

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE
INFLUENCE OF
SEA POWER UPON
THE FRENCH
REVOLUTION
AND EMPIRE,
1793-1812

FOURTH EDITION

A. J. MARRAS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607
LONDON, ENGLAND W2 1BS

0022-216X/91/0000-0000

The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812

VOLUME 1

A. T.



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108023726

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1893

This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-02372-6 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

History

The books reissued in this series include accounts of historical events and movements by eye-witnesses and contemporaries, as well as landmark studies that assembled significant source materials or developed new historiographical methods. The series includes work in social, political and military history on a wide range of periods and regions, giving modern scholars ready access to influential publications of the past.

The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) was an American naval officer, considered one of the most important naval strategists of the nineteenth century. In 1885 he was appointed Lecturer in Naval History and Tactics at the US Naval War College, and became President of the institution between 1886–1889. These volumes, first published in 1893, contain Mahan's detailed analysis of British and French naval strategy during the French Revolution, defined as lasting between 1793–1812. Mahan recounts chronologically the major naval battles and campaigns between Britain and France and their allies, analysing the different naval strategies used and discussing Britain's successful naval tactics. Mahan was the first naval strategist to explore the importance of controlling and protecting commercial shipping and preventing blockades of ports during warfare, tactics which he fully explores using historical examples from the French Revolution in these volumes. Volume 1 covers the period 1793–1801.

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection will bring back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

THE
INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER
UPON THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION AND EMPIRE
1793-1812

BY
CAPTAIN A. T. MAHAN, U.S.N.

PRESIDENT UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

AUTHOR OF "THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER UPON HISTORY, 1660-1783"
OF "THE GULF AND INLAND WATERS," AND OF A
"LIFE OF ADMIRAL FARRAGUT"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY, LIMITED
St. Dunstan's House
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1893

UNIVERSITY PRESS.
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

P R E F A C E.

THE present work, like its predecessor, "The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783," is wholly a result of the author's connection with the United States Naval War College as lecturer upon Naval History and Naval Tactics.

When first asked to undertake that duty, the question naturally arose how to impart to the subject of Naval History an aspect which, in this very utilitarian age, should not be open to the ready reproach of having merely archæological interest, and possessing no practical value for men called upon to use the changed materials of modern naval war. "You won't have much to say about history," was then the somewhat discouraging comment of a senior officer of his own service.

In pondering this matter, it occurred to the author — whose acquaintance with naval history was at that time wholly superficial — that the part played by navies, and by maritime power generally, as a factor in the results of history, and as shaping the destinies of nations and of the world, had received

little or no particular attention. If this were so, an analysis of the course of events through a series of years, directed to show the influence of Sea Power upon History, would at least serve to imbue his hearers with an exalted sense of the mission of their calling; and might also, by throwing light upon the political bearings of naval force, contribute to give the service and the country a more definite impression of the necessity to provide a fleet adequate to great undertakings, lest, if an occasion should arise for what he has ventured to call "statesmanship directing arms," we should be found unprepared, through having no sufficient armed force to direct.

In avowing this as the original, and, for a time at least, almost the sole motive of his work, the author practically confesses that he at the beginning had no scientific appreciation or reasoned knowledge of the naval history of the past. Upon giving this the attention required by his new duties, and collating the various incidents with the teachings of recognized authorities upon land warfare, he soon came to recognize that the principles which they claimed to be of general application in their own specialty received also ample and convincing illustration in naval annals; although the development of the Art of War at sea has been slower, and is now less advanced, than on shore. This backward result has been due, partly, to uncertainties peculiar to the sea, and partly

to a contempt for the study of the past, and of its experience, as "not practical," from which the naval profession has not yet wholly rid itself.

Thus, in its course, the author's former work, without abandoning its first simple motive, expanded into an attempt to analyze the strategic conduct of the naval campaigns, as well as the tactical features of the various battles — all too few — in which any clear tactical purpose was shown by the commanders engaged. The cordial reception given to the work by his professional brethren, in Great Britain as well as at home, has been to him not only most gratifying, but wholly unexpected. Its chief significance is, however, not personal. The somewhat surprised satisfaction testified is virtually an admission that, in the race for material and mechanical development, sea-officers as a class have allowed their attention to be unduly diverted from the systematic study of the Conduct of War, which is their peculiar and main concern. For, if the commendation bestowed be at all deserved, it is to be ascribed simply to the fact that the author has been led to give to the most important part of the profession an attention which it is in the power of any other officer to bestow, but which too few actually do.

That the author has done so is due, wholly and exclusively, to the Naval War College, which was in-

stituted to promote such studies. If further success attend his present venture, it is his hope that this avowal may help to assure the long uncertain fortunes of the College, to which, — and to its founder, Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, — he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness for guiding him into a path he would not himself have found.

The term of this work is fixed at the year 1812; a date signalized by Napoleon's invasion of Russia, which wrecked his empire, — or at least gave the outward and visible token of the wreck, — and also by the outbreak of war between Great Britain and the United States. To the latter, as a subject of particular national interest, the author hopes in the near future to devote a special study.

A. T. MAHAN.

OCTOBER, 1892.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY

OUTLINE OF EVENTS IN EUROPE, 1783-1793.

	PAGE
Prominence of the year 1793	1
Leading features and results of the war of 1778	2
Condition of the different belligerents at its termination . . .	3
Success of the second Pitt as a peace minister	5
Advantage to Great Britain arising from his secure tenure of power	6
Desire of Western Europe for peace	7
Causes of disturbance	7
Accession of Joseph II. to crown of Austria	7
Commercial expansion of Austrian Netherlands during war of 1778	8
Question of the navigation of the Scheldt	9
Wide-spread interests therein involved	10
The Eastern Question, 1780-1790	11
Change of relations between Great Britain and Russia from 1770 to 1785	12
Interests of France and of Great Britain in the Levant and Baltic	14
Importance of Antwerp as a naval station	15
Interests of European States in Holland and the Netherlands .	16
Relations between Russia and France, 1780-1790	17
Preponderance of French influence in Dutch politics	17
Joseph II. drops the question of the Scheldt	18
Treaty of alliance between France and Holland, 1785	18
Armed interference of Prussia in Holland, 1787	19
British party regains ascendancy in Holland, 1787	19

	Page
Meeting of the Notables in France, February, 1787	19
Turkey declares war against Russia, August, 1787	19
Austria declares war against Turkey, February, 1788	19
Great Britain and Holland proclaim a strict neutrality	20
Consequent effect upon Russia's maritime projects	20
Sweden attacks Russian Finland, June, 1788	21
Defensive alliance between Great Britain, Prussia, and Holland, 1788	21
Denmark attacks Sweden	21
Interposition of Great Britain and Prussia in the Baltic	21
Significance of this action	22
Dawn of the modern Eastern Question	22
Conflicting views of British statesmen about Russia, 1791	23
External influence of France paralyzed by home troubles	24
Progress of the war in southeastern Europe	24
Renewed interference of Great Britain and Prussia in the Baltic	25
Meeting of the States-General in France, 1789	25
Cessation of hostilities between Austria and Turkey, September, 1790	26
Storming of Ismail by Suwarrow, Christmas, 1790	26
Peace of Galatz between Russia and Turkey, August, 1791	27
General peace in eastern Europe, 1791	27
Progress of the Revolution in France, 1789-1791	28
Flight of the King, 1791	28
Declaration of Pilnitz, August, 1791	28
Significant coincidence of this date with Peace of Galatz	29
France declares war against Austria, April, 1792	29
Disorders in Paris, June-September, 1792	30
Suspension of the King, August, 1792	30
Battle of Valmy, September 20, 1792	30
Meeting of National Convention, September 22, 1792	31
Royalty abolished in France	31
Battle of Jemappes, November 6, 1792	31
The French occupy Austrian Netherlands and open the Scheldt	31
Decree of Fraternity, November 19, 1792	31
Decree extending the French system with their armies, Decem- ber 15, 1792	32
Strained relations between Great Britain and France	32
Execution of Louis XVI., January 21, 1793	32
Dismissal of the French minister by the British court	34
France declares war against Great Britain and Holland, Febru- ary 1, 1793	34

CHAPTER II.

THE CONDITION OF THE NAVIES IN 1793 — AND ESPECIALLY OF
THE FRENCH NAVY.

	PAGE
Causes of the deterioration of the French navy after 1789 . . .	35
Ignorance of maritime conditions among French administrators . . .	37
Value of the lessons derivable from this experience	38
Factors conditioning the effects of any form of military activity . . .	38
The gun the one sea-weapon of the period in question	39
A ship is a mobile battery	39
It is handled by an organic body, whose members are mutually dependent	39
Necessity of special training to such an organization	40
Blindness of the French Legislature to these facts	41
Rise and growth of insubordination in the navy	41
The disturbances in Toulon, 1789	42
Maltreatment of Commodore D'Albert de Rions	43
Weakness of the National (Constituent) Assembly	43
The Nootka Sound trouble between Spain and Great Britain, 1790	44
France prepares to support Spain	45
De Rions ordered to command the Brest fleet	45
Mutiny in the Brest fleet	45
De Rions leaves the navy	46
His services and distinguished professional reputation	46
Disorders in the navy abroad	47
Disastrous effects upon the French colonies	48
Emigration of French naval officers	49
Reorganization of the navy by the Constituent Assembly, 1791 . . .	50
Previous measures of the monarchical government, 1786	51
Reorganization decrees of the Assembly, April, 1791	52
Essential spirit of this legislation	53
The Second (Legislative) Assembly lowers the qualifications for officers	54
Naval officers in the Reign of Terror	54
Further legislation by Third Assembly (National Convention), 1793	55
Results of the successive measures	56
Action of the Assemblies touching enlisted men	57
Singular arguments based on equality of rights	58
Extravagancies of the period	59

	PAGE
Direct results of these measures as shown in battle	60
Indirect effects of the laxness of the Assemblies upon discipline	60
Mutiny in the Brest fleet, 1793	62
Disorders in the Mediterranean fleet, 1792	63
Deterioration of the material of the navy	64
Misery of officers and seamen	64
Want of naval supplies and equipment	67
Effect of these disadvantages upon naval efficiency	68
Effect of naval inefficiency upon the general results of the war	68
Endurance and success of Great Britain due to her Sea Power	69
Condition of the British navy in 1793	69
Possesses a body of trained officers having a continuous tradition	69
Embarrassment of Great Britain for seamen	70
Condition and health of the crews	71
Mutinies in the British navy. How characterized	72
Character of the material in the British navy	73
Comparative force of the French and British navies	75
Numbers and condition of the Spanish navy	75
Inefficiency of its officers and seamen	76
Navies of Holland, Naples, and Portugal	78
Of Turkey and the Baltic States	78

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONDITIONS, AND THE EVENTS OF 1793.

France declares war against Spain, March 7, 1793	79
Character of the governments arrayed against France	79
Mutual jealousy of Austria and Prussia	80
Attitude of the smaller German States	80
Military and naval situation of Spain	81
Policy of Great Britain	82
Attitude of Russia	82
Second Partition of Poland	82
Course of Sweden and Denmark	83
Internal dissensions and external dangers of Holland	83
Dutch colonies	83
Relations between Portugal and Great Britain	84
Attitude of the Italian States	84

CONTENTS.

xi

	PAGE
Extent and disorganization of the Turkish Empire	85
Strategic importance of the Mediterranean islands	85
Their political distribution	86
Value of Malta and of Port Mahon	87
Corsica in the beginning of the French Revolution	88
Internal commotions in France	89
Reverses in Belgium and treason of Dumouriez	89
Reorganization of the Committee of Public Safety	90
Revolt of Lyon against the Convention	90
Fall of the Girondists	90
Risings of their followers throughout France	90
Siege of Lyon by Conventional troops	91
Toulon delivered to the British and Spanish fleets	92
French reverses on the eastern and northeastern frontiers	93
Desperate state of France	93
Mistakes of the allies	94
Energy of the Convention and its commissioners	94
Effect upon the armies	94
Failure to attain similar results in the navy	95
Causes of this failure	96
Naval unpreparedness of Great Britain in 1793	96
Difficulty in manning the fleet	96
Distribution of the British naval forces	96
Military and naval problem before Great Britain	97
Military value of insurrections in an enemy's country	98
Measures to compel the French navy to leave port	99
Difficulty of blockading French ports	99
Maritime claims of Great Britain	100
Military character of Lord Howe	101
His views of naval policy	101
Proper strategic use of the British fleet	102
Effects of inactivity upon a naval force	102
Successes of the French armies toward the close of 1793	103
Disasters of the Vendean insurgents	104
Fall of Lyon	105
The allies abandon Toulon, Dec. 19, 1793	105
Disadvantages of Toulon for the allies	106
End of the maritime year 1793	106

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEST INDIES, 1793-1810.

	PAGE
Present importance of the West India islands	109
Their value at the end of the eighteenth century	109
Control of a maritime region dependent upon the navy	110
Interests of Great Britain in the Caribbean Sea	110
Condition of Haiti	111
Relation of Haiti to the routes of commerce	112
Mistaken policy of the British in Haiti	113
Military and commercial value of the Lesser Antilles	114
Their political distribution in 1793	114
Naval weakness of Great Britain in that region	115
Expedition of Jervis and Grey in 1794	115
Capture of the French islands	115
The French retake Guadaloupe	116
Disastrous results to British possessions and commerce	117
Expedition of Christian and Abercromby, 1796	117
Its successes	118
Criticism of British military policy in 1794	119
Injury to Great Britain of Spanish and Dutch alliance with France	120
Capture of Trinidad by the British	121
Subsequent events in the West Indies	121

CHAPTER V.

THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN OF MAY, 1794, AND BATTLE OF THE
FIRST OF JUNE.

Distress in France in 1793 and 1794	122
Food supplies ordered from the United States	123
Ships of war sent to convoy them to France	123
Squadrons of Nielly and Villaret sent to meet the convoy	124
Determination of British government to intercept it	125
Sailing of the Channel Fleet under Lord Howe	125
Howe meets the French fleet under Villaret Joyeuse, May 28	126
Partial engagement of May 28	127
Manœuvres of May 29	129
Partial engagement of May 29	130