6.

¹⁰⁶UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:20 (Jan 11, 1894), c. 1320, 1328-9.

January 1894 was a momentous time for public clamour. Newspapers were rife with speculation about the new naval programme, and maintained the momentum of the agitation by insisting on more stringent definitions of the Two-Power Standard. The *Daily News* published a pilot balloon on January 15, describing a programme of four first- and four second-class battleships, eight first-class cruisers and assorted destroyers, torpedo boats and torpedo-gunboats.¹⁰⁷ Published in a Liberal paper, the article insisted that the previous month's alarm was unjustified and that the Liberal government had already contemplated effective measures along the lines demanded by the Admiralty. It accused the alarmists of exacerbating foreign fears of British naval armaments and driving the arms race. In spite of its strong language, this was not a scale of armaments suited to the perceived needs of naval officers and navalist agitators alike, nor was it presented with sufficient rapidity to influence the course of the public discussion.

In 1894, *Blackwood's* returned to the insufficiency of the Two-Power Standard, instead preferring a force level measured against the requirements of protecting trade.¹⁰⁸ Naturally, battleships were required to support the cruisers, and the article concluded that the most effective form of commerce defence was the blockade of enemy raiders in port. Manoeuvres had shown that technological innovation had favoured the blockaded, so the blockaders would require larger fleets than a Two-Power Standard could provide. *Blackwoods* put its faith in the growing popularity of the navy to force the Government to obey the recommendations of its professional advisers rather than the Treasury.

Public opinion made itself felt through other avenues. In one instance, the Leith Chamber of Commerce wrote directly to Gladstone, "praying for more naval

¹⁰⁷“The Government and the Navy,” *Daily News*, 14911 (Jan 15, 1894), n.p.

¹⁰⁸“The Navy and Its Duties,” *Blackwood's*, 155:941 (Mar 1894), 427-37.

armaments.”¹⁰⁹ They were not the only commercial association to support naval expansion. The *Saturday Review* pointed to the political significance “that a body of men of business should be found urging Ministers to spend money on warlike preparations.”¹¹⁰ It denied that there was any real public fear over the state of the navy, arguing that the scare was mainly “of the newspaper kind.” Perhaps this was true, but it was the authors who wrote to the press, using their professional authority and convincing discourse to claim to speak on behalf of the public, who provided the political energy that allowed part of the Government to act on its convictions.

The Queen turned to Rosebery to form a government after the long-delayed resignation of Gladstone. This gave hope to Unionists that Rosebery's leadership might signal an alignment of Liberal domestic policy along the lines favoured by Unionists, as he had already done for foreign policy.¹¹¹ Liberals were themselves hopeful that Rosebery's leadership would heal the schism between the majority of the party and the Liberal Imperialists.¹¹² One of its first tasks was the passing of the Navy Estimates. On March 8 the Cabinet chose to proceed with the Estimates that Spencer had framed on January 1, along the lines the 'minimum' programme of the Admirals.¹¹³ Ten cruisers might be reduced in the future, thus leaving an increase of £3,126,000 over the Estimates of 1893–94. Rosebery did prefer to omit any mention that the Estimates were framed along a definitive multi-year programme; Spencer maintained it was the accurate

¹⁰⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 188, W.E. Gladstone to Sir J.W. Pease, Feb 16, 1894.

¹¹⁰“The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 77:2003 (Mar 17, 1894), 277-8.

¹¹¹NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10092, ff. 37-9, G. Buckle to Rosebery, Mar 4, 1894.

¹¹²NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10092, ff. 120-1, Brassey to Rosebery, Mar 11, 1894.

¹¹³NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, ff. 111-2, Rosebery's Cabinet Notes, Mar 8, 1894.

description and should be included, but Rosebery carried his point.¹¹⁴ Spencer announced the new programme at a dinner of the Institution of Naval Architects.

The Navy Estimates provided for five first-class battleships to be laid down in 1894–95, with two more in the following year, all to be completed in 1899 before France and Russia completed their programmes. Debate continued on personnel and material issues, for instance on the wisdom of investing substantial resources in large ships, which the Admiralty considered to be necessary for both speed and range.¹¹⁵ Significant debate in March focused on the consequences of the *Victoria* disaster, and the questions that it raised about ship design, particularly the value of rams since the *Collingwood* was also severely damaged.¹¹⁶ Parliamentary debates on the Estimates were surprisingly limited; doubtless many criticisms were forestalled by the impressive government response to the scare. Sir William Cremer did register his opposition, claiming that “increased expenditure was objected to by a large section of the people of this country,” citing working-men’s petitions.¹¹⁷ In spite of Sir R. Temple’s frequent laughter, Cremer denied there was any real threat and described the scare as a construction of writers in periodicals that was then taken up by newspapers and party organs, giving the semblance of public opinion without being truly representative. Harcourt defended the Government, rejecting Cremer’s claims that European Powers were amenable to disarmament, insisting

¹¹⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77376, Spencer Memorandum, Mar 8, 1894; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, f. 152, Spencer to Rosebery, Mar 8, 1894.

¹¹⁵Referred to in “The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 17:2003 (Mar 17, 1894), 277-8.

¹¹⁶See the debates on the *Victoria*, UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:22 (Mar 20, 1894), c. 703-25. Sir E. Harland and Sir E.J. Reed had a long discussion about rams and watertight compartments, with the latter defending the Admiralty against Harland’s easy comparisons between mercantile and warship design and construction.

¹¹⁷UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:22 (Mar 20, 1894), c. 731-7.

that naval forces were inherently defensive and arguing that large forces were necessary to ensure Britain's isolation from Continental entanglements.¹¹⁸

Rosebery's Government was not long-lived. It did not take long for Harcourt, who was leading the party in the Commons, to clash with Rosebery. After Rosebery and Kimberley, the Foreign Minister, signed a secret treaty with the King of Belgium over African territories, without consulting Harcourt or the Cabinet, the Government fragmented. The fall of Rosebery was a shock to many people, and he remained on the outskirts of Liberal politics for the remainder of his career.

The 1893 Navy Scare was powerful enough to create a major fleet expansion programme, which was passed in its entirety against serious political resistance from some of the most important and powerful Liberal politicians of the nineteenth century. The public agitation provided the necessary backdrop to convince the Admiralty that a strong stance would achieve necessary ends, and to convince politicians that there would be benefits instead of undesirable consequences to supporting naval expenditure.

Brassey's *Naval Annual* for 1894 was compiled with the events and concerns of the recent naval scare in mind, such as the quantity and quality of personnel, the strategic position in the Mediterranean, French naval power, and the value of convoys. Chapter eight, by Captain Sidney Eardley-Wilmot, examined in detail "The Agitation in 1893 for the Increase of the Navy." He explained that the scare was the natural result of rising public interest in the navy revealing significant deficiencies that had resulted from long periods of political neglect coupled with foreign efforts matching the naval programmes of 1885 and 1888. Eardley-Wilmot offered his own opinion on several integral issues,

¹¹⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:22 (Mar 20, 1894), c. 737-40. In the same debate Arthur Forwood continued to press for greater measures to ensure naval security, using the logic of national insurance (c. 744-9).

including favoring moderate sized battleships and for the consideration of French second-class battleships in comparative statistics. In concluding his analysis, Eardley-Wilmot suggested that the scare “was not produced by any immediate prospect of peace being disturbed, but simply by a feeling that if an effort was not made our naval position would be imperilled.... The Administration should be grateful for such support.”¹¹⁹ The *Naval Annual*'s content shows how much conscious effort had gone into the succession of arguments and the multiplicity of avenues pursued by agitators.

In light of the growing self-consciousness of navalist agitators in the usefulness and political weight of the succession of naval scares, proposals were made to regularize the agitation into a consistent educational and electoral force. The Navy League was first proposed in January 1894 and held its first meeting before the end of the year, although it would be substantially reconstituted in 1895 before beginning a vigorous period of publication and naval advertising.

The Mediterranean as the Two-Power Standard Test Case

The Mediterranean emphasis, readily apparent in 1890–91 as well as earlier, was the result of the force concentrations of Britain's main rival, France, in that sea. Overall, it offers some interesting insights into the thinking of British navalists. Their first concern was the aggregate numbers of ships in commission and in reserve for all major naval powers. Beyond this, they had to start engaging with the practical realities of strategy and tactics. Simply having sufficient forces in existence did not place them in the decisive theatre at the moment of decisive battle. Thinkers had to move beyond the 'big picture' to

¹¹⁹S. Eardley-Wilmot, “The Agitation in 1893 for the Increase of the Navy,” *Naval Annual*, (1894), 162-3.

engage with the actual requirements of war — how to position, support and reinforce the necessary forces to *ensure* victory. Forces could not be instantaneously increased or redeployed after war was declared, which would leave the Mediterranean Fleet to face a coordinated Franco-Russian attack with only the forces on hand.¹²⁰ This combination would lead to a heated debate on the Two-Power Standard and 5:3 ratio and how these applied to force levels. Critical questions of the definition of the standard included whether it meant bare numerical equality with the next two powers, did it apply to each station or region in isolation and did it include the margin necessary for victory and what would this margin be? Thus, the Mediterranean became a testing ground for the examination of the reality of Britain's war preparations, although the discussion of aggregate force comparisons never disappeared.

The November 1893 *Pall Mall Gazette* struck at the heart of the debate, explaining to its readers that the difficulty lay in balancing the two equally valid perspectives of overall British naval superiority on the one hand, and its local weakness in the Mediterranean on the other.¹²¹ Navalist thinkers consciously applied the question of the Mediterranean to turn vague theoretical concepts like the Two-Power Standard into quantifiable analysis that non-specialist audiences could digest. James Bruce, a long-term correspondent and ally of Hornby, explained that, “One thing at a time is as much as the public can understand, and if they get down that bolus, it may have such an effect on their 'constitution' that no other medicine may be required, anyhow it will greatly facilitate the

¹²⁰Germany was not seen as particularly threatening, although there was some discussion and political action by Rosebery regarding the wisdom of ceding Heligoland in the North Sea. See NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 12, 1890; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10024, ff. 12-3, Princess of Wales memorandum, Jun 1890; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10024, ff. 3-4, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Jun 19, 1890; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10088, ff. 198-9, Salisbury to Rosebery, Jun 19, 1890.

¹²¹“The Restoration of Our Mediterranean Power,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8949 (Nov 27, 1893), 1-2.

digestion of subsequent doses.”¹²² It seems clear that the Mediterranean dominated the discourse because it was seen as representative of the practical, applicable strength of the navy to the problem of warfare, in a way that paper comparisons of battleships could not replace.

Harcourt represented the opposing viewpoint that emphasized the rejected the primacy of the Mediterranean to the navalist debate, explaining to Spencer,

“A great part of the scare... is due to fixing public attention on the superiority of the French in the Mediterranean totally ignoring the resources of each nation elsewhere. You could easily put an end to this by making the British force at Malta more powerful than that of the French, which you have abundant means to do, and then this silly outcry would be put an end to. I think this would be a good thing to do, though it might cost a little more money but not near as much as a scare.”¹²³

Spencer was unenthusiastic about Harcourt’s interference, telling him politely that temporary public concerns did not warrant creating an international incident, and in any case the forces were not available without full mobilization.¹²⁴ Perhaps Harcourt thought that paper naval forces could be easily redistributed, but as navalists were fond of pointing out, it was the extent of the demands that were being made on the fleet that required naval expansion, not the paper comparisons of strength. Arnold-Forster provided a leading role in Parliament, asking particularly about the claimed 19:10 superiority and forced Harcourt to admit that it applied to the navy as a whole and not to the Mediterranean.¹²⁵ The Mediterranean test case was an effective counter to the complacent assurances that Harcourt presented, because navalists understood that if peacetime naval

¹²²NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, May 25, 1891.

¹²³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 28, 1893. reply Nov 28.

¹²⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Nov 28, 1893.

¹²⁵UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:20 (Dec 22, 1893), c. 210.

supremacy was allowed to decline in a particular region, the ensuing deficiencies could only be rectified at great expense and risk during wartime.

France was the main strategic threat in British planning, as discussed in the introduction, but this was shifting in the early 1890s to become a Two-Power Standard. Navalist thinkers felt that they could not avoid a Two-Power Standard because of Britain's isolation from Continental commitments. Bridge denigrated the frequent tendency to assume that Britain would have allies in a future conflict, and thought that in any case, "who in his senses would trust to them when we are weak enough to be unable to do anything without them?"¹²⁶ Rumours circulated about diplomatic alignments, but these were fodder for partisan politics and were not seriously pursued by either party.¹²⁷ Naval planners considered the possibility of Italian support in the 1880s, but from the 1890s until the Entente Cordiale they assumed that the British Empire would stand alone. In 1887 Salisbury's Administration pursued a set of Mediterranean Agreements with the Triple Alliance, focused on the threat of France and Russia. The French fleet was concentrating in the Mediterranean to meet the growing cooperation between Italy and Germany, increasing to fourteen battleships in 1888 and twenty in 1891.

The emphasis on the threat of France was not solely based on the numerical size of the French fleet. In the Mediterranean British observers were deeply impressed with the quality and depth of French naval forces. James Bruce argued that in this decisive theatre the "number, quality and speed of our respective ships, and the respective

¹²⁶NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Nov 26, 1890.

¹²⁷See for instance the 1891 rumour of a naval commitment to Italy, BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 11, ff. 245-6, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Jul 2, 1891; Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, II, 125-6, W.V. Harcourt to J. Morley, Jul 3, 1891; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10024, ff. 45-6, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Jul 12, 1891; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10024, ff. 47-9, Rosebery to W.E. Gladstone, Jul 16, 1891; BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 11, ff. 253-5, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Jul 21, 1891.

dockyard facilities” of Britain and France were seriously unbalanced in France's favour.¹²⁸ He reckoned nineteen French battleships, but R.N. Custance estimated eleven such ships. Nevertheless, Custance was still concerned because “the number, the power, and the good order and discipline of the French force in the Mediterranean, [mean] there is no doubt that to beat it will tax our powers considerably.”¹²⁹ France was awarded a qualitative edge, and with the consideration of British forces isolated to the Mediterranean, it opened up an avenue for a persistent concern over the ability of Gibraltar and Malta to support the fleet. A prominent idea was that the British infrastructure at Gibraltar and Malta should be on par with the French facilities available in Toulon, in order to support a blockading fleet.¹³⁰

Mediterranean strategy had to take into account the operational separation of the sea into Eastern and Western parts. With the rise of the Russian Black Sea fleet in the late 1880s, discussed previously, a Levant Squadron was formed to provide a naval presence in support of Constantinople in case of surprise Russian attacks or Russian naval forces slipping into the Mediterranean.¹³¹ In 1890 this fleet was an integral part of DNI Bridge's recommended force structure, maintained at a level comparable to the Russian Black Sea Fleet, along with a western fleet stronger than the French fleet at Toulon and sufficient cruisers to protect trade and communications.¹³² This force would blockade French and Russian battle fleets and turn a Mediterranean conflict into a war of cruisers, which

¹²⁸He reckoned nineteen French battleships to fourteen British in the Mediterranean, NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/C/2 pt1, J. Bruce to G.P. Hornby, May 12, 1891.

¹²⁹NMM, Noel Papers, NOE/1/A/5, R.N. Custance to G.H.U. Noel, Aug 24, 1891.

¹³⁰UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 5, 1893), c. 468-9. On this occasion Campbell-Bannerman refused to answer, saying that “public mischief may be done even by putting such question upon the Paper.”

¹³¹NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 20, 1890.

¹³²NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 11, 1890; BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Feb 12, 1890; BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 20, 1890.

Bridge argued were the most urgently needed warship class.¹³³ Since these fleets were not currently able to unite for training and exercises, he stated, the Levant squadron should be considered in addition to the normal Mediterranean fleet, in order to be truly effective.

Over time the vulnerability of the Ottoman Empire to a Russian advance, and the adverse consequences this would have for British Mediterranean security, became even more concerning. In 1892 Salisbury had to tone down his attitude to the Straits question after he realized the gulf that existed between the Foreign Office's policy and the ability of the fleet to support it.¹³⁴ Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour analysed the situation in March 1894 and concluded that the Bosphorus was nearly defenceless and Russia could easily seize the straights and deploy the Black Sea Fleet into the Mediterranean. For this reason, Seymour successfully advocated despatching a Levant squadron whenever the Russian Black Sea Fleet mobilized for exercises, but otherwise the whole Mediterranean fleet would be kept together in order to practice the evolutions and tactics that would be employed in wartime.¹³⁵ At this point the concentration of the French fleet made a united Mediterranean fleet more valuable than the local responsiveness of a dual deployment; by the twentieth century the fleet was a single operational unit.

The purpose of the British Mediterranean Fleet was to blockade the enemy, especially its commerce raiders, in its ports. In late 1881, Captain George Tryon, later the famous Admiral who went down with the *Victoria*, explained to Admiralty Hornby his concerns over French naval superiority in the Mediterranean and the terrible damage that fast French cruisers could inflict on British commerce. Besides these quantitative aspects,

¹³³NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Mar 24, 1890.

¹³⁴Lillian Penson, "Foreign Affairs under the Third Marquis of Salisbury," *The Creighton Lecture in History 1960*, (University of London, 1962), 10.

¹³⁵BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77423, Sir M. Culme-Seymour to Spencer, Mar 31, 1894. Undated memorandum attached.

Tryon emphasized the degree of preparation and organization of the French fleet, as well as its emphasis on long-range gunnery; both of these factors would give the French navy an advantage in fleet actions and commerce raiding.¹³⁶ In his analysis, the French threat was measured by its ability to inflict damage on British shipping, rather than winning the command of the sea. Nevertheless, command of the sea was integral to British strategy. P.H. Colomb's 1889 article series in the popular *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine* used naval history to show that it was the command of the sea that enabled a belligerent to attack commerce, even in its ports, and that it was impossible for the weaker opponent to attack commerce and contest the command of the sea simultaneously.¹³⁷ These lessons, even if debatable, pointed toward the same conclusion one that lies at the heart of Parkinson's historical analysis — that the best shield for Britain's Mediterranean artery was to seal all French forces in Toulon and maintain forces on station that would deter or defeat any French escape attempts.

Maintaining a blockade would not be easy, and that is where the 5:3 ratio lent its weight to the constant increase of the Mediterranean fleet. After E.R. Fremantle's 1889 experience of blockade duty in East Africa, he explained to Admiral R.V. Hamilton that civilians did not appreciate the complex demands of refitting, resting and travelling, all of which meant that a blockading squadron had to be substantially larger than the force blockaded.¹³⁸ In 1892 the British were able to acquire more hands-on experience with the key strategic concept of blockade, when France declared a 'pacific blockade' of Bangkok during the Siamese crisis. Captain MacLeod tried to enter Bangkok, and was refused by

¹³⁶NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/B/1 pt5, Letter from G. Tryon to G.P. Hornby, Dec 5, 1881.

¹³⁷Referenced in "The Magazines," *Army and Navy Gazette*, 30:1546 (Sep 7, 1889), 711.

¹³⁸Ann Parry, Ed., *The Admirals Fremantle*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 233-4; NMM, Fremantle Papers, FRE/137, E.R. Fremantle to R.V. Hamilton, Dec 17, 1889.

the French Admiral who had declared the blockade. Spencer believed that MacLeod acted with weakness, and that the imposition of the blockade was very discourteous, but he agreed with Rosebery that formal diplomatic action was inadvisable because “we must remember on the great question that it is against our interest to narrow the scope or increase the obstacles to blockades.”¹³⁹

The British analysis of the French blockade was deceptive because it suggested that international law and belligerent rights were stable and dependable rules. The closest thing to a legal protection of maritime commerce was the 1856 Declaration of Paris. Gibson Bowles argued that the Declaration should be abrogated, and some types of commerce as well as neutral vessels given absolute protection from capture.¹⁴⁰ This was never going to happen, because it would massively undercut the navy's preferred strategy of offensively blockading the enemy. These episodes concealed the full impact of commerce raiding on merchant shipping and seemingly supported thinkers, like Forwood, who believed that restricting the rights of belligerents to capture neutral shipping would provide effective protection. The navy and its allies would not trust to this method, as Brassey explained, preferring sufficient cruisers to patrol the trade routes based on the length, location and value of the commerce requiring protection.¹⁴¹ With the twin objectives of blockade and patrols, there was always a plausible strategic argument for naval expansion. A blockade that could contain enemy raiders would greatly ease the burden of hunting down raiders.

¹³⁹NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10062, ff. 122-3, Spencer to Rosebery, Nov 13, 1893; BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77376, Rosebery to Spencer, Nov 15, 1893; Add MS 77376, Spencer's memorandum, undated [Nov 15-20].

¹⁴⁰T. Gibson Bowles, “Private Property in War,” *Times*, 32809 (Sep 20, 1889), 6.

¹⁴¹See “Lord Brassey on the Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 71:1847 (Mar 21, 1891), 347.

The RUSI offered its Gold Medal essay prize for 1893 on the topic of blockade. The strategic effectiveness of blockade was still being actively debated, such as the difference between close and distant blockade, as well as the level of force that would be required to implement it effectively. The Mediterranean Fleet thus remained at the core of commerce defence in the public mind, because it was the key fleet blockading the French commerce destroyers and preventing their escape. If the Mediterranean Fleet was strong enough, it would shield the rest of the British Empire. As T.A. Brassey wrote, “Our defence against invasion will rest primarily with the Mediterranean fleet...”¹⁴² This was a blue-water rationale, rejecting the ideas of military home defences that were given prominence in the recent *Battle of Dorking*. To Brassey, “no local defence, whether in fortifications or men, will preserve them to a power which has lost the command of the sea.”¹⁴³ Fortifications were necessary for coaling stations, but only for protecting against single-ship raids — anything else would be a waste.

The Mediterranean situation returned on multiple occasions in the early 1890s, frequently through the personal activism of Beresford, reaching a crescendo that ultimately resulted in the Mediterranean fleet becoming nearly twice as large as the Channel fleet. With the new administration of Hoskins in late 1891, the Mediterranean was again the focus of strategic discussion. Beresford had produced another memorandum that emphasized the capabilities of the French facilities at Toulon and the relative weakness of the Mediterranean fleet. This description formed the basis of Hornby's activism, which may have been exaggerated but was based on the 'impregnable'

¹⁴²T.A. Brassey, “Great Britain as a Sea-Power,” *Nineteenth Century*, 34:197 (Jul 1893), 128.

¹⁴³T.A. Brassey, “Great Britain as a Sea-Power,” *Nineteenth Century*, 34:197 (Jul 1893), 126.

fact that the French were rapidly increasing their Mediterranean strength.¹⁴⁴ Hoskins admitted the Mediterranean was the decisive theatre of war, and that Britain's strategic position was currently very weak. Bridge expected that Hoskins would prevent the further dispersion of the ironclad fleet in order to concentrate to meet this vulnerability.¹⁴⁵ For naval officers, the Mediterranean was the keystone for Britain's command of the sea and they were intent on convincing the Government and the public that the expense of maintaining a large fleet there was strategically justified.

In May and June 1892 Beresford wrote to H.O. Arnold-Forster and Sir Charles Dilke insisting that the Mediterranean fleet was not up to its tasks.¹⁴⁶ He told Arnold-Forster that after his active service was concluded, he would present a complete Policy of Defence to the country "to enable each service to help the other in time of war." He claimed his information validated the Hartington Commission's recommendations, and this vulnerability would be far more costly in wartime than any deficiency in numbers. Beresford reminded Arnold-Forster that while Army reform was important, "no matter how efficient it may be made it has nothing to do with the maintenance of the Empire as a whole, or with the supply of food to our people at Home." Beresford argued that the real problem preventing efficiency and economy was "our system which often compels the two Services to work in totally different directions" when they should be cooperating within an overall framework of defence.

All of these demands meant that the forces available to hold the Mediterranean were redeployed, raising the spectre of dispersed squadrons being defeated in detail. One solution that was propounded in the press, probably as an ironic 'ad absurdum' argument,

¹⁴⁴NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 22, 1891.

¹⁴⁵NMM, Bridge Papers, BRI/18/4, C.A.G. Bridge to R.N. Custance, Oct 31, 1891.

¹⁴⁶BL, Arnold-Forster Papers, Add MS 88953/1/1, C. Beresford to H.O. Arnold-Forster, May 31, 1892.

was to abandon the Mediterranean entirely. Captain Gambier's article, "An Exchange for Gibraltar," argued that the sizable garrisons that would be required in war for Malta, Gibraltar and Egypt would be impossible to despatch, and the Mediterranean Fleet would retreat to Gibraltar to contain the French.¹⁴⁷ He advised selling or exchanging Britain's Mediterranean possessions and strengthening the Cape trade route. W.T. Stead's *Review of Reviews* agreed in principle that the Mediterranean route would be too dangerous for trade in wartime, but argued that Britain could not exit the region without precipitating a war.¹⁴⁸ Thinkers realized that the strategic importance of the Mediterranean was multi-faceted, and simplistically re-routing trade in wartime was not a catch-all solution to escape the necessity of controlling the sea.

Spencer, in common with his Unionist predecessors, took a serious interest in naval strategy, much to the delight of his professional advisers. Strategy was becoming more established — when Hoskins was relieved by Admiral Sir Frederick Richards as First Naval Lord, a conference was held between both officers and Spencer to maintain continuity of policy.¹⁴⁹ On February 4, 1893 the First Naval Lord invited Spencer to attend a regular meeting discussing the "work of the Intelligence Department and the progress of our preparation for war" and "give you an insight into the work..."¹⁵⁰ The focus of strategic discussions was the Mediterranean, but the situation was complicated because of the need to avoid interfering with blockading rights.¹⁵¹ After another report of a Russian cruiser transiting the Dardanelles, which Gladstone denied was a significant

¹⁴⁷J.W. Gambier, "An Exchange for Gibraltar," *Fortnightly Review*, 53:317 (May 1893), 722-33.

¹⁴⁸Leading Articles in the *Reviews*: Shall We Abandon the Mediterranean?, Yes, By Capt. Gambier R.N." *Review of Reviews*, (May 1893), 503.

¹⁴⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Oct 7, 1893.

¹⁵⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387. A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Feb 4, 1893.

¹⁵¹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77387, A.H. Hoskins to Spencer, Oct 28, 1893.

policy change, a Defence Committee under Henry Campbell-Bannerman was appointed in November, 1893.¹⁵² Rosebery eagerly pressed for information about war planning for a conflict with France and Russia, with his fears about the Mediterranean at the forefront, although the Committee seems to have focused on the defences of Egypt and Malta.¹⁵³ These internal government debates fed into a new round of Parliamentary questions on the sufficiency and security of British bases in the region, including coal supplies, dock accommodation and defence against torpedo attack, although the Government did not provide answers for security reasons.¹⁵⁴

The discourse on naval strategy did not diminish as the scare achieved political criticality in December and January. Beresford, as usual, was vocal about the state of the navy in the Mediterranean during the scare. He wrote to Dilke to provide information about the lack of coal at Gibraltar, which showed up in several parliamentary questions, as well as the inability of the navy to keep the Mediterranean trade routes open or hold command of the sea against the more thoroughly-prepared French fleet.¹⁵⁵ In light of Fisher's later sloganeering, it is interesting to note that Beresford was also emphasizing the need to prepare for instant war, since a distant blockade maintained by cruisers would allow audacious French captains the chance to wreak tremendous destruction on Mediterranean commerce before they could be brought to battle.¹⁵⁶ Only instant offensive action against French torpedo boat stations could bring the French fleet to battle on advantageous terms.

¹⁵²UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 28, 1893), c. 1914-5.

¹⁵³NLS, Rosebery Papers, MS 10002, copy of Rosebery to H. Campbell-Bannerman, confidential, Nov 29, 1893; MS 10002, H. Campbell-Bannerman to Rosebery, confidential, Dec 4, 1893.

¹⁵⁴UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:18 (Nov 28, 1893), c. 1899; *Hansard*, 4:19 (Dec 1, 1893), c. 267-8; (Dec 7, 1893), c. 632-3; (Dec 8, 1893), c. 812.

¹⁵⁵BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 140-5, C. Beresford to C.W. Dilke, Dec 22, 1893.

¹⁵⁶BL, Dilke Papers, Add MS 43915, ff. 154-5, C. Beresford to C.W. Dilke, Jan 28, 1894.

A meeting was held at the Foreign Office on April 27, 1894 in order to develop a “definition of national policy to be adopted in war” that would reduce confusion and unnecessary expenditure by giving the army and navy definite objects to base their standards on. The DNI, Admiral Cyprian Bridge, thought the Suez route was better defended than the Cape, but the Mediterranean fleet had to match French and Russian forces in the Mediterranean. In wartime, trade should be diverted around the Cape, but this would require immediate offensive action against French colonial ports to prevent commerce raiding, for which he suggested a 5,000 man force be held constantly in readiness.¹⁵⁷ Bridge also stated that ships should be detailed to convoy merchantmen, and that these had to be in addition to the ships required by the main battle fleets. Lord Brassey wrote from Australia to argue for the use of the Cape route in wartime, since “neither convoys nor single ships could be secured from torpedo boats issuing forth at night” from French Mediterranean stations.¹⁵⁸

The Mediterranean dominated British strategic discourse in the first place because of the primacy of the Franco-Russian threat, which was concentrated at Toulon. Beyond this reality, navalists used the Mediterranean as a test case in their debates over the sufficiency of the navy and their uncertainties about the practicality of blockade and commerce defence. The confined waters and the abundance of torpedo boats in the Mediterranean made it very effective in thought experiments about how technology was impacting strategy.

¹⁵⁷BL, General War Office Papers, Add MS 88906/16/20, Apr 27, 1894, “Notes of a meeting held at the Foreign Office on April 27th, 1894,” signed by Secretary of State for War.

¹⁵⁸NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10093, ff. 125-33, Lord Brassey to Rosebery, Apr 19, 1894, revd May 18.

Harcourt vs Spencer — the Victory of the Admirals

1893 was a turning point in the ongoing struggle between the forces of fiscal economy and those of defence expenditure. The ‘Manchester School’ no longer held the high ground in the battle for public opinion, and the vast majority of politicians were willing to accept the changing situation and use defence spending for their own political prestige. The Liberal Party made a conscious choice to follow a policy that had been popular in the past. In this final struggle, security triumphed over economy. The core of this battle was fought within the Liberal administration, between the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Vernon Harcourt, backed up by Gladstone, and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl Spencer, backed up by the professional advisers of the Board of Admiralty. Spencer was a loyal follower of Gladstone, one of the few great Whig peers left in the Liberal Party, and it was undoubtedly a difficult decision for him to choose the Admiralty over his Chief.

Spencer and Harcourt had already fought a short war in 1892, which was dealt with in the last chapter, that left the Navy Estimates static. A memorandum was produced in August 1893, but Harcourt was not pleased that it failed to classify ships or include expected dates of completion. In November he would piggy-back on Lord George Hamilton's agitation to request more thorough and accurate tables. Harcourt was also aware that the French press was “a match for our own” in its ability to panic-monger, referring to an article in the *Marine Française* that argued that the French fleet was inferior to the Triple Alliance and even to Germany alone.¹⁵⁹ To Harcourt, this was proof that the agitation was largely groundless. He believed that “the principle of the alarmists

¹⁵⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, May 15, 1893.

is to pile up every conceivable contingency probable or improbable on one side, and to admit no possible contingencies on the other.”¹⁶⁰ Harcourt said that the navalists were flat-out lying, and, as in the previous year, argued that the Russian fleet in the Black Sea should not be considered, since it could not enter the Mediterranean without war with the Central Powers and thus adding the Italian fleet to Britain's Mediterranean position. Harcourt believed that the public agitation was built on misconceptions or even outright lies, and a clear and authoritative statement of facts would restore public confidence.

A November memorandum by Harcourt outlined nine essential points to describe British naval supremacy, the Admiralty responses were short and crystal clear:¹⁶¹

[Harcourt's Claims]	[Admiralty pencilled marginalia]
In first class Ironclads the British Navy is nearly double in numbers that of the French	No
In the Second or Third Class the British Navy has a marked superiority in point of numbers though in a less degree	[numbers] only
In cruisers it is a case of Gt Britain first and the French nowhere	No
The case however is not merely of superiority in numbers. Taking the several classes, the British first class Battle ships are to the extent of one half at least are ships of the newest type only just completed. The great part of the French ships are of an older or presumably inferior type. The tonnage and speed of the British ships are greatly superior on average to those of the French.	No
The same thing is true though perhaps to a less degree of the other two classes, many of the French ships being wooden ships [Admiralty note: “w hulls with armour protection”] and being on the whole inferior in tonnage and speed to the corresponding classes of British ships.	No
The French ships of the first class take a year and a half longer in completion than the British.	✓
The French ships cost 20% more money than the British.	✓
The British Mercantile Marine furnishes a reserve of engineers (?) and stokers which the French do not possess.	doubtful

¹⁶⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 20, 1893. Private. reply Nov 24.

¹⁶¹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 27, 1893. Appended.

The great passenger steamers afford a body of unarmoured scouts which can always [retreat] out of fire from their high speed which the French do not possess.	meaning?
In powerful <u>armoured</u> [emphasis by Admiralty] cruisers the British can allot 4 to 1 to each Battle ship as compared to the French.	No

The Admiralty conceded that Britain had superior construction capacity, but to naval officers this was poor consolation, since it did not mean that ships could be built instantaneously. Harcourt's position was based on a one-power standard that had little resonance with the British public who had eagerly adopted the Two-Power Standard as the measure of naval supremacy.

Undeterred, Harcourt responded with a new tabulation of warships at the end of November. He broke down the figures for each of the next four years, divided the Russian forces into Black and Baltic fleets, and excluded projected ships entirely.¹⁶² Essentially, he did not accept any of the Admiralty's responses and continued to hammer away with his own personal views. Perhaps he thought, as Gladstone did, that Spencer was under the influence of the Admiralty's professional advisers and not, as was in fact the case, personally convinced of the need for greater naval expenditure.

When the Admiralty developed their own 'minimum' and 'maximum' programmes at the end of November, the conflict between Spencer and Harcourt became more pronounced. Nevertheless, Spencer acceded to Harcourt's requests, and retabulated the figures according to the new criteria. He resisted the exclusion of French wooden-hulled ships, arguing that their armour and ordnance was more important than the material of the hull for their fighting power.¹⁶³

¹⁶²BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Nov 27, 1893.

¹⁶³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77379, folder 3, copy of Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 2, 1893; original in

After Hamilton's activity in Parliament and the press in December, and the general acceptance by other journals, including Liberal organs, of British naval weakness, particularly in the Mediterranean, Harcourt went on the offensive. Since to him it was obvious that it was not "right that a responsible Government should allow the nation to be deliberately deceived as to its actual situation," he threatened to make the truth public himself if Spencer would not make a clear public statement about the "satisfactory *present* relative strength of our Navy."¹⁶⁴ Spencer advised Harcourt against making any statement independently of the Admiralty, probably because he was afraid of the long-term political consequences of making a public statement that could be open to criticism and attack for years to come.¹⁶⁵ Harcourt's emphasis on the present strength of the fleet is important, since the scare was not primarily about the present, but about the future state of the navy, a point which Harcourt seems to have consciously avoided recognizing.

Spencer probably realized that he held the advantage over Harcourt, but he was not eager to start breaking the Liberal Party, particularly after the last schism over Home Rule. Fisher informed Spencer that, in spite of Harcourt's virulent claims, "I happened to be with 5 very influential M.P.s. who said the feeling on both sides of the House was such that you could do what you liked...."¹⁶⁶ Given this kind of support, Spencer informed Harcourt that since there was "no chance of doing as we did last year, viz. of coming to a mutual agreement... I think it is due to the Cabinet to have some statement of the views of the Admiralty."¹⁶⁷ Harcourt agreed, sarcastically asking if naval and military

BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 46, ff. 95-6.

¹⁶⁴*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 230, U. Kay-Shuttleworth to Spencer, Dec 9, 1893; Gardiner, *Life of sir William Harcourt*, II, 249, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 9, 1893.

¹⁶⁵BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 46, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 10, 1893.

¹⁶⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, J.A. Fisher to Spencer, Dec 9, 1893.

¹⁶⁷BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 46, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 10, 1893.

expenditure should be increased with an anticipated £3,000,000 deficit, calling the current Ministry the “most extravagant and reckless in its expenditure of any which has existed for many years.”¹⁶⁸ Harcourt claimed that the Duke of York and Wordsworth Lambton (Spencer's private secretary) agreed with his figures, and promised to tell the truth to his own constituents. Caught between the public scare and Harcourt's impressive intransigence, Spencer presented the Admiralty views directly to the Cabinet, which prevented Harcourt from deceiving the other members of the Government about the views of the professional advisers. The Cabinet would have to arbitrate between Treasury and Admiralty, and, given the public disillusionment with the Treasury's interference in national security, Harcourt was on softer ground than he believed.

Spencer was not complacent, and requested that Rosebery provide any papers from the Foreign Office that could support or refute Harcourt's views, since the Admirals had informed him that neutral ships and the Declaration of Paris regulations would not suffice to protect British trade in wartime.¹⁶⁹ Spencer was marshaling his facts for Cabinet, and was very much inclined to accept the professional advice of naval officers, who were taking to a logical conclusion the strategic principles that they had developed over the previous years relating to blockade, torpedo boat attacks, and the patrolling of trade routes. Spencer challenged Harcourt to support his claims that in wartime all commerce would be carried under neutral flags, and thus not require naval protection. In response Harcourt cited former First Lord George Hamilton, Forwood and Evans, the latter two possessing credibility as ship owners, from the December 1888 debates.¹⁷⁰ Harcourt seemed to be unaware of the substantial opposition that these views had drawn

¹⁶⁸*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 231, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 12, 1893.

¹⁶⁹NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 125-6, Spencer to Rosebery, Dec 16, 1893.

¹⁷⁰BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 46, ff. 111-2, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, private, Dec 18, 1893.

from intellectual naval circles in the years following the 1888 Navy Scare, which has been described in Chapter 5.

Gladstone became personally involved after he was forced to recognize his isolation on the navy issue in mid-December. He requested information from Spencer, focusing initially on the length of time each nation took in constructing warships, evidently hoping that faster British construction could provide an answer to the shipbuilding question since it was oriented towards the future.¹⁷¹ When he made a stand in Parliament against Hamilton's motion of Censure, however, Gladstone did not focus on the question of the navy, but on Parliamentary procedure and responsibility.

During the same December 19 debates, Harcourt spoke directly and publicly, as he had promised Spencer. He claimed that the Naval Lords were satisfied with the condition of the navy, implying although not directly stating that this included both present and future. Reading the newspaper reports, Spencer “feared that his Admirals might kick at being so prominently quoted...” but admitted to Rosebery that he did not disagree with Harcourt's statements, and “it is very wrong to show a weak front when we are really strong.”¹⁷² It seems that Harcourt's statements were becoming more moderate, but it was the implication that the naval profession supported Harcourt's pro-economy position that was of great concern to the Naval Lords.

The Naval Lords immediately wrote a collective letter of protest to Spencer that emphatically rejected Harcourt's statements and reaffirmed that a new construction programme was urgently required. They reminded Spencer that at the November 22 meeting, when Harcourt was present, the Admiral Richards had “in clear and

¹⁷¹Included in *Diaries of William Gladstone*, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Dec 15, 1893.

¹⁷²*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 232, from the Lewis Harcourt Journal; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 130-1, Spencer to Rosebery, secret, Dec 20, 1893.

unmistakeable terms expressed his conviction, and that of his naval colleagues, that at least 7 Battleships of the First Class ought to be laid down in 1894” as well as at least 80 torpedo-boat destroyers and this would still not provide satisfactory forces in 1896-7.¹⁷³ Now Harcourt was claiming that they were satisfied. The details of the internal pressure put on Harcourt is not adequately described in the sources, but it was probably tremendous, for Harcourt broke and publicly retracted the implications, although not the specific claims, of his speech.

Spencer and Harcourt exchanged a series of letters on December 21, a testament to the frequency of the nineteenth-century post service, in which Harcourt quickly backtracked. After Spencer had informed him of the displeasure of the Admiralty Board members, Harcourt insisted that he had only quoted the Naval Lords in stating that Britain was currently superior in first-class battleships, and that he had been justified in his reference to the Naval Lords because Dilke, Chamberlain and other opposition MPs were citing the “opinion of experts.”¹⁷⁴ He denied making any reference to future shipbuilding, the quality of torpedoes or other aspects of the naval question, and that December 19 had been the first time he had heard of building seven battleships in 1894.

Harcourt was an excellent politician, and he appears to have realized the drift of the political wind and with his retraction also began his own process of adapting to and accepting the naval scare. The Admirals agreed to accept a statement of correction from Harcourt, as a favour to Spencer, but told him that they would not accept being misrepresented.¹⁷⁵ Fisher's letter to Austen Chamberlain described the events in a very arrogant tone, saying, “We gave Lord Spencer to understand that unless Sir W. Harcourt

¹⁷³*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 231-2, Sea Lords to Spencer, Dec 20, 1893.

¹⁷⁴BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 46, ff. 121-5, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Dec 21, 1893.

¹⁷⁵*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 233, Spencer to Lady Spencer, Dec 21, 1893.

explained we would resign.... and further we will not stand much longer delay in dealing with pressing naval requirements.”¹⁷⁶ Spencer was far more respectful, and expressed his appreciation of Harcourt's choice in a letter to his wife.¹⁷⁷ On December 21 Harcourt informed the House that in quoting the Naval Lords he had meant “to confine that statement to the relative force of the various countries at the present moment in respect of first-class battleships completed in the present financial year....”¹⁷⁸ Harcourt tried to minimize his retraction and characterize his statement as a clarification, but Hicks-Beach forced him to state clearly that he had no authority to speak for the professional advisers of the navy on any technical or future aspects of naval power.

The Naval Lords protest was quickly leaked, likely by Fisher, including rumours that the entire Board of Admiralty had threatened to resign over Harcourt's statements, although Harcourt and Gladstone refused to give any more information about Harcourt's sources or the Naval Lords' protest.¹⁷⁹ Harcourt was not personally convinced, but as he observed to the Queen, “the scare which has been started in England has communicated itself to France” with the probable outcome of enlarged programmes in both countries.¹⁸⁰ Harcourt was overly focused on the maximum programme, which Spencer was quick to correct after the December 27 Cabinet meeting. Harcourt's junior at the Treasury, Edward Hamilton, noted on December 28 that the naval estimates would be increasing by about £3,000,000, suggesting that Harcourt was already moving to accommodate a programme,

¹⁷⁶*Fear God and Dread Nought: The correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Vol I, Arthur J. Marder, ed., (London: Cape, 1954), 119-20, Dec 22, 1893, J.A. Fisher to A. Chamberlain.

¹⁷⁷*Papers of the Red Earl*, vol II, 233, Lord Spencer to Lady Spencer, Dec 21, 1893.

¹⁷⁸UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:20 (Dec 21, 1893), c. 112.

¹⁷⁹UK, Commons, *Hansard*, 4:20 (Dec 27, 1893), c. 271; (Dec 28, 1893), c. 339-41.

¹⁸⁰Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, II, 250, W.V. Harcourt to Queen Victoria, Dec 23, 1893.

in spite of possible budgetary deficit.¹⁸¹ He informed John Morley that there had been some confusion over the magnitude of the sum, possibly admitting that he had misconstrued the Admiralty's demands.¹⁸²

Harcourt would remain convinced that his own interpretation of the state of the navy was correct. He persisted in believing that the professional members of the Admiralty were intentionally exaggerating or blatantly lying about French shipbuilding, or perhaps he was just trying to get a rise out of Spencer.¹⁸³ Spencer jumped to the defence of his Admirals, and protested against the “insinuations of dishonesty on the part of the Admiralty.”¹⁸⁴ Harcourt may not have been convinced of the truth of the scare, but he accepted its political reality, and this was what mattered.

Into January Gladstone took over the leading role in resisting the scare and reducing Admiralty demands. Harcourt moved into a more conciliatory role, leaving Gladstone with insufficient support to have any hope of carrying even a compromise position. The defeat of Harcourt over the interpretation of the state of the navy was a necessary condition for forcing the resignation of Gladstone in the late spring of 1894, although the length of that process requires separate treatment below. The Spencer-Harcourt conflict could only happen to the Liberal Party, with its disparate attitudes to national defence between the old Whigs and Radicals.

¹⁸¹ *Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 233, Excerpt from *Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton*, Dec 28, 1893.

¹⁸² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44257, f. 139, J. Morley to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 30, 1893.

¹⁸³ Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, II, 252, W.V. Harcourt to Spencer, Jan 22, 1894.

¹⁸⁴ BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 47, ff. 6-7, Spencer to W.V. Harcourt, Jan 24, 1894.

Gladstone's Resignation and a Blue-Water Consensus

The resignation of W.E. Gladstone was both expected and unexpected. He was ageing and into his 90's, with failing hearing and eyesight, and had already resigned once before, in 1874. There was every reason to anticipate his resignation, but he had also shown remarkable longevity and tenacity, with no hint of letting go of the reins of power. Gladstone was philosophically opposed to expenditure on armaments, although in 1884 he was unable to defeat the popular scare. Gladstone resisted calls for expenditure in 1893, but again was defeated and this time forced to resign. The official reason for Gladstone's retirement was poor health, and the truth of this is evident in many 1893-94 diary entries. It was well known that the official explanation was not the whole story. When the Queen told Gladstone she was “sorry *for the cause*” of Gladstone's retirement, “She did not however show any curiosity for particulars as to eyes and ears.”¹⁸⁵ The Queen was well aware that health was a cover for real political conflict. Gladstone's differences with his colleagues over naval affairs need to be interrogated as a key factor in the timing and manner of Gladstone's departure. Once his colleagues had accepted a new naval programme, Gladstone chose semi-graceful retirement rather than split the party and begin a new political crusade.

Gladstone had been aware of the rising naval controversy in November, but his personal involvement commenced on December 15, 1893. After Hamilton presented his motion for increasing the navy, Gladstone requested Admiralty papers on the state of the navy regarding battleships and cruisers from Spencer. In his request, Gladstone specifically asked for information about reducing the time for warship construction,

¹⁸⁵*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Feb 28, 1894.

clearly insinuating that the navy could rest on its current superiority and delay the construction of necessary warships.¹⁸⁶ Gladstone's personal advisers were started to change their counsel in the face of the political wind. Morley admitted that there may be a good cause for naval expansion, and expressed his concern that “the accident of his office should make Spencer the organ of the alarmists” since it might alienate important Liberals from a future Party leader.¹⁸⁷ Morley may have genuinely agreed with Gladstone’s misinterpretation of the party’s attitude to defence spending, but he might have been trying to gently lead Gladstone towards accepting a naval programme.

As described above, Gladstone focused on Parliamentary procedure and Ministerial responsibility, treating the naval scare as a political force without recognizing that it had achieved a sense of reality through the lengthy navalist discourses. Even after Gladstone recognized the power of the scare, he took a very narrowly financial and partisan perspective of the issues. He vented to Harcourt that,

*An exceptional expenditure having been proposed by the late Govt. [the NDA] to make up arrears & lay in a stop for the future — and having been a good deal objected to for excess (as well as on financial grounds) by the Liberal party — it is proposed to adopt a rate equal to the whole of that exceptional expenditure, and to add to it a million & a half?*¹⁸⁸

Gladstone seems to have been greatly concerned with his political legacy, and was unwilling to compromise his convictions.

His first move was to craft a memorandum on naval finances, appended to the latest Admiralty return, which showed British inferiority to France and Russia in all warship classes save third-class battleships, special torpedo vessels and cruisers. He

¹⁸⁶BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Dec 15, 1893, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

¹⁸⁷BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44257, f. 137, J. Morley to W.E. Gladstone, Dec 17, 1893, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

¹⁸⁸BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 13, f. 233, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Dec 30, 1893.

started on the assumption that the £13,000,000 of the 1888–89 Navy Estimates should be the baseline because this amount had been consistent through the 1880s, if the NDA and Northbrook programmes were excluded from consideration. The NDA had left a residual charge of £1,429,000 for 1894–95, and with the Admiralty's proposed £4,000,000 addition meant a total of £18,429,000. This was £2,239,000 above the average yearly expenditure of the five NDA years, although the bulk of this was the leftover NDA sum.¹⁸⁹ Comparative finances and the political record of both parties mattered more to Gladstone than the relationship between needs and means for naval defences.

After a meeting with a “rather severe” Harcourt on January 2, Gladstone appears to have adopted identical views about the state of the navy. He questioned Spencer about the inclusion of the Black Sea Fleet in calculations, and reminded him that the NDA had promised to make good arrears and to provide a margin for the future.¹⁹⁰ Gladstone even repeated the plea for “some correction of the press” as to the quantitative comparisons of first-class battleships. At the same time, Harcourt appears to have practically abandoned Gladstone. Peter Gordon argues that Harcourt realized that Rosebery and Spencer would resign if the new Estimates were not accepted, and adapted to the changing political wind.¹⁹¹ Spencer noted the sudden change in a letter to Rosebery, since Harcourt “abuses me and the Admirals roundly... and next day is full of smiles arranging how to find the money.”¹⁹² Harcourt had revised the Death Duties and found a way to fund the enlarged naval programme.

¹⁸⁹NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, *Return of Ships Built and Building*, with appended memorandum by W.E. Gladstone, Jan 1, 1894.

¹⁹⁰BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Jan 2, 1894.

¹⁹¹*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 234.

¹⁹²NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 1332-3, Spencer to Rosebery, Jan 2, 1894.

Gladstone was not so compromising, and informed Spencer on January 3 that he would resign rather than give in to the Admiralty demands.¹⁹³ He followed this up with more financial nit-picking, which even he grudgingly admitted was “secondary but not unimportant,” on the impropriety of Cabinet definitively adopting Estimates except with exact figures.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps he thought he could buy more time, in the hopes that the scare, and its political potency, would diminish. Spencer refused to accept this, arguing that principles could be approved and fleshed out in greater detail later.¹⁹⁵ Gladstone wrote to Morley in frustration at the excess of the new programme (more than had even been spent in a single year) and explaining that he believed it would drive European militarism, damage the Liberal Party and require greater taxation.¹⁹⁶ Gladstone was furious with Harcourt for abandoning him and practically siding with the Admiralty.¹⁹⁷

Morley arranged for another meeting between Gladstone and Spencer, proposing matching the expenditure of the first year of the NDA as a compromise position.¹⁹⁸ Gladstone offered a compromise of a £2,250,000 increase on the 'normal' charges of £13,000,000, £1,000,000 more than the 1893–94 Estimates. He considered this offer to be “so large a proceeding that it requires effort to justify it to myself,” but it was insignificant compared to the extra £4,000,000 demanded by the Admiralty.¹⁹⁹ Gladstone claimed he was standing against European militarism and insisted that his offer “carries

¹⁹³*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 234, excerpt from Lewis Harcourt’s journal, Jan 3, 1894.

¹⁹⁴BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Jan 3, 1894.

¹⁹⁵BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44314, f. 101, Spencer to W.E. Gladstone, Jan 4, 1894.

¹⁹⁶BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44776, f. 11, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Jan 4, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

¹⁹⁷*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 234, J. Morley to Spencer, Jan 4, 1894.

¹⁹⁸*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 234, J. Morley to Spencer, Jan 4, 1894.

¹⁹⁹BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44257, f. 173, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Jan 5, 1893, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

me *up* to the breaking point. Any addition breaks me.”²⁰⁰ Morley presented Gladstone's proposals to Kay-Shuttleworth, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith and Acland on January 8, but the Admiralty insisted on the entire increase. Kay-Shuttleworth admitted that the Admiralty's case was convincing and the meeting's attendees concluded that the fair comparison was with the NDA years, including the NDA contract costs, IDA ships and armaments, and backed Kay-Shuttleworth's division of expenditure over five years. Kay-Shuttleworth's plan was deemed to be “less vulnerable in debate, and a better plan for meeting and defeating the cry for a Defence Act.”²⁰¹ An Act was too restrictive, and might only spur foreign efforts, as explained below.

A Cabinet meeting on January 9 was pivotal. Gladstone harangued the Cabinet for fifty minutes, recorded in detail immediately after the meeting by Rosebery, stating that the new programme would encourage militarism, destroy good finances, and was based on poor calculations from an over-rigid Two Power Standard. Gladstone proposed to 'bisect' the Admiralty proposals, by keeping 1894–95 expenditure at his January 5 compromise position, and postponing additional expenditure until the following year. Gladstone reaffirmed that he could not accept the proposals, since it might lead to the formation of a coalition against Britain, and described his various physical ailments. Gladstone was already building an excuse for resignation that would conceal the real conflict. He did subtly threaten that with the “disproportionate authority remain[ing] to his name” there might be serious injury to the party if he were to depart.²⁰²

²⁰⁰BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 174, W.E. Gladstone to J. Morley, Jan 7, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²⁰¹*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 235, U. Kay-Shuttleworth to Spencer, Jan 8, 1894.

²⁰²BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44648, Gladstone's Cabinet Notes, Jan 9, 1894; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, ff. 47-51, 'A Memorable Cabinet' by Rosebery, Jan 9, 1894.

To Rosebery, “Mr G's argument dwelt entirely on expenditure. He never deemed to think of what the country shd require, he only seemed to think of what it would cost.” Spencer spoke for “5 or 6 conciliatory minutes” but concluded that the Admiralty Board would resign if the 'minimum' programme was not accepted. The real shock was Harcourt's speech, which so infuriated Gladstone that he physically turned his back on Harcourt while the latter spoke. Harcourt decried militarism and the great expense, but calmly declared that “now the plan was inevitable. If we went out the Tories would pass it. And he saw the means of paying for it...”²⁰³ The division between Gladstone and his ministers was complete, and he saw that he was “without a ray of hope against this mad & mischievous scheme.”²⁰⁴ The Cabinet concluded that Spencer's Estimates would be adopted and Gladstone would inform the Queen of this, although it was obvious that it was going to entail the end of the current Ministry. Gladstone departed to Biarritz for a vacation, without formally declaring his intention to resign, in spite of expectations.²⁰⁵

Gladstone made some desperate suggestions to try to stave off defeat or at least save face. To Rosebery, he said that the Admiralty proposals would be more acceptable if paired with the withdrawal of the occupation forces in Egypt.²⁰⁶ He met again with Spencer on January 11, but Spencer said he had already reduced the demands by £1,000,000, and there was no room for reduction in the current, 'minimum', plan.²⁰⁷ Gladstone responded by retracting his support for tendering for one battleship, since any private contract for a battleship would imply that the entire programme was being

²⁰³NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, ff. 47-51, 'A Memorable Cabinet' by Rosebery, Jan 9, 1894.

²⁰⁴*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Gladstone's Cabinet Notes, Jan 9, 1894.

²⁰⁵*Diaries of William Gladstone*, Entry for Jan 10, 1894.

²⁰⁶NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10027, ff. 127-8, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Jan 11, 1894.

²⁰⁷*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 236, excerpt from Lewis Harcourt's journal, Jan 11, 1894.

adopted.²⁰⁸ Spencer insisted on the measure, but it only bought him some time with the Admirals, who fully expected the programme to be passed in its entirety.²⁰⁹ As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Spencer believed that the new programme was necessary, but he lamented that it had been formed in response to a scare, which had provided political weight but also created misdirection and confusion.²¹⁰

Gladstone attempted a new compromise in less than a week. His private secretary, Lewis Harcourt, assured Rosebery that Gladstone was becoming more conciliatory and “that some practically immaterial concession would enable him to remain.”²¹¹ Rosebery seems to have thought that Gladstone was going to accept the inevitable without resigning. Spencer refused the new offer, and was offended that Gladstone was treating him as if he would have asked for one sum while being willing to accept a lower figure, insisting that he had cut the Estimates as much as was possible already.²¹² He could not understand Gladstone's fixation with reducing the first year's expenditure, since it did not change the total programme. Perhaps he was concerned that Gladstone would attempt, in postponing expenditure, to prevent it in future years. He did not believe that the small amount of Cabinet support, from the most Radical members, would be enough to allow Gladstone the possibility of forming a different Ministry, and concluded that Gladstone “shall come back to England ready to face the actual situation and without expectation of further concessions.”²¹³ Gladstone produced a new memorandum on January 20, recorded

²⁰⁸*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 236. W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Jan 12, 1894.

²⁰⁹BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 77395, Spencer to J.A. Fisher, Jan 14, 1894; NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 134-5, Spencer to Rosebery, Jan 14, 1894.

²¹⁰*Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 237, Spencer to Ad H.F. Stephenson, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Station, Jan 14, 1894.

²¹¹Herbert Gladstone told Lewis Harcourt, who then informed Rosebery and Spencer, NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 136-8, Rosebery to Spencer, secret, Jan 15, 1894.

²¹²NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10062, ff. 139-44, Spencer to Rosebery, secret, Jan 18, 1894.

²¹³These MPs included George Shaw-Lefevre, George Trevelyan, and Mundella, NLS, Primrose Papers,

at length at the beginning of the chapter, but it only clarified the discord without adding new information.²¹⁴

During the January 9 Cabinet meeting, much to the disgust of Gladstone, Harcourt compared his current position with that of Gladstone in the 1859–60 scare.²¹⁵ This led to a lengthy historical correspondence about the events of that year and the precedents that were set. In 1859 total defence expenditure was £21,700,000 and this increased to £28,300,000 in 1861 before falling slightly, with the Army Estimates about £2,000,000 greater than the navy. Adding the £5,400,000 spent on the war in China in 1861 gave a comparable increase, in Harcourt's estimation, to the current situation, and Gladstone met these demands with increased taxation that at the time was resisted as 'enormous' and 'bloated.'²¹⁶ Gladstone declared that these figures were wrong, and it was only £1,700,000 for China. Gladstone claimed that “the heavy military charges of 1860–3 were due to cause and not to scare, though scare had something to do with them,” again refusing to recognize any validity to the present concerns.²¹⁷

Gladstone insisted that the 1859 episode was fundamentally different, that it was never really a scare but was justified by the international situation at the time, including the Italian Crisis.²¹⁸ He complained to Lord Acton and Edward Hamilton that the discussion of 1859 was designed to turn the question into a personal attack on himself, without reference to the nuances of his actual position, specifically that the measures

MS 10062, ff. 139-44, Spencer to Rosebery, secret, Jan 18, 1894.

²¹⁴BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44648, f. 145, Gladstone memorandum, Jan 20, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²¹⁵See NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10145, ff. 47-51, 'A Memorable Cabinet' by Rosebery, Jan 9, 1894.

²¹⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 14, ff. 1-4, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Jan 10, 1894.

²¹⁷BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt dep. 14, ff. 5-6, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Jan 10, 1894.

²¹⁸See BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 14, ff. 9-10, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 5, 1894; MS Harcourt 14, ff. 11-2, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 7, 1894. Gladstone specifically mentioned the Trent Affair and the Second Opium War in China.

were temporary and were in fact subsequently reduced in 1864–65.²¹⁹ When Edward Hamilton checked Gladstone's speeches, he had to tell Gladstone that he had come to "somewhat different conclusions."²²⁰ Lord Acton, who was at Biarritz with Gladstone, found Gladstone's arguments against naval expenditure easily refuted.²²¹ It would appear that Gladstone was reshaping the memory to suit his needs, and could not recognize that his colleagues felt that there was ample, real cause for concern at the present moment, in the same way that he claimed he was convinced in 1859–60. He claimed that the January 8 concessions were larger than those he had accepted in 1860 and 1884, while in 1860 he had been motivated by the need to preserve the treaty with France and still managed to reduce the demands by £4,000,000.²²² A.J. Mundella suggested that future estimates might be reduced in the current case as well, so Gladstone might not leave.²²³ Gladstone's desperation was palpable to his colleagues. Edward Hamilton thought he was 'catching at straws' for believing that he could shake the unity of his colleagues, particularly now that the 1859 precedent stood against him.²²⁴

The *Pall Mall Gazette* attempted to force Gladstone's hand, and gain a newspaper scoop by announcing Gladstone's resignation on its own initiative.²²⁵ Gladstone immediately contradicted this report, and it provided an opportunity for colleagues to deceptively flatter him. Harcourt told Gladstone that it was 'impossible' to imagine the

²¹⁹*Diaries of William Gladstone*, W.E. Gladstone to Lord Acton, Feb 6, 1894; W.E. Gladstone to E.W. Hamilton, Feb 13, 1894.

²²⁰*Diaries of William Gladstone*, E.W. Hamilton to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 13, 1894.

²²¹*Diaries of William Gladstone*, entry for Jan 31, 1894.

²²²BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44258, f. 328, W.E. Gladstone to A.J. Mundella, Feb 6, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²²³BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44258, f. 331, Feb 15, 1894, A.J. Mundella to W.E. Gladstone, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²²⁴Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, II, 254-5, E.W. Hamilton to W.V. Harcourt, Jan 29, 1894.

²²⁵"Impending Resignation of Mr. Gladstone: Grave political crisis, dissolution probable," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9004 (Jan 31, 1894).

party without his leadership, and reported that his own constituents had been very understanding of the Government's difficulties and pleased with how the Government had met those challenges.²²⁶ He noted that the public seemed to be willing to pay for the naval security it demanded, and that the revenue shortfall was less than expected anyway. Harcourt was trying to find some way for Gladstone to accept the naval expenditure, since that was clearly the only way to reconcile the schism. Gladstone explained to Mundella that the country had placed its faith in the Liberal Party under his leadership and principles, which he interpreted as based on his belief in economy and peace, claiming that “Liberalism cannot put on the garb of Jingoism without suffering it.”²²⁷ Thus, if the policy was to be changed, new leaders who sincerely believed in the new policy should be chosen.

During the January and February conflicts, Gladstone became aware of the gulf between himself and his colleagues. He started to realize “the world of today is not the world in which I was bred and trained and have principally lived,” and philosophical principles, like economy and pacifism, offered a comforting belief on which to make his last stand.²²⁸ Gladstone was moving towards resignation, building an explanation based on poor health.²²⁹ Gladstone still hoped for a last miracle, since “the Cabinet never decide these matters till rather close upon the time for producing Estimates for the coming

²²⁶BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 14, ff. 5-8, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 2, 1894. Mundella expressed the same sentiment that the party would break up without Gladstone, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44258, f. 325, A.J. Mundella to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 3, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²²⁷BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44258, f. 328, W.E. Gladstone to A.J. Mundella, Feb 6, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²²⁸BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 185, W.E. Gladstone to Acton, Feb 8, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²²⁹See BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44137, f. 486, W.E. Gladstone to J. Cowan, Chairman of Midlothian Liberal Association, Feb 8, 1894.

year.”²³⁰ The next evening there was a Cabinet dinner, and his colleagues expected an announcement, but Gladstone remained silent, thinking “there is nothing to be said.”²³¹ He probably thought that time was on his side, and his opponents would moderate themselves. This did not occur, and on February 23 Gladstone informed Cabinet of his intention to resign, which was made official on March 1.²³²

To his credit, Gladstone chose to conceal the real reasons for his resignation. He assured Spencer that, “I deem it a very distinct duty to refrain from expressing them both at the present moment and in any circumstances I can now foresee as probable.”²³³ Gladstone had no intention of sabotaging his party by revealing major philosophical divisions. Knowledgeable insiders, such as the Queen, were well aware that 'eyes and ears' were an excuse to conceal the real reason, although she was polite enough to express regret over the real cause.²³⁴ In a retrospective piece, Gladstone concluded that his health would have necessitated retirement in any case, and the close of the 1893–94 session was a natural break. While his colleagues may have prevented him from resigning just out of convenience, he was happy for the 'mad and drunk' naval scheme that allowed him to “act on [a cause] which was rational, sufficient, and ready to hand.”²³⁵

Gladstone's colleagues all sent letters of affection and farewell. Spencer still maintained his position on naval affairs, and believed that the programme would have

²³⁰BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44549, f. 188, W.E. Gladstone to J.W. Pease, Feb 16, 1894.

²³¹*Diaries of William Gladstone*, entry for Feb 17, 1894.

²³²BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44648, f. 161, Gladstone's Cabinet Notes, Feb 23, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²³³BL, Althorp Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Feb 23, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²³⁴*Diaries of William Gladstone*, entries for Feb 28, 1894 and Mar 10, 1894.

²³⁵BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44790, f. 101, Autobiographica, Mar 19, 1894, also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

been passed under any circumstances.²³⁶ Rosebery sent a fond letter, expressing sorrow that there had been such a serious difference of opinion, which Gladstone shared.²³⁷ They were both interested in the peace of the world, but approached it from opposite angles. Harcourt was over-the-top in his effusive praise, calling Gladstone the “great luminary of the Liberal Party.”²³⁸ Perhaps he realized that his abandonment of Gladstone had cut deep, and he wanted to make amends — he made no mention of the navy at all in his letter. Gladstone replied modestly, and suggested that a new government could be formed and that affairs should run their natural course.²³⁹

Gladstone's resignation was easily covered up as a natural outcome, but it was the result of massive internal conflict. It was a pivotal moment in the history of the Liberal Party, when the old philosophies of Gladstonian Liberalism were abandoned, and the popular politics of national defence definitively adopted. It meant that in later years, the Liberal Party was as likely as the Conservatives to pursue national security, undoubtedly furthering the development of the international arms race. For all of the attempts to make national defence a non-partisan political question, it was only achieved through the politics of public panic.

The Spencer Programme, Acts of Parliament and the Navy League

As the NDA was nearing completion, agitation was renewed for a new Act of Parliament that would guarantee spending in case of the return of a Liberal Government

²³⁶BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44314, ff. 109-12, Spencer to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 23, 1894; also in *Papers of the Red Earl*, II, 239-40.

²³⁷NLS, Primrose Papers, MS 10027, ff. 149-50, Rosebery to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 24, 1894; MS 10027, ff. 151-2, W.E. Gladstone to Rosebery, Feb 25, 1894.

²³⁸BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 14, ff. 13-4, W.V. Harcourt to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 24, 1894.

²³⁹BodL, Harcourt Papers, MS Harcourt 14, ff. 15-6, W.E. Gladstone to W.V. Harcourt, Feb 25, 1894.

under Gladstone. When the Liberals returned to power, it raised unfounded fears of a return to a policy of naval starvation. The Liberal Party had changed since the 1860s and 70s in the same way as the Conservative Party, and supported the scale of naval defence envisioned by naval professionals and civilian agitators. The 1893 Spencer Programme mirrored the NDA in the scope of its expenditure and its multi-year planning, but without the rigidity of an Act of Parliament. The NDA had been embodied as an Act of Parliament for very specific reasons, including reassuring the public of a consistent programme and intimidating Britain's rivals with her determination to uphold naval supremacy. The Spencer Programme, envisioned as slightly larger in scope than the NDA, would not be presented as an Act. Instead the public would be assured that a programme existed, and its breadth roughly defined as policy, but without the restrictions in finance and organization that the NDA had entailed.

While Gladstone was struggling with his own personal beliefs about the state of the Royal Navy, the press was running wild with stories and speculation about the new naval programme. The nature of the public controversy, centred particularly in January 1894, reinforced the Government's unwillingness to employ the mechanism of an Act of Parliament to embody a specific multi-year construction programme. With the Government choosing to rely on normal Parliamentary procedure, navalist agitators choose to regularize their own efforts through a dedicated lobby group that would continue the education of the British public on naval affairs — the Navy League. This development changed the nature of future civil-military interaction, with more frequent, smaller-scale agitational activities taking the place of periodic, but severe, scares.

Prominent naval agitators wanted a new Act of Parliament to replace the NDA, because an Act could not be surreptitiously abandoned for financial reasons by a parsimonious government. Sidney Eardley-Wilmot's analysis of the naval scare for Brassey's *Naval Annual* concurred with Lord George Hamilton's argument in the December 19, 1893 Parliamentary debate that

The only method by which ample preparation can be made is to take a complete and thorough survey of the situation, both of your own and of foreign navies, and then to embody the results in an Act of Parliament to which the House gives its assent; and the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is simply to provide the money required by the Act.²⁴⁰

The use of an Act was presented as providing full accountability to Parliament, and the total control of malignant influence from the Treasury. In practice, the use of an Act would mean that the temporary combination of a mobilized navalist public opinion with professional analysis in support would have the greatest possible effect.

Mainstream Liberal opinion was inclined to support the cause of the navy, but to reject the insistence on a new Act as a Conservative political ploy. When Conservative organs were blaming the poor condition of the navy on Liberal opposition, *The Speaker* suggested that naval scares gained traction in Britain *because* the belief in naval supremacy was non-partisan. In fact, the *Speaker* claimed that the Liberals were more interested in naval power because a supreme fleet allowed them to pursue a foreign policy of non-involvement.²⁴¹ Like many other periodicals, the *Speaker* used the accusation of political partisanship to discredit the criticisms of political opponents, in this case the Conservatives, by suggesting that their motives were impure. Partisan accusations were a regular feature of naval politics, but the reality was that both

²⁴⁰S. Eardley-Wilmot, "The Agitation in 1893 for the Increase of the Navy," *Naval Annual*, (1894), 154.

²⁴¹"The Navy," *Speaker*, 8 (Nov 11, 1893), 515-6.

conservatives and liberals believed equally in the importance of naval supremacy, whatever their individual justifications were. Conservative journals were trying to win political advantage by building a false equivalency between support for the navy and a construction programme embodied in an Act of Parliament; the actual disagreement was over the form of the programme, because Liberals disliked the mechanism of an Act.

The Speaker was fully converted to the navalist cause, although it refused to condemn the Liberal Party. The periodical defended the current Government for having done as much for the navy as any other, while the Conservative panic-mongering papers were “knocking at an open door” since there was cross-party agreement on the need to maintain naval supremacy.²⁴² *The Speaker* assured readers that there was no need to panic, since the Government was well aware of the naval situation and taking all necessary steps. At the same time, it admitted that the current superiority of the fleet could be lost in two or three years and thus followed the lines of Conservative critics and professional naval officers in advocating a new programme. It denied the validity of panic in order to defend its political allies, but even the Liberal press was abandoning Gladstone and following the majority of the party into qualified acceptance of new naval expansion efforts.

In January the rumours of the new naval programme triggered a storm of discussion, including the self-conscious reflection on the usefulness of panic. When Edmund Robertson was explaining the scare and the principles on which the Admiralty was constructing its policy to his constituents, he attributed the new programme directly to the pressure that the scare had put on the administration. He claimed that the agitation had begun with Radical Liberal newspapers, the *Speaker* and *Daily News*, thus

²⁴²“Naval Defence,” *Speaker*, 8 (Nov 18, 1893), 543-4.

discrediting Unionist attempts to claim credit for the new measures. Credit for the new programme belonged entirely to the Liberal government, and had only been delayed by the NDA's legacy of payments.²⁴³ Pro-navy Liberals would later become a large part of the membership of the Navy League, which drew many members from both political parties. To the *Saturday Review*, the reality of scares was part and parcel of the new democratic party politics, and the article described that, "It has come to be the tradition that the navy cannot get attended to without a preliminary agitation."²⁴⁴

Robertson told his constituents that the Navy Estimates for 1894–95 would be part of a multi-year programme "carefully elaborated in all its details, but not published or intended to be published at present."²⁴⁵ The *Times* was generally satisfied by Robertson's speech, reaffirming its own belief that it was only necessary to support the Admiralty against Treasury parsimony; the decision not to publish the entire programme, ostensibly to avoid international provocation, was the only point of criticism because the *Times* believed was intended to permit the Government to renege on the promised programme.²⁴⁶ Gladstone felt that Robertson's speech was an imprudent and unauthorized statement that would create the impression that the departmental Estimates had been adopted, when they had not been through the normal procedure of gaining Cabinet and Parliamentary approval.²⁴⁷ Robertson did specifically state that the navy was in a good present state, but also stated that a new effort was necessary in order to match new foreign efforts. In this case, Spencer defended Robertson, since he did not make any

²⁴³“Mr. Edmund Robertson on the Navy,” *Times*, 34183 (Feb 9, 1894), 12.

²⁴⁴“The Navy Scare,” *Saturday Review*, Nov 25, 1893.

²⁴⁵“Mr. Edmund Robertson on the Navy,” *Times*, 34183 (Feb 9, 1894), 12.

²⁴⁶Editorial, “The country will have learnt with satisfaction...” *Times*, 34185 (Feb 12, 1894), 9. It also noted with pleasure that ‘Civis’s suggestion was being pursued by the London Chamber of Commerce.

²⁴⁷BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 76864, W.E. Gladstone to Spencer, Feb 13, 1894; also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

definite statements of policy.²⁴⁸ Robertson's speech did make it clear to the British public that the full details of the Spencer programme would not be published, while simultaneously assuring the public that it was a multi-year, comprehensive plan.

The First Lord's statement on the Navy Estimates, presented by Kay-Shuttleworth in the Commons, clarified Robertson's point that the programme would remain unpublished in order to forestall foreign efforts to match British shipbuilding that were the unintended consequence of the NDA. To critical minds, like that of Lord George Hamilton backed by the *Saturday Review*, this was pure nonsense, since other nations would quickly acquire the information and the only people that would be in the dark about the programme would be the British parliament and public.²⁴⁹ *The Speaker* was particularly critical of the Opposition for its claims in the debates on the 1894–95 Navy Estimates. It argued that it was the Conservatives who had acted hypocritically in creating a naval scare and censuring the Government for not taking immediate action, when in fact the Ministry had openly declared its intention of maintaining a Two-Power Standard while following normal Parliamentary procedures.²⁵⁰ *The Speaker* praised the Government's decision to increase ordinary expenditure because it was more financially responsible, by paying for each year's expenses from each year's revenue, rather than throwing massive expenses onto future years. Even the generally critical *Saturday Review* agreed that an Act did not allow sufficient flexibility in expenditure, particularly since this meant that the Estimates could increase as well as decrease.²⁵¹ *The Speaker's* readers were reminded that the Government remained fully committed to naval supremacy in the

²⁴⁸BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44314, f. 107, Spencer to W.E. Gladstone, Feb 13, 1894; also in *Diaries of William Gladstone*.

²⁴⁹“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 77:2004 (Mar 24, 1894), 299-300.

²⁵⁰“The Government and the Navy,” *Speaker*, 9 (Mar 24, 1894), 326-7.

²⁵¹“The Navy Estimates,” *Saturday Review*, 77:2003 (Mar 17, 1894), 277-8.

future, leaving the Opposition confined to criticizing minor issues like dockyards and reserves while assiduously avoiding the question of shipbuilding. The *Saturday Review* worried that the prominence of dockyard questions in the debates indicated the successful political lobbying of this workforce, and told readers that just as it was wrong to cut expenditure to curry votes, it was also wrong to spend extravagantly because it would be “good for the working classes.”²⁵² France had made this mistake, and kept thousands of men on official establishments for fear of the political cost of layoffs.

A consequence of the decision to avoid another Act of Parliament was the change in the nature of public agitation. On January 22, 1894, 'Civis,' the pen-name of Sir George Sydenham Clarke, wrote to the *Times* suggesting the creation of a Navy League. Since the experience of the naval scares of 1884, 1888 and 1893 had shown that the best guarantee of a sufficient fleet was an active and aware public opinion, Clarke proposed,

The only way to secure continuity and sufficiency in our naval policy, to overcome the native inertness of Governments and their fatal tendency to that misplaced economy which is the worst form of extravagance, is to apply the force required steadily, persistently, and uniformly. This can only be done by organization adapted to the purpose.²⁵³

Clarke envisioned the League as a non-partisan lobby group that would not try to dictate policy on technical, strategic or organizational matters that should be left to professionals, but to provide political and public support for responsible Ministers to maintain the navy in an adequate condition. Admiral de Horsey supported Clarke, asserting that the navy would welcome non-partisan support which would prevent party interests from

²⁵²“The Navy,” *Saturday Review*, 77:2004 (Mar 24, 1894), 299-300.

²⁵³‘Civis,’ “The Nation and the Navy,” *Times*, 34167 (Jan 22, 1894), 8.

overwhelming the nation's interest. The *Times* editorial fully supported finding "some means to correct deficiencies in our existing political system..."²⁵⁴

The actual formation of the Navy League was a lengthy process. In November 1894 the League was still fundraising to establish itself. There were meetings in December to draft a constitution and mission statement, and in January the first official meetings were held.²⁵⁵ The Secretary was W.H. Welsh, and Admiral Hornby, who had been involved in the organization of the League in 1894, was elected the first president. The initial constitution of the Navy League stated that its object was to secure the command of the sea through the education of the public about the importance of the navy and the organization of pro-navy political action, and, significantly, "To secure the appointment of a single professional adviser, responsible to the Cabinet, upon the maritime defence of the Empire, whose opinions as to the sufficiency of the preparations covered by the Estimates shall be communicated to Parliament."²⁵⁶ The last statement was a direct reference to the efforts of Dilke, Chesney, Arnold-Forster and Wilkinson to create a responsible professional head of the service who would report directly rather than through a political Minister.

The decision to include a single professional adviser with seemingly broad executive power was very controversial. When the Navy Estimates were going to Committee in March 1895, Arnold-Forster moved that the Government declare that its naval policy was based on the recommendations of the individual who would command the fleet in wartime. 'Sindbad' wrote to the *Times* to explain that this was simply obstructionism, because no government could follow the advice of a non-existent adviser,

²⁵⁴Editorial, *Times*, 34168 (Jan 23, 1894), 7.

²⁵⁵Ad for Navy League meeting, *Times*, 34467 (Jan 7, 1895), 8.

²⁵⁶See NMM, Phipps Hornby Papers, PHI/120/D/1 pt7, William H. Welsh to G.P. Hornby, Dec 15, 1894.

and suggested that the drive for a single professional adviser was alienating supporters of the Navy League.²⁵⁷ Interestingly, Arnold-Forster wrote back denying the accusation of obstructionism, but also denying that he had had any association of any kind with the League.²⁵⁸

Later in 1895, the Navy League was reconstituted with a larger Executive Committee and a mandate to republish the mass of literature generated over the previous decade of navalist discourse. The Executive Committee was chaired by Admiral Vesey Hamilton and included Admirals Colomb, Sir E. Fanshawe, Maxse, Close, Sir L. McClintock and Sir George Elliot. The organization had a Parliamentary Committee that maintained contact with the House of Commons, a Provincial Committee to support local branches of the League, and a Colonial Committee to promote navalism in the Empire.²⁵⁹ Marder describes how mercantile interests and the LCC were attracted to the Navy League, and recent research has emphasized that the membership of the League included a proportionate number of Liberals.²⁶⁰ On the political front, the *Journal* published a letter sent by William Caius Crutchley, the new Secretary of the Navy League, to the press asking for help convincing the public to put a navalist test question to their political candidates in the upcoming election. The question asked, “Will you pledge yourself, if elected to Parliament, to urge upon Government, irrespective of party, the necessity for Naval Estimates adequate to the opinion of the Admiralty to protect our Commerce, to maintain our food supply, and to guarantee the command of the sea under all probable

²⁵⁷ ‘Sindbad,’ “Obstructing the Navy Estimates,” *Times*, 34520 (Mar 9, 1895), 4.

²⁵⁸ H.O. Arnold-Forster, “Mr. Arnold-Forster’s Resolution,” *Times*, 34251 (Mar 11, 1895), 10.

²⁵⁹ Structure briefly described in “The Navy League,” *Navy League Journal*, 1:1 (Jul 1895), 1.

²⁶⁰ Matthew Johnson, “The Liberal Party and the Navy League in Britain before the Great War,” *Twentieth Century British History*, 22:2 (Jun 2011): 137-63; Marder, *Anatomy of British Seapower*, 12.

contingencies of war?”²⁶¹ This shows the new and less combative political approach of the reconstituted League. Eschewing a specific administrative measure meant that the League would have broader appeal and less objectionable political values.

The Navy League Journal: The official organ of the Navy League began publication in July 1895, under the editorship of H.W. Wilson. The first page of issue one stated that the League was, “A strictly non-political organization to urge upon Government and the Electorate the paramount importance of an adequate navy as the best guarantee of Peace.” From the beginning the *Journal* intended to publish unique material from leading naval thinkers, although this was explicitly focused on naval policy rather than technical matters that were better left to professional judgement. Eardley-Wilmot began an article series on, “Our Naval Supremacy – Is it assured?” taking as his starting point the report of the Three Admirals’ Committee and further establishing that moment as the historical turning point. The conversion of working-class people to the cause of navalism was an important aim, which the League viewed as part of the larger struggle of patriotism against the anti-imperial socialism. The point was not to repeat the past, which was described as fifteen years of “panic and sluggish inadvertence alternating, and succeeding one another,” but to provide the consistency that would better suit the dignity and position of the nation. Constant navalist activism would prevent the chaos of periodic scares and panic expenditure, and ensure the ordinary Navy Estimates rose to a level that the political nation deemed necessary.

²⁶¹“The Elections,” *Navy League Journal*, 1:1 (Jul 1895), 3.

Chapter 8 — Conclusion

The series of naval scares spanning 1884–94 were integral to the modernization of the Royal Navy, and it was only through this political process that the Admiralty gained sufficient resources to complete the adaptation of the Service to the full range of new technologies being developed at record pace. The scares represented the increasing public engagement in questions of national defence, driven by the paired processes of democratization and commercial mass media. The political effectiveness of the scares contributed to the entrenchment of the belief in the importance of public opinion. Fleet modernization was, and is, a tremendously expensive process that required a level of peace time government spending far beyond what the British state had been accustomed to for the first two thirds of the nineteenth century. Understanding how public involvement affected naval policy in the nineteenth century has important implications for existing historical assessments of the 'Fisher Era,' undermining its hitherto privileged status in historiography. The naval scares of 1884, 1888 and 1893 were the product of new methods of civil-military relations, and laid the necessary political foundations for the dramatic expansion of naval spending that would permit the Royal Navy to continue its technological innovation while simultaneously expanding its forces.

Naval progress was built on the longstanding and almost universal belief that Britain both required and had a morally just claim to worldwide naval supremacy. Even William Gladstone, the navalists' nemesis in 1884 and 1893, believed in the necessity of naval supremacy, and promised his followers that he would maintain it. The question was always defined by the tension between economy and security, of how much money would

buy an acceptable level of security. The process of defining naval needs was inherently political, because it was about convincing the state to reallocate finite resources to an end that was increasingly framed in terms of national insurance — no one wants to pay more than necessary, but to go without is courting serious loss. Conflict and compromise are an inherent part of the policy-making process, with many different aims and outcomes.

The triumph of blue-water navalism was not inevitable or natural; it was hard won through the extensive educational efforts by naval officers, journalists and politicians operating largely through the press. The 1888 experience of massive simultaneous agitation for both the navy and the army was pivotal to establishing the primacy of a blue-water navalist common sense in the nation. The inherent tension of building the blue-water ideology was between the need to take the public into confidence and explain clearly the state of the navy, and the necessary secrecy to ensure national security. Somewhere the balance point had to be determined, and in general the trend was towards greater openness. Navalists were quick to claim that foreign governments had effective intelligence gathering and were well aware of British policy, with only the British public remaining in ignorance. At the same time, the 1893 Spencer programme opted for greater secrecy, although in this case the public was reassured by experts that an extensive programme did exist and which was verified by the Navy Estimates. The depth and intricacy of the public discourse is impressive, and there were very few aspects of technology, tactics, strategy, finance or policy that were not discussed openly.

The naval scares were located at a specific and unique moment in British history. Successive democratic reform efforts widened the electorate substantially, and the new political economy would place a high value on the support of public opinion to justify

policy decisions, regardless of party. The mass press, utilizing the popularizing techniques of the 'New Journalism,' claimed a novel constitutional role as the Government's watchdog and the representative of the wider public. These two long-term factors were necessary for the late nineteenth-century navalist agitations to be politically effective. These conditions would develop in breadth and depth and would only fundamentally change with the First World War, when new conceptions of propaganda and censorship derived from total war would transform the civil-military relationship.

The press offered a forum for leading thinkers to present their ideas to the educated public, and generate the necessary sensation of pressure to convince policy-makers, both politicians and the Admiralty, to address their concerns. While, in the earlier scares, concern was comparatively restricted to political and professional elites interacting through the limited readership of the political press, after 1884 the leading forums for navalist agitation included widely read civilian journals in addition to the continued role of the service press and parliamentary debates. The most important work was done by the prestigious and prolific Navy League, which maintained its nonpartisan advocacy for adequate naval forces.¹ Studying the output of the public press is a valuable addition to the understanding of naval history because it goes beyond the output of notable thinkers to include the crowd of contributors, correspondents and authors whose combined efforts played an equally significant a role in shaping national attitudes.

Naval officers played an increasingly direct role in the public navalist discourse, particularly through signed articles in the periodical press and involvement with

¹For instance the Navy League published the *Navy League Journal* and the *Navy League Annual*, both of which were priced to be affordable to much of the literate nation. See Iain O'Shea, *Selling 'The Scheme': The British periodical press and the discourse on naval reform, 1900-1910*, (unpublished MA Thesis: University of New Brunswick, 2010).

institutions like the LCC and later the Navy League. Admiral Hornby serves as an exemplar of a precursor to the modern phenomenon of the 'CNN General,' a retired senior officer who can act as an expert interpreter to explain military affairs and policy to the public.² In the 1880s and 90s naval officers were fairly diligent in restraining from public agitation during periods of active service, although this would be transgressed more frequently in the Fisher Era. The expert discourse generated by these experienced officers confirms the need to incorporate these discourses into the historical picture of naval strategy, which is starting to gain more credit with historians. Naval officers had limited official forums to develop and debate issues of technology, logistics, tactics and strategy, and found a replacement in semi-official bodies like the Royal United Service Institution and the service press. As naval officers became directly involved with the press, their efforts were loosely coordinated through private correspondence, which indicates that their motives for cooperative action were genuine and patriotic.

The effectiveness of public agitation had obvious limits, leading to failed attempts to trigger a scare, most notably in 1886 and 1892. The consistent public agitation conducted by notable navalist writers, like Reed or Admiral Symonds, did not carry sufficient credibility to bridge the gap between specialist and general concern, and thus could not gain sufficient influence to alter political decision-making. Attempts to mobilize public opinion around technical issues or specific policy questions proved to be far less effective than appeals based on the big picture of national finances. The 1884 Navy Scare was the turning point for these agitators, because their credibility was undeniably established by the 1885 Russian War Scare, and this set a valuable precedent

²See Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) for more on the military-media relationship, particularly the 'CNN Effect' in the 1990s.

for the later events. To be politically effective, the domestic discourse on the state of the navy required external validation of its pessimistic evaluations, particularly in the numerical comparisons of British strength.

This dissertation has endeavoured to show the nuance and complexity inherent in the navalist discourse and recognize that the scares may have been constructed phenomena, but they involved a great deal of thoughtful discussion to flesh out concepts that could not simply be taken for granted in an era devoid of war experience. Navalists applied the limited knowledge of the time to extrapolate and anticipate the problems that would be faced in war. For this reason, after 1884 and the subsequent Northbrook programme agitators focused on projections of deficiency that anticipated the relative strength of the navy as British and foreign vessels were brought into service. There were justifiable reasons to anticipate needs, because technological change was so rapid that contemporaries felt like they had to assume only the most modern ships had fighting value, and because they were well aware that it took years to build major warships. Each attendant aspect, such as relative shipbuilding rates or the relative fighting power of older vessels, was subjected to tremendous debate with widely varying estimates. In hindsight it is easy to evaluate the truth, but for contemporaries there was a great deal of confusion in the very terms of the debate.

The Two-Power Standard was one of the most important outcomes of the scares, particularly when it was officially articulated in 1888 as a foundational concept for evaluating the state of the navy. Consideration of the navalist discourse reveals that this concept was not originally as rigid as historians have treated it. Equality with the next two naval powers did not necessarily mean bare numerical equality of total forces;

thinkers debated what 'margin for victory' was built into the standard, how it related to the projected 5:3 ratio of superiority required for effective blockading, and whether the Two-Power Standard applied to each specific region (like the Mediterranean). Equally important, cruisers and the provisions for trade defence were never discussed in terms of a Two-Power Standard, with thinkers debating whether forces should be kept in proportion to anticipated commerce raiding, the geographical length of trade routes, or the relative size of the British Merchant Marine. Obviously, each of these 'slight' differences results in widely different projections for what forces would be required in war. Then the question mutates into what proportion of this ideal force should be maintained in peacetime, what proportion in reserve, and what forces could be left to marshal only upon the outbreak of war.

What historians need to realize is that the Two-Power Standard was not a simple solution to public agitation, because these questions were all part of the public discourse. When John Beeler described the naval scares, he judged Britain's naval strength to compare reasonably with the strength of France, but this misses the internal, perfectionist element of the discourse. The navy was not just compared with its rival, but also against projections of an idealized navy, which would remove all of the undesirable shortcomings regardless of whether other nations were equally affected. The cruiser question in particular rarely revolved around foreign powers, with the emphasis being placed on characterizing these forces as a type of maritime insurance. The idea of the navy as a form of national insurance provided a complementary rationale to the Two-Power Standard. Comparisons of the Royal Navy to the enormous size of British commerce, shipping or national revenue were an easy method of justifying large naval

increases that did not solely depend on references to foreign powers for their credibility. The appeal to commercial interests for valuable political support particularly benefitted from having naval officers present this kind of intelligible interpretation.

The reality of the scares has been a major focus for the limited historical work considering the scares. Beeler concluded that navalists in the 1884 Navy Scare fabricated an unreasonably pessimistic picture that effectively lied about the real strength of the Royal Navy.³ Beeler has his facts straight, and in the perfection of hindsight this appears to be a logical assessment. In contrast, Matthew Seligmann gives the Admiralty credit for acting on genuine intelligence information in the 1909 Navy Scare, even though it ultimately turned out to be incorrect.⁴ This dissertation has supported Seligmann's approach of evaluating decisions based on the knowledge of the time, although even this does not address the core issue. It is unfair to assume that contemporary thinkers possessed perfect knowledge of the power of the Royal Navy in comparison to foreign navies, and it misses the essential nature of political questions — reality is far less important than perceptions and interpretations of reality. The objective truth of the scares has its usefulness for historians, but it is insufficient to explain important political movements simply as a function of cynical manipulation or lies.

The application of private papers to the study of the press discourse and parliamentary debates does not indicate the application of conspiracies, whether by armaments industries on politicians or professional naval officers on their political masters. Men like Spencer, Salisbury and Gladstone were very experienced and not easily manipulated by subordinates or nascent lobby groups. Navalists had to present solid,

³Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era*, 260-80.

⁴Seligmann, "Intelligence Information and the 1909 Naval Scare" and "Britain's Great Security Mirage."

justifiable arguments backed by plausible claims to represent a large portion of electoral opinion in order to convince political leaders that an expansionist naval policy was necessary, either for strategic or political reasons. In 1884 Gladstone was convinced of the political necessity to promise a naval programme, while in 1893-94 he strongly resisted greater naval spending that Spencer was convinced was strategically necessary to follow up on the NDA. The scares indicate the transition of the political public away from very economy-minded 'Manchester School' attitudes of the mid-Victorian period, towards approval of state spending. The introduction of social-security spending in the twentieth century is well described, but state spending was equally affected by the longer-term pressure of almost constantly increasing defence spending from the 1880s. Incidents of severe public agitation over the sufficiency of the navy that led to large construction programmes, such as 1893 and 1909, would be the catalyst for reforms to taxation, with all the attendant effects on the structure of society like the position of the aristocracy.

The nature of the scares was far more complex than historians have realized. They were not primarily a response to a fear of decline, and recent historical work has cast reasonable doubt on whether the experience of relative decline actually defined British policy-making at the turn of the century. The recurring fear was that the Government would choose to keep the navy weaker than it should be for reasons of partisan political expediency, but there was always confidence that Britain could out build any combination of rivals if necessary. The scares, particularly that of 1884, were evidence that an increasingly informed and politically active public doubted the ability of the civilian-led political system to adequately treat non-partisan issues like national defence. The publicized shipbuilding programmes arising out of the scares, whether official like

the 1889 NDA or unofficial like the Spencer programme, played an important role in assuring the nation that a popularly elected Ministry in a partisan political system was capable of conducting defence policy.

Historians who have studied naval politics in the Fisher Era have been misguided by their failure to appreciate the degree to which naval policy debates were a continuation of the developments of the late nineteenth century. In the heated nineteenth-century debates, a variety of thinkers, including active and retired naval officers, journalists, politicians and educated citizens, gave concrete form and definition to the main ideas of naval reform that were implemented in the following decades. Fisher's reform efforts were an important piece of naval reform, but they followed the patterns and ideas set during earlier debates — the goal was always to replace obsolete vessels with modern ships, improve training and education, concentrate forces in decisive theatres, and increase the war-readiness of the fleet. Even naval historians who have examined public relations focus largely on the twentieth century 'Fisher Era,' when the examples are far more extensive and obvious, but the depth of the inheritance must be traced back to the pivotal 1880s.⁵ Christopher Bell's conclusion characterizes it best: “If we shift our perspective a little, and accept that Fisher and his ideas were a peripheral rather than a central part of the process, the evidence no longer points towards a Fisher-inspired naval revolution.”⁶

A new appreciation of naval scares and the importance of public discourses has serious consequences for the approach to naval history in the Fisher Era. Severe tensions exist between the revisionist school of thought established by Jon Sumida and Nicholas

⁵Specifically, Mark Hamilton, *Navy and Nation*; A.J.A. Morris, *Scaremongers*, and Jan Ruger, *Great Naval Game*, all place their primary emphasis on the late 1890s and the Fisher Era.

⁶Bell, “Standards and Scholarship,” 409.

Lambert, primarily, and their recent challengers, notably Bell.⁷ The revisionists have rightly emphasized the innovation of naval thought, but they carry their point too far in constructing conspiracy theories of hidden or secret plans, whether it be the use of a 'tactical-technical synthesis' in battlefleet actions or a system of flotilla defence to replace the traditional battlefleet. Even Andrew Lambert's proposal that Fisher was intentionally triggering an Arms Race with Germany as a strategic method of crushing rivals falls into this kind of conspiracy.⁸ These theories are being challenged by new historical work that gives more weight to the strategic value of the traditional battlefleet, the reasoned conservatism of politicians and naval officers alike, and the unofficial contemporary tactical and strategic discussions.⁹

The naval scares and the importance of public opinion for naval development show that it was extremely unlikely if not impossible for the Government or Admiralty to adopt a radical new strategy without preparing and educating the public about its merits. Policy was not made in isolation on purely functional grounds; it always had a political

⁷Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* and Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* are the two major works.

⁸Andrew Lambert, *Admirals*, Fisher chapter.

⁹The main pieces of the dreadnought gunnery tactics debate are John Brooks, *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland*; Brooks, "Dreadnought: Blunder or Stroke of Genius?"; Stephen McLaughlin, "Battlelines and Fast Wings: Battlefleet tactics in the Royal Navy, 1900-1914," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:7 (Dec 2015): 985-1005; Sumida "A Matter of Timing: The Royal Navy and the Tactics of Defensive Battle, 1912-1916," *Journal of Military History*, 67:1 (Jan 2003): 85-136; Sumida, "Expectation, Adaptation, and Resignation: British Battlefleet Tactical Planning, August 1914-April 1916," *Naval War College Review*, 60:3 (Summer 2007): 101-22. The second main historical debate focuses on flotilla defence under Churchill's leadership. See Christopher M. Bell, "Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution Reconsidered: Winston Churchill at the Admiralty, 1911-1914," *War in History*, 18:3 (Jul 2011): 333-56; Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bell, "On Standards and Scholarship: A Response to Nicholas Lambert," *War in History*, 20:3 (Jul 2013): 381-409; Bell, "The Myth of a Naval Revolution by Proxy: Lord Fisher's influence on Winston Churchill's Naval Policy, 1911-1914," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:7 (2015): 1024-44; Nicholas A. Lambert, "Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904-9," *Journal of Military History*, 59:4 (Oct 1995): 639-60; Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*; Lambert, "On Standards: A Reply to Christopher Bell," *War in History*, 19:2 (Apr 2012): 217-40; Lambert, "Righting the Scholarship: The battle-cruiser in history and historiography," *The Historical Journal*, 58:1 (2015): 275-307.

element that had to be considered. Traditional force structures, like battleships, offered a certainty of security that could not be simply traded for a force, no matter its strength, of flotilla craft. Bell shows that the 1912 attempt to implement flotilla defence in the secondary theatre of the Mediterranean failed because of the reasoned conservatism of the Service, which preferred to place its faith in the nation to pay rather than trust to a revolutionary and untested strategy.¹⁰ Many interesting concepts were proposed in the volatile period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but there were solid reasons behind the policy choices that are best explained by exploring civil-military relations rather than finding secret revolutions.

The biggest problem in pre-First World War histories of the Royal Navy is not the interpretations that are applied to the 'Fisher Era,' but the sheer dominance of the 1900s in the historiography. Continuity, not change, is the dominant theme of the four decades before the Great War, and the neglect of the 1880s and 90s has severely skewed the historical understanding of the period. The Royal Navy was faced with unprecedented technology change amidst a total lack of large-scale war experience, and the naval officers and policy-makers deserve greater credit for their adaptability and ingenuity under the circumstances. All armed forces face the challenge of justifying their budgets, and the most important struggle in the late nineteenth century was not how the money was spent, but how to justify receiving the money in the first place. Later reforms were successful because the battle for funding had been won in 1884–94. The public and political spheres had been educated in a blue-water strategic outlook by increasingly intellectually rigorous and consistent public activism that ensured the Royal Navy's needs were given generous consideration.

¹⁰Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, 17-22, 37-8.

Substantial historical work remains to be done in understanding the complex civil-military relationship at the turn of the century. The Fisher Era requires a detailed assessment of the interactions of the Service, press and policy-makers to further contextualize the reform efforts of Fisher and appreciate the depth of discourse that surrounded the events. Simple descriptions of cultural navalism/militarism will need to be re-evaluated in light of the consistently nuanced and thoughtful nature of a large proportion of public writing. The naval scares defined an important transitional decade and played a huge role in determining the size and composition of the Royal Navy moving into the conflict-ridden twentieth century.

Bibliography

Archives

Bodleian Library Special Collections, Oxford (BodL)

Harcourt, Sir William George Granville Venables Vernon (1827–1904) Knight Statesman.

British Library, London (BL)

Arnold-Forster, Hugh Oakeley, (1855–1909), Supplementary Papers.

Balfour, Arthur James, 1st Earl of Balfour, (1848–1930).

Beresford, Charles William de la Poer, Admiral, Baron Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore.

Dilke, Sir Charles Wentworth, 3rd Baronet, (1874–1918).

General War Office Papers.

Gladstone, William Ewart, Rt. Hon., (1809–1898).

Martin, Sir William Fanshawe, Admiral of the Fleet, (1801-1895).

Robinson, George Frederick Samuel, 1st Marquess of Ripon (1849–1909).

Spencer, John Poyntz, 5th Earl Spencer, (1835–1910), in Althorp Papers.

Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge (CACC)

Brett, Reginald Baliol, 2nd Viscount Esher, (1852–1930).

Churchill, Randolph Henry Spencer, Lord, (1849–1895).

Fisher, John Arbuthnot, Admiral of the Fleet, 1st Baron Fisher (1841–1920).

Stead, William Thomas, (1849–1912).

McGill University Special Collections, Montreal (McGill)

Bellairs, Carlyon Wilfroy, MP, (1871–1955).

National Archives, Kew (NA)

Cabinet Documents

Cabinet Papers of the Earl of Northbrook, First Lord of the Admiralty

War Office: William H. Smith, Secretary of State for War: Papers

Ardagh, Sir John Charles, Major-General.

National Library of Scotland (NLS)

Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929).

National Maritime Museum (NMM)

Bridge, Sir Cyprian Arthur George, Admiral, (1839–1924).

Currey, Bernard, Admiral, (1885–1914).

Fremantle, The Hon. Sir Edmund Robert, Admiral, (1836–1929) in Fremantle Family Papers.

Greene, Sir William Graham, Secretary of the Admiralty, (1857-1950).

Hamilton, Sir Frederick Tower, Admiral, (1856–1917) in Hamilton Family Papers.

Hamilton, Sir Richard Vesey, Admiral, (1829–1912).

Hornby, Sir Geoffrey Thomas Phipps, Admiral of the Fleet, (1825–1895) in Phipps Hornby Collection.

Keppel, The Hon. Sir Henry, Admiral of the Fleet, (1809–1904), in Hamilton Family Papers.

Noel, Sir Gerard Henry Uctred, Admiral of the Fleet, (1845–1918).

Nineteenth Century Collections Online (NCCO)

Cabinet Papers, 1880–1916.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Army and Navy Gazette: Journal of the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

The Broad Arrow and Naval and Military Gazette

Caledonian Mercury

Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal; after 1889, The United Service Magazine: with which is incorporated The Army and Navy Magazine

The Contemporary Review

Daily News

Edinburgh Review

Fortnightly Review

The Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine: A Monthly Journal devoted to all subjects connected with Her Majesty's Land and Sea Forces

Journal of the Royal United Service Institution

The National Observer

The National Review

The Naval Annual

Navy League Journal: The Official Organ of the Navy League

The New Review

The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review

The Pall Mall Gazette: An Evening Newspaper and Review

The Quarterly Review

The Review of Reviews

The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art

The Speaker: The Liberal Review

The Spectator

The Star (St. Peter Port, England)

The Times (London)

Westminster Review

Collections of Personal Papers

The Crisis of British Power: The imperial and naval papers of the second Earl of Selborne, 1895–1910. D. George Boyce, Ed. London: Historian's Press, 1990.

The Diaries of William Gladstone. 14 vols. M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew, Eds. Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corporation, 2002. Ebook.

The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, 1880–1885. 2 Vols. Dudley W.R. Bahlman, Ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Fear God and Dread Nought: The correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone. 3 Volumes. Arthur J. Marder, Ed. London: Cape, 1952-59.

The Letters and Papers of Professor Sir John Knox Laughton, 1830–1915, Andrew Lambert, Ed. Aldershot: Ashgate and Navy Records Society, 2002.

The Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C.E. Childers, 1827–1896. 2 Volumes. Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Childers, Ed. London: John Murray, 1901.

Naval Intelligence from Germany: The Reports of the British Naval Attachés in Berlin, 1906-1914. Matthew S. Seligmann, Ed. Navy Records Society, 2007.

Opinions and Policy of Viscount Palmerston: as minister, diplomatist, and statesman, during more than forty years of public life, George Henry Francis, Ed. London: Colburn, 1852.

The Red Earl: the papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer, Vol. II: 1885–1910. Peter Gordon, Ed. Northampton: Northampton Records Society, 1986.

Memoirs and Primary Sources

Beresford, Lord Charles de la Poer. *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford.* 2 Volumes. 2nd Edition. Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1914.

Cobden, Richard. *The Three Panics: An historical episode.* London: Ward & Co. 1862.

Cobden Club. *The Burden of Armaments: A plea for retrenchment.* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905.

Colomb, Admiral Sir Philip Howard. *Naval Warfare: Its ruling principles and practice historically treated.* London: W.H. Allen, 1891.

Dilke, Charles Wentworth and Spenser Wilkinson. *Imperial Defence.* London: Macmillan and Co., 1892.

Gardiner, A.G. *The Life of Sir William Harcourt.* London: Constable, 1923.

- Hamilton, Lord George. *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886–1906*. 2 Volumes. London, 1922.
- Hattendorf, John B. Ed. *British Naval Documents, 1204–1960*. Aldershot: Scolar Press for the Navy Records Society, 1993.
- Hay, Admiral the Right Hon. Sir John C. Darlymple. *Lines from my Log-Books*. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1898.
- Hirst, Francis Wrigley. *The Six Panics and Other Essays*. 1913.
- Joinville, Prince François Ferdinand Phillippe Louis Marie d'Orléans. *Note sur l'état des forces navales de la France*. Paris: Béhune et Plon, [1844?].
- Lloyd, David. *A Rhapsody on the Present System of French Politics; on the Projected Invasion, and the means to defeat it. Illustrated with Plans, on three coppery plates. By --, a Chelsea Pensioner*. London: W. Faden, 1779.
- Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*. London: Methuen, 1965.
- Mallet, Bernard. *Thomas George: Earl of Northbrook, G.C.S.I., a memoir*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.
- Napier, Rear-Admiral Sir Charles, K.C.B. *The Navy: Its Past and Present State, in a series of letters*. Major-General Sir William Napier, K.C.B., Ed. London: John & Daniel A. Darling, 1851.
- Spender, J.A. *Life, Journalism and Politics: Volume I*. London: Cassell and Company, 1927.
- Tweed, John. "The Invasion: or, England's Glory. A drama, as it is intended to be acted in 1798." Bocking, 1798.
- Wiener, Joel H. Ed. *Great Britain: Foreign Policy and the Span of Empire, 1689–1971, a documentary history*. 4 Volumes. New York: Chelsea House, 1972.

Secondary Sources

- Alder, Ken. *Engineering the Revolution: Arms and Enlightenment in France, 1763–1815*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Alexander, R.S. *Europe's Uncertain Path, 1814–1914: State Formation and Civil Society*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Alger, Dean E. *The Media and Politics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.

- Attridge, Steve. *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Bacon, Reginald H. *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929.
- Baumgart, Winfried. *The Crimean War, 1853–1856*. New York: Arnold, 1999.
- Beeler, John. *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866–1880*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Bell, Christopher M. *Churchill and Sea Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Bennett, Geoffrey Martin. *Charlie B: A biography of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford of Metemmeh and Curraghmore, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., LL.D., D.C.L.* London: Dawnay, 1968.
- Biagini, Eugenio F. *Gladstone*. London: Macmillan Press, 2000.
- Black, Jeremy. *The British Seaborne Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Breuilly, John. *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982.
- Broers, Michael. *Europe After Napoleon: Revolution, reaction, and romanticism, 1814–1848*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.
- Brooks, John. *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Cannadine, David. *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Carew, Anthony. *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 1900–39: The Invergordon Mutiny in perspective*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981.
- Carruthers, Susan L. *The Media At War*. 2nd Ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Chapman, Tim. *The Congress of Vienna: Origins, processes and results*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Church, Clive H. *Europe in 1830: Revolution and Political Change*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983.
- Churchill, Right Hon. Winston Spencer, MP *Lord Randolph Churchill*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1907.
- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the nation, 1707–1837*. London: Vintage, 1996.

- Crick, Timothy. *Ramparts of Empire: The fortifications of Sir William Jervois, Royal Engineer, 1821–1897*. University of Exeter Press, 2012.
- Darwin, John. *The Empire Project: The rise and fall of the British world-system, 1830–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Davison, Robert L. *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's executive branch officers, 1880–1919*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.
- Dooley, Allan C. *Author and Printer in Victorian England*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992.
- Evans, David. *Building the Steam Navy: Dockyard Technology and the Creation of the Victorian Battle Fleet, 1830–1905*. Conway Maritime Press, 2004.
- Feuchtwanger, E.J. *Democracy and Empire: Britain, 1865–1914*. London: E. Arnold, 1985.
- Foster, Robert F. *Lord Randolph Churchill: a political life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
- Friedburg, Aaron L. *The Weary Titan: Britain and the experience of relative decline, 1895–1905*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Gat, Azar. *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Grainger, John D. *The First Pacific War: Britain and Russia, 1854–1856*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008.
- Green, E.H.H. *The Crisis of Conservatism: The politics, economics, and ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880–1914*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2005.
- Greenhill, Basil and Ann Giffard, *Steam, Politics and Patronage: The Transformation of the Navy, 1815–54*. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1994.
- Grimes, Shawn T. *Strategy and War Planning in the Royal Navy*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2012.
- Hamer, D.A. *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery: A study in leadership and policy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Hamilton, C.I. *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making, 1805–1927*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Hamilton, W. Mark. *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and organization of British navalist propaganda, 1889–1914*. New York and London: Garland, 1986.

- Handover, P.M. *Printing in London: From 1746 to modern times*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960.
- Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn. *The Army and Victorian Society*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Hogg, Ian and John Batchelor. *Naval Gun*. Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1978.
- Hooper, Alan. *The Military and the Media*. Aldershot: Gower, 1982.
- Hough, Richard. *Admirals in Collision*. London: White Lion, 1973.
- Humble, Richard. *Before the Dreadnought: The Royal Navy From Nelson to Fisher*. London: MacDonal and Jane's, 1976.
- Jackson, Kate. *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880–1914: Culture and profit*. Ashgate, 2001.
- James, Robert Rhodes. *Lord Randolph Churchill*. New York: Barnes, 1960.
- Jenkins, T.A. *The Liberal Ascendancy, 1830-1886*. London: MacMillan, 1994.
- Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic change and military conflict from 500 to 2000*. New York: 1987.
- Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*. London: Ashfield, 1987.
- Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. London: Penguin, 1976.
- Kidd, Alan. *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*. London: MacMillan Press, 1999.
- Knightley, Phillip. *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The war correspondent as hero, propagandist, and myth maker*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.
- Koss, Stephen. *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. I: The nineteenth century*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984.
- Lambert, Andrew. *Admirals: The naval commanders who made Britain great*. Faber & Faber, Kindle Edition, 2007.

- Lambert, Andrew. *Battleships in Transition: The creation of the steam battlefleet, 1815–1860*. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1984.
- Lambert, Andrew. *The Crimean War: British grand strategy against Russia, 1853–56*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.
- Lambert, Andrew. *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy, and the naval historical profession*. London: Chatham, 1998.
- Lambert, Nicholas. *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005.
- Landes, David S. *The Unbound Prometheus: technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Lewis, Michael. *The Navy in Transition, 1814–1864: A Social History*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965.
- Lowe, C.J. *Salisbury and the Mediterranean, 1886–1896*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.
- Lynn, John. *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture, from Ancient Greece to Modern America*. Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2003.
- Mackay, Ruddock F. *Fisher of Kilverstone*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
- MacKenzie, John M. *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.
- Mann, Michael. *The Sources of Social Power: Volume II: The Rise of Classes and Nation States, 1760–1914*. Cambridge, 1993.
- Marder, Arthur. *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A history of British naval policy in the pre-dreadnought era, 1880–1905*. 1940.
- Marder, Arthur. *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, Volume I: The Road to War, 1904–1914*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013.
- Matzke, Rebecca Berens. *Deterrence through Strength: British naval power and foreign policy under Pax Britannica*. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2011.
- McNeill, William H. *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, armed force and society since A.D. 1000*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

- McQuail, Denis. *Audience Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Morris, A.J.A. *The Scaremongers: The advocacy of war and rearmament, 1896–1914*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Naylor, Lonard Edwin. *The Irrepressible Victorian: The story of Thomas Gibson Bowles, journalist, parliamentarian and founder editor of the original Vanity Fair*. London: Macdonald, 1965.
- Neilson, Keith. *Britain and the Last Tsar: British policy and Russia, 1894–1917*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Padfield, Peter. *Rule Britannia: The Victorian and Edwardian navy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.
- Parkinson, Roger. *The Late Victorian Navy: The pre-Dreadnought era and the origins of the First World War*. New York: Boydell, 2008.
- Parry, Ann. Ed. *The Admirals Fremantle*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971.
- Parry, Jonathan. *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Perkin, Harold. *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880*. London: Routledge, 1969.
- Perkin, Harold. *The Origins of Professional Society: England since 1880*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Pollard, Sidney and Robertson, Paul. *The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1870–1914*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Pollen, Anthony. *The Great Gunnery Scandal: The mystery of Jutland*. London: Collins, 1980.
- Pugh, Philip. *The Cost of Seapower: The influence of money on naval affairs from 1815 to the present day*. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1986.
- Ranft, Bryan, Ed. *Technical Change and British Naval Policy, 1860–1939*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977.
- Richardson, James. *Crisis Diplomacy: The great powers since the mid-nineteenth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Richmond, Admiral Sir Herbert. *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Admiral of the Fleet*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1929.

- Rippon, P.M. *Evolution of Engineering in the Royal Navy, Volume I: 1827–1939*. Tunbridge Wells: Spellmount, 1988.
- Rubinstein, W.D. *Britain's Century: A political and social history, 1815–1905*. London: Arnold, 1998.
- Ruger, Jan. *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the age of empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Sandler, Stanley. *The Emergence of the Modern Capital Ship*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1979.
- Schults, Raymond L. *Crusader in Babylon: W.T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
- Schurman, Donald M. *The Education of the Navy: The development of British naval strategic thought, 1867–1914*. London: Cassell, 1965.
- Schurman, Donald M. *Imperial Defence, 1868–1887*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000.
- Schurman, Donald M. *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922: Historian of British maritime policy from Drake to Jellicoe*. London: Royal Historical Society, 1981.
- Seligmann, Matthew S. *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901–1914: Admiralty plans to protect trade in a war against Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Semmel, Bernard. *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, interest and sea power during the Pax Britannica*. Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986.
- Shannon, Richard. *Gladstone: Volume I, Peel's Inheritor, 1809–1865*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1982.
- Spitzer, Robert, Ed. *Media and Public Policy*. Westport: Praeger, 1993.
- Stearns, Peter N. *European Society in Upheaval: Social History since 1750*. 2nd Edition. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- Steele, E.D. *Lord Salisbury: a political biography*. London; New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Sumida, Jon T. *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, technology and British naval policy, 1889–1914*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Thompson, Andrew. *The Empire Strikes Back?: The impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

- Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Tilly, Charles, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly. *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Twyman, Michael. *Printing, 1770–1970: An illustrated history of its development and uses in England*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970.
- Warren, Kenneth. *Armstrongs of Elswick: Growth in engineering and armaments to the merger with Vickers*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Weiner, Martin J. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Wheeler, H.F.B. and A.M. Broadley. *Napoleon and the Invasion of England: The Story of the Great Terror*. Nonsuch Publishing, 2007. Original 1908.
- Wiener, Joel and Mark Hampton. *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850–2000*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Wiener, Joel. Ed. *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Wilson, Keith. Ed. *Empire and Continent: studies in British foreign policy from the 1880s to the First World War*. London: Mansell, 1987.
- Zimmerman, David. *Britain's Shield: Radar and the defeat of the Luftwaffe*. Stroud: Amberley, 2010.

Secondary Source Articles

- Allen, Matthew. "The British Mediterranean Squadron during the Great Eastern Crisis of 1878-79." *Mariner's Mirror*. 85:1 (1999): 53-67.
- Allen, Matthew. "The Deployment of Untried Technology: British naval tactics in the Ironclad Era." *War in History*. 15:3 (Jul 2008): 269-93.
- Allen, Matthew. "The Origins, Conduct and Outcomes of the British Naval Exercises of 1885." *Mariner's Mirror*. 91:3 (2005): 421-35.
- Baker, Gordon. "The romantic and radical nature of the 1870 Education Act." *History of Education*, 30:3 (May 2001): 211-32.

- Bastable, Marshall J. "From Breechloaders to Monster Guns: Sir William Armstrong and the Invention of Modern Artillery, 1854–1880." *Technology and Culture*, 33:2 (April 1992): 213-47.
- Baylen, J.O. "Politics and the 'New Journalism': Lord Esher's Use of the 'Pall Mall Gazette'." *Victorian Periodicals Review*. 20:4 (Winter 1987): 126-41.
- Beeler, John. "Review Article: The Theatre of Navalism in Germany and Britain." *The International History Review*. 30:2 (June 2008): 332-42.
- Bell, Christopher M. "On Standards and Scholarship: A response to Nicholas Lambert." *War in History*. 20:3 (Jul 2013): 381-409.
- Bell, Christopher M. "Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution Reconsidered: Winston Churchill at the Admiralty, 1911-1914." *War in History*. 18:3 (Jul 2011): 333-56.
- Bell, Christopher M. "The Myth of a Naval Revolution by Proxy: Lord Fisher's influence on Winston Churchill's naval policy, 1911–1914." *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 38:7 (2015): 1024-44.
- Berridge, A.L. "Off the Chart: The Crimean War in British public consciousness." *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 20 (May 2015).
www.19.bbk.ac.uk/articles/10.16995/ntn.726/
- Brook, John. "Dreadnought: Blunder or Stroke of Genius?" *War in History*. 14:2 (2007): 157-78.
- Caquet, P.E. "Notions of Drug Addiction at the time of the First Opium War." *The Historical Journal*. 58:4 (Dec 2015): 1009-29.
- Fraser, John. "Propaganda on the Picture Postcard." *Oxford Art Journal*. 3:2 Propaganda (Oct, 1980): 39-47.
- Gordon, Donald C. "The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration, 1885–1904." *Political Science Quarterly*. 77:4 (Dec 1962): 526-45.
- Hamilton, C.I. "Diplomatic and Naval Effects of the Prince de Joinville's Note sur l'etat des forces navales de la France of 1844." *Historical Journal*. 32:3 (Sep 1989): 675-87.
- Hampton, Mark. "Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the press in Britain, 1830–1914." *Victorian Periodicals Review*. 37:1 (Spring 2004): 72-92.
- Hillier, Mary Ruth. "The Identification of Authors: The Great Victorian Enigma," in J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdel, eds., *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978): 123-48.

- Hinton, Mike. "Reporting the Crimean War: Misinformation and Misinterpretation." *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 20 (May 2015).
www.19.bbk.ac.uk/articles/10.16995/ntn.711/
- Johnson, Matthew. "The Liberal Party and the Navy League in Britain before the Great War." *Twentieth Century British History*. 22:2 (June 2011): 137-63.
- Judd, Denis. "Gordon of Khartoum: The making of an imperial martyr." *History Today*. 35:1 (Jan 1985): 19-25.
- Lambert, Nicholas. "Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904–9." *Journal of Military History*. 59:4 (Oct 1995): 639-60.
- Lambert, Nicholas. "On Standards: A reply to Christopher Bell." *War in History*. 19:2 (Apr 2012): 217-40.
- Lambert, Nicholas. "Righting the Scholarship: The battle-cruiser in history and historiography," *The Historical Journal*. 58:1 (2015): 275-307.
- Macleod, Christine, Jeremy Stein, Jennifer Tann and James Andrew. "Making waves: The Royal Navy's management of invention and innovation in steam shipping, 1815–1832." *History and Technology*. 16:4 (Jan 2000): 307-33.
- Marder, Arthur J. "The English Armament Industry and Navalism in the Nineties." *Pacific Historical Review*. 7:3 (September 1938): 241-53.
- Marder, Arthur J. "The Origin of Popular Interest in the Royal Navy," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. 82 (Feb 1, 1837): 763-71.
- Matin, A. Michael. "Scrutinizing the Battle of Dorking: The Royal United Service Institution and the mid-Victorian invasion scare." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. 39:2 (2011): 385-407.
- Matin, A. Michael. "The Creativity of War Planners: Armed forces professionals and the pre-1914 British invasion-scare genre." *ELH*. 78:4 (Winter 2011): 801-31.
- McLaughlin, Stephen. "Battlelines and Fast Wings: Battlefleet tactics in the Royal Navy, 1900–1914." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38:7 (Dec 2015): 985-1005.
- Neilson, Keith. "Greatly Exaggerated: The myth of the decline of Great Britain before 1914." *International History Review*. 13:4 (Nov 1991): 695-725.
- Nevett, Terry. "Advertising and Editorial Integrity in the Nineteenth Century." in Michael Harris and Allan Lee, Eds. *The Press in English from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*. Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986.

- Penson, Lillian. "Foreign Affairs under the Third Marquis of Salisbury." *The Creighton Lecture in History, 1960*. University of London, 1962.
- Redford, Duncan. "Opposition to the Channel Tunnel, 1882–1975: Identity, Island Status and Security." *History*. 99:334 (Jan 2014): 100-20.
- Ruger, Jan. "Nation, Empire and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom, 1887–1914." *Past & Present*. 185 (Nov 2004): 159-87.
- Seligmann, Matthew S. "Britain's Great Security Mirage: The Royal Navy and the Franco-Russian Naval Threat, 1898-1906." *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 35:6 (Dec 2012): 861-86.
- Seligmann, Matthew S. "Intelligence Information and the 1909 Naval Scare: The secret foundations of a public panic," *War in History*, 17:1 (January 2010): 37-59.
- Seligmann, Matthew S. "Naval History by Conspiracy Theory: The British Admiralty before the First World War and the Methodology of Revisionism." *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 38:7 (2015): 966-84.
- Seligmann, Matthew S. "Switching Horses: The Admiralty's recognition of the threat from Germany, 1900–1905." *International History Review*. XXX (Jun 2008): 239-58.
- Smith, Steven R.B. "Public Opinion, the Navy, and the City of London: The drive for British naval expansion in the late nineteenth century." *War and Society*, 9 (1991): 29-50. in Andrew Lambert, Ed. *Naval History 1850-Present, Vol. I*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007: 273-94.
- Sumida, Jon T. "A Matter of Timing: The Royal Navy and the tactics of defensive battle, 1912–1916." *Journal of Military History*. 67:1 (Jan 2003): 85-136.
- Sumida, Jon T. "British Naval Administration and Policy in the Age of Fisher." *Journal of Military History*. 54:1 (Jan 1, 1990): 1-26.
- Sumida, Jon T. "Expectation, Adaptation, and Resignation: British battlefleet tactical planning, August 1914–April 1916." *Naval War College Review*. 60:3 (Summer 2007): 101-22.
- Sumida, Jon T. "Sir John Fisher and the Dreadnought: The sources of naval mythology." *Journal of Military History*. 59:4 (October 1995): 619-37.