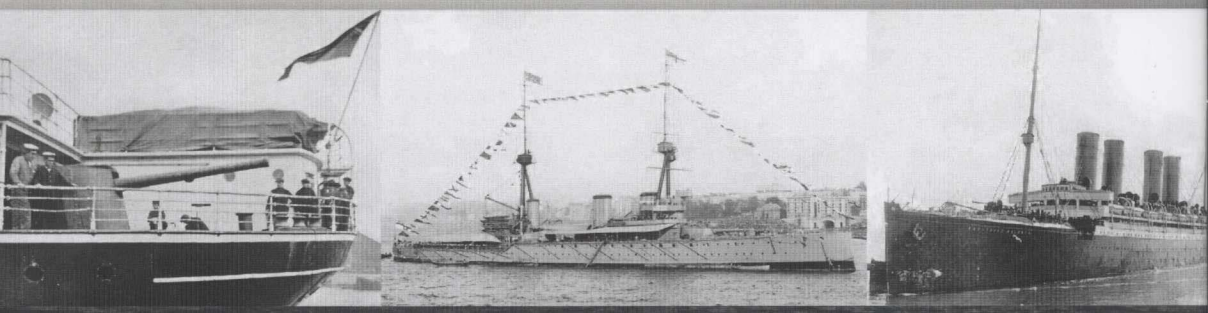
OXFORD

THE ROYAL NAVY *and the* GERMAN THREAT 1901–1914

Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War Against Germany



Matthew S. Seligmann

The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901–1914

Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War Against Germany

MATTHEW S. SELIGMANN

常州大学山书馆
藏书章

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© Matthew S. Seligmann 2012

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

First Edition published in 2012

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Library of Congress Control Number: 2012931193

ISBN 978–0–19–957403–2

Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
MPG Books Group, Bodmin and King's Lynn

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

To my mother

Acknowledgements

While writing this book I have received assistance from several individuals and institutions and I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge this and record my gratitude. For their willingness to share ideas and supply useful references I am indebted to Dr Nicholas Black, Dr John Brooks, Dr Stephen Cobb, Rear Admiral James Goldrick, Dr Iain Hamilton and Hiraku Yabuki. For answering my numerous questions about materials in their collection I thank Jenny Wraight and Iain MacKenzie at the Admiralty Library and Kate Brett, Malcolm Llewellyn-Jones and M. McAloon at the archive of the Naval Historical Branch. The archivists at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg were unfailing in their courtesy and useful advice. Finally, I am grateful for the support provided by the British Academy, which funded my research in Germany, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which awarded me the fellowship that allowed me to complete this volume. For permission to use the Alexander Bethell papers, I am grateful to the Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London. Extracts from the private correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone are published by permission of the present Lord Fisher. Quotations from the Selborne papers and the uncatalogued Southborough papers are courtesy of the Bodleian Library. Material from the Royal Archives is reproduced by permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Crown copyright material in the National Archives and elsewhere is reproduced courtesy of the Keeper of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

M.S.S.

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

Abbreviations

AMC	armed merchant cruiser
BA-MA	Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg i. Br.
BL	British Library, London
CAC	Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
DAMS	defensively armed merchant ships
DID	Director of the Intelligence Division
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
FGDN	Arthur J. Marder (ed.), *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, 3 vols (London, 1952–9)
HAPAG	Hamburg-Amerikanische-Packetfahrt-Aktien-Gesellschaft
HSDG	Hamburg-Südamerikanische-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft
HTD	Head of the Trade Division
ID	Intelligence Division
IMM	International Mercantile Marine Company
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London
NDL	Norddeutsche Lloyd
NHB	Naval Historical Branch, Portsmouth
NID	Naval Intelligence Department
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
RA	Royal Archives, Windsor
RFR	Royal Fleet Reserve
RMSP	Royal Mail Steam Packet Company
RNM	Royal Navy Museum, Portsmouth
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve
SSB	Secret Service Bureau
TNA	The National Archives, Kew Gardens

Contents

Introduction

At ten past two in the afternoon of Friday 7th May 1915, Kapitänleutnant Walter Schwieger, commanding officer of the German submarine *U20*, fired a single torpedo at the passenger liner *Lusitania*. Eighteen minutes later the pride of the Cunard fleet disappeared beneath the waves, taking 1,198 men, women and children with her. The sinking of the *Lusitania* is undoubtedly the single most famous act of submarine warfare of the twentieth century. Not only did it galvanize American opinion behind the Allied cause, but it also dramatically ushered in a new, more savage era in naval warfare. The *Lusitania* was a civilian vessel struck without warning by an unseen opponent; the victims of the attack were all non-combatants, innocent civilians going about their lawful business on the high seas. Thus, both in its method and in its results, this action brought the stark brutality of 'total war' to the world's oceans.[1]

For the history of the Royal Navy, the sinking of the *Lusitania* has a further significance. The demise of this great ship, sailing as it was unarmed and unescorted off the Irish coast, serves for many as demonstrable proof of the backwardness of British naval thinking.[2] That so famous and important a vessel could be allowed to travel alone and unprotected and, thereby, be left to its own fate in dangerous waters showed that no thought had been given by those in charge of Britain's maritime defences to the realities of the peril the country faced. Had the Royal Navy been truly prepared for modern 'total' warfare, so the argument runs, it would have anticipated that Germany would seek to defeat Britain with an attack on its ocean trade, and measures to protect British commerce from such methods would have been thought through ahead of time and put into place from the war's outset.

This is a compelling argument, and it is certainly true that Britain was not ready for unrestricted submarine warfare, a tactic that almost brought about the nation's defeat in 1917. Yet, ironically, the *Lusitania* itself is proof that, well before the outbreak of the First World War, the Royal Navy had in fact given a great deal of thought to the possibility of a German assault on British trade. For the very liner that succumbed so dramatically to a German torpedo in 1915 had been specifically

[1] Arnold Kludas, *Great Passenger Ships of the World. Volume 1: 1858–1912* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 134. In fact, as James Goldrick has shown, the first German exercise in total war at sea was the less high-profile decision to fire on British trawlers. However, this has not captured the popular imagination in the same way as the sinking of the *Lusitania*. James Goldrick, *The King's Ships were at Sea: The War in the North Sea, August 1914–February 1915* (Annapolis, MD, 1984), p. 79.

[2] Patrick Beesly, *Room 40: British Naval Intelligence 1914–1918* (London, 1982), p. 86; David Stafford, *Churchill and Secret Service* (London, 1997), p. 74.

conceived a decade earlier to protect British commerce from a German attack. The product of an agreement between the Cunard Company and the British government, the *Lusitania* and her sister, *Mauretania*, were meant to serve as luxury passenger vessels in peacetime but to transform into auxiliary cruisers in wartime. To this end, they were built with massive turbines capable of generating a high sea-speed, large coal bunkers designed to provide great endurance, and pre-established fittings for gun mountings intended to facilitate an easy-to-install offensive capability.[3] Considerable sums of public money went into making this possible.

The Admiralty's decision to offer Cunard a huge subsidy to build two fast liners capable of conversion into fast auxiliary cruisers reflected the navy's emerging belief that a new and dangerous threat to British commerce was being created. The threat in question came not from Britain's traditional enemies, France and Russia, but from a new opponent, Germany, whose extensive fleet of large Atlantic liners—though not U-boats, of which she then had none—was viewed with apprehension. Admiralty intelligence suggested, not entirely without reason as we shall see, that these ships were capable of exceptional speed, were manned largely by naval reservists and always had arms stowed on board. As a result, at the very moment war broke out, it was feared that these vessels would be converted into auxiliary warships and sent to prey on the trade routes in the manner of the privateers of old. In this capacity they would be very dangerous. Because of their exceptional speed not only would no British merchantmen be able to escape them, but, more worrying still, no British warships would be able to catch them. They would, therefore, be in a position to run amok on the sea lanes; hence the idea of building two even faster British liners to track them down.

Paying Cunard to build the *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* was the first step in a twelve-year history of Admiralty efforts to counter the threat to British commerce that was expected to come from Germany's large fleet of fast transatlantic liners, the so-called 'ocean greyhounds'. These efforts included developing new types of auxiliary and then regular warships; a campaign to change international law to prohibit the conversion of civilian ships into men-of-war on the high seas; and the establishment of a new global intelligence network to determine the location of German liners and route British merchantmen away from them. Finally, following the appointment of Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty in late 1911, the controversial decision was taken to undertake a major programme of arming British merchant vessels for their own defence, a decision that also involved taking steps to place trained gun crews on these vessels in peacetime. Two years were devoted to developing and implementing this scheme.

These various efforts to defend British commerce from German attack absorbed considerable resources at the Admiralty. Yet, despite the time, energy and money devoted to them, the idea that the British naval leadership perceived a danger to the nation's seaborne trade from a German assault, let alone that it spent twelve years

[3] The high coal consumption of these vessels when travelling at speed, a trait which would severely limit their range, notwithstanding the capacity of their bunkers, was not considered at the time.

developing countermeasures to meet this threat, has received almost no recognition from historians. The standard work on the Admiralty's trade defence planning before the First World War is a 1968 doctoral dissertation by Brian Ranft.[4] While this is an important piece of research, its value as a study of pre-war policy is limited by virtue of its chronological range. Ranft's main interest was the nineteenth century and, as a result, he took his account no further than 1905, thereby omitting, quite logically, all consideration of the crucial decade before the outbreak of war. Accordingly, he has almost nothing to say either about German plans to attack British commerce or about any prospective British schemes to counter them. Nor, it seems, has anybody else. Although it is over four decades since Ranft completed his examination, no other historian has attempted to continue the work he began and explain British trade protection policy in the run up to the First World War. How can one account for this remarkable gap in the literature?

One explanation is that the attention of historians has been directed elsewhere. Contrary to some peacetime visions of what naval warfare would actually look like, when the fighting did finally begin in August 1914, the war at sea turned out to be dominated not by confrontations between fleets, as had been widely and erroneously anticipated, but by two long-running, slowly fought, global battles: the Allied 'blockade' of the Central Powers and Germany's unrestricted submarine campaign against Allied shipping. The impact that these two protracted struggles exerted, first upon the course of the conflict and, subsequently, upon the popular imagination, has led to much research being targeted into these areas in preference to other related fields. Thus, for example, many of the historians who have looked at British preparations for economic warfare before the First World War have been much more interested in the *offensive* aspects of British policy, namely the plans to exclude Germany from global commerce, than on the *defensive* plans to protect British trade from German deprivations. These are usually dealt with only briefly and in the most general terms. In a similar way, a great deal of thought has been devoted to the question of why the British government failed to anticipate the U-boat threat, a focus that, by definition, reflects the dictates of hindsight and the obsessions of the present rather than the issues that concerned contemporary policy-makers. Hence, in much of the current literature, explaining what was not foreseen—that is, U-boats—is given priority over the more accurate predictions that were made, such as the fact that Germany intended to attack British shipping with surface raiders.

A further and more substantive barrier to the proper consideration of this topic is the current and highly polarized debate about the origins and nature of the Anglo-German naval race. Two alternative and radically different schools of thought exist over when, why, or even if, the German Empire came to be perceived by the British government as a likely future opponent. In the traditional canon of naval history, as first formulated in 1940 by Arthur Marder, the British Admiralty realized as early as 1902 that the German naval construction programme, begun in

[4] Brian Ranft, 'The Naval Defence of British Sea-Borne Trade, 1860–1905' (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1968).

1898 under the auspices of Admiral Tirpitz, was being undertaken with the explicit purpose of building a fleet capable of fighting a major engagement against the Royal Navy in the North Sea. Accordingly, the British naval authorities promptly strove to meet this challenge. From this point onwards, the actions of the Admiralty, including the building of ever more warships, the introduction of new technologies and the gradual withdrawal of Britain's scattered naval forces to home waters, were principally driven by the need to counter the threat posed by the expansion of German maritime power.[5]

In reaching this conclusion, Marder, like Tirpitz, focused principally on battleships. He reasoned that the German decision to construct warships for a fleet engagement rather than cruisers for service in distant waters implied a strategy of fighting a traditional naval battle in the North Sea rather than a *guerre de course* against British shipping throughout the world's oceans and that the British naval authorities recognized this intention. As a result, though they were concerned about the British battle fleet being defeated by its German counterpart and of Britain thereby losing command of the sea, they saw no threat to British commerce so long as Germany was their main enemy. Accordingly, trade defence was not a matter that concerned them.

The orthodox narrative about British fears of a German threat going back to 1902 was a compelling one; however, not everyone was convinced. The first major critic was Ruddock Mackay. He argued that the nature of the British fleet redeployment of 1904, carried out by the new First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John Fisher, showed that well after 1902 the traditional Franco-Russian naval challenge rather than the German threat was still the main focus of the Admiralty's attention. Consequently, whatever might have occurred afterwards, before 1905 Britain's naval authorities were not unduly concerned by Germany's growing battle fleet.[6] Mackay's careful critique was subsequently taken up with gusto by two other revisionist historians, Jon Sumida and Nicholas Lambert. They agreed with Mackay's contention that Fisher's redistribution demonstrated that he 'regarded France and Russia as the Royal Navy's most likely opponents in any future war... [and was not] unduly concerned at the expansion of the German Navy.'[7] Additionally, they appended a further element to the argument, proposing that Fisher's Franco-Russian focus and his concomitant lack of interest in Germany were heavily influenced by the ability of the former and the inability of the latter to threaten British trade. As Nicholas Lambert explains it, 'having thought deeply about the character of twentieth-century maritime war', Fisher saw no danger of Britain losing command

[5] Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905* (New York, 1940); Arthur J. Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone. Volume 2: Years of Power, 1904–1914* (London, 1956; hereafter referred to as *FGDN*); Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow. Volume I: The Road to War, 1904–1914* (Oxford, 1961).

[6] Ruddock F. Mackay, 'The Admiralty, the German Navy, and the redistribution of the British Fleet, 1904–1905', *Mariner's Mirror* 56 (1970), 341–6; Ruddock F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 314–19.

[7] Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Strategic command and control for maneuver warfare: Creation of the Royal Navy's "War Room" system, 1905–1915', *Journal of Military History* 69 (2005), 375–6.

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com

of her home waters to a foreign battle fleet, the threat of which could cheaply and easily be neutralized by small torpedo craft. Instead, he believed that the principal peril to the nation lay in 'a stranglehold' being placed on the British economy by a foreign power being able to 'harass her trade routes', depriving the nation of vital supplies of food and raw materials. The weapon of choice for this purpose, says Lambert, was the armoured cruiser. The French and Russian navies had long espoused a *guerre de course* strategy, had access to numerous overseas bases and were equipped with large numbers of armoured cruisers explicitly designed for commerce destroying. As a result, they were seen as posing a significant danger. By contrast, the Germans, with a growing force of battleships, designed to fight a traditional fleet action in the North Sea, but negligible numbers of armoured cruisers for attacking the trade routes, appeared hardly a menace at all. Indeed, so little threat did they pose that, according to Lambert, they were only considered by the Admiralty in the unlikely context 'that Germany might join a Franco-Russian combination against Britain'.[8] In short, according to Sumida and Lambert, because Germany did not possess the *warships* for commerce raiding (auxiliary cruisers were not considered in this argument), the growth of German sea power neither worried the Admiralty nor required any particular focus on trade defence.

While there is little shared ground between the two competing interpretations of the Anglo-German naval race, they do have one element in common: both assert that the growth of German sea power, being based upon the battleship rather than the cruiser, did not threaten the flow of goods in and out of the British Isles and, therefore, did not provide any stimulus for the Admiralty to develop new measures to protect the nation's commerce. With this point embedded in both sides of the argument, it is little wonder that it is generally accepted in the current literature that there is no need for the historian to look deeply into the question of British measures to protect maritime trade from German attack, since the Admiralty ignored the matter in the run up to the First World War in the mistaken belief that Germany, with a short coastline, few overseas bases and only a small number of cruisers, was ill-equipped to wage such a war and would be unable to do so in practice.[9] If the historian wishes to study anything, says Angus Ross, in an important and well-known article on the alleged British failure to anticipate an attack on the nation's trade that exemplifies this thinking, it should not be the few pitiful measures that were taken in this area, but the reason for the 'complacency' that led to this 'collective lack of action'.[10]

This book challenges both the orthodox and revisionist interpretations. It argues that the expansion of German maritime power became an important consideration in the thinking of the British naval authorities from the very start of the twentieth

[8] Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Transformation and technology in the Fisher era: The impact of the communications revolution', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 27 (2004), 273.

[9] See, for example, Paul M. Kennedy, 'Great Britain before 1914', in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, 1984), p. 187.

[10] Angus Ross, 'Losing the initiative in mercantile warfare: Great Britain's surprising failure to anticipate maritime challenges to her global trading network in the First World War', *International Journal of Naval History* 1 (2002) <http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume1_number1_Apr02/article_ross_great-britain_mercantile.doc.htm>

century, much earlier than the current revisionist consensus would allow. However, contrary to the orthodox view that this concern derived exclusively from the growth of the German battle fleet, it demonstrates instead that fear of German commerce raiding was, in fact, one of the initial spurs. In 1901, elements within the Admiralty identified what they regarded as a real and potent danger to British trade from Germany's extensive fleet of large Atlantic liners. They feared, rightly as it transpired, that the Germans planned to convert these great vessels in wartime into auxiliary cruisers and send them as corsairs onto the trade routes. With their high speeds, excellent sea-keeping qualities and supposedly exceptional cruising radiuses, it was anticipated that they would be formidable adversaries, capable of making numerous early captures that would cause panic in the international shipping world and possibly force Britain to make peace. Thus, irrespective of whether or not they were concerned either then or subsequently by the growth of the German battle fleet, this gave the naval authorities in London reason to focus on the expansion of German maritime power and to plan against it. Additionally, having once identified the threat from German surface raiders, the Admiralty remained highly concerned right up to the outbreak of war at the prospect of a German *guerre de course* against British seaborne commerce. Accordingly, it spent the next twelve years devising ways to counter it. It is this story of the menace posed by Germany's 'ocean greyhounds' and the extensive and long-term nature of the British response to it that will be told here.

In the process, several important conclusions will be reached. First, from the end of 1901, the British Admiralty identified a threat to the nation's shipping from fast armed German merchant vessels, principally transatlantic liners. Second, the Admiralty was not wrong to do so. Germany *did* develop and continuously refine schemes for deploying its liners in a commerce war and these plans grew in scope and sophistication over time. Third, over the next twelve years the Royal Navy unrolled a series of initiatives designed to frustrate the German design. Finally, because these countermeasures were all introduced, either wholly or partly, to combat the menace of German mercantile cruisers, the measures discussed are not separate, isolated and individual initiatives in the broad sweep of British naval policy, but must be seen as related actions linked together by a single thread and forming part of a common narrative, namely British preparation for a commerce war undertaken against the nation's shipping by German surface raiders. As a result, it will be concluded that the generally held theory that Britain did not expect a campaign to be launched against her seaborne trade in wartime, the so-called 'surprising failure to anticipate maritime challenges to her global trading network', proves to be not so much surprising as a myth.[11] As this book shows, such a challenge was both clearly anticipated and systematically addressed in the country's naval preparations.

[11] Ibid.

1

Handelskrieg gegen England

German Plans to Attack British Commerce in an Anglo-German War

In 1897 Konteradmiral Alfred Tirpitz persuaded Kaiser Wilhelm II to build a German battle fleet.[1] If truth be told, Wilhelm did not require much convincing. The eldest son of the British Princess Royal, he had spent much of his youth being regaled with stories about the greatness of the British Empire and of the navy which both nurtured and protected it. At the same time, he had also taken many holidays in Britain visiting his august grandmother, Queen Victoria, and attending, amongst other things, naval reviews and pageants, where the ships and squadrons of the British fleet were displayed in all their pomp and finery. As a result of this constant exposure, admiration for the Royal Navy, for its sheer scale and achievements, and for its proud history and traditions were all deeply ingrained in him. So, too, was the desire to build a comparable navy for Germany.

Wilhelm's enthusiasm for all matters maritime and his burning desire to see an expansion of the German navy did not, however, mean that he possessed the necessary skills to bring this about. The problem was that his ambition was as undirected as it was intense. He knew instinctively that he wanted a bigger fleet, but just what form it should take and what precise purpose it should serve he could not rightly say. As a result, his incessant demands before the German parliament, the Reichstag, for funds for naval increases, sometimes for battleships, at other times for cruisers, were met with both scepticism and alarm by Reichstag deputies, who could see the expense but not the purpose of what the Kaiser proposed. Accordingly, Wilhelm's pleas were branded by his critics as 'limitless fleet plans' and regularly voted down, much to his great frustration and anger. Clearly, what Wilhelm needed was someone who could channel his desires and present a cogent rationale for German naval expansion to the nation and its parliament in a manner that would convince them of its genuine necessity. This was the role that Tirpitz was to play for Wilhelm II.[2]

[1] Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle Fleet* (New York, 1965).

[2] John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy 1888–1900* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 999–1039.

TIRPITZ AND THE BATTLESHIP SCHOOL

Like Wilhelm, Tirpitz was a fierce and committed advocate of German naval expansion, but, unlike his royal master, he knew exactly what he wanted and why. Moreover, he was able to articulate the thrust of his ideas with considerable force and clarity. Thus, anyone who came into contact with Tirpitz would soon become aware that the admiral believed that great nations inevitably had extensive overseas interests and invariably forged great overseas empires. Germany, while already an established power on the European continent, cut only a marginal figure on the world stage. Consequently, Tirpitz reasoned, if Germany wished to be counted amongst the truly mighty, it would have to embark upon a process of global expansion. But how was this to be done?

In conformity with the views of the leading maritime theorist of the period, the highly influential American naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan, Tirpitz insisted that, for Germany to achieve its destiny as a world power, the nation would need to develop sufficient naval strength to be able to project its influence across the oceans. Mahan had asserted in his international best seller, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, that such global reach could only be achieved by those nations that possessed navies capable of meeting and defeating the forces of rival powers in major battles and, thereby, gaining command of the sea. This, Mahan had maintained, could only be achieved by great fleets composed of powerful battleships. All other types of naval warfare and the ships needed to fight them, for example attacks on an opponent's maritime commerce by cruisers in a *guerre de course* (the so-called *Kleinkrieg* or *Handelskrieg* approach), were secondary concerns that contributed little to the destiny of nations. Tirpitz agreed and, hence, he argued that to achieve the status of a world power Germany would have to build a great fleet of battleships capable of winning a decisive engagement against the power that most clearly stood in Germany's way. For Tirpitz, this power was Britain, which meant that the target for his concentrated force of battleships was the Royal Navy. With this in mind, he proposed a battle fleet concentrated in Germany's North Sea harbours and directed against Britain. This idea he first sold to Wilhelm; he then set about convincing the German parliament. The results were impressive. Between 1898 and 1912, Tirpitz steered through the Reichstag legislation that committed the nation to the construction by 1920 of a fleet of no less than sixty battleships and large armoured cruisers (later known as battle cruisers). Once achieved, this programme would transform Germany from naval anonymity into the possessor of the world's second most formidable fleet.[3]

Because Tirpitz was a devotee of Mahan's, and consistently emphasized the role of the battle fleet in naval warfare and downplayed alternative strategies, and because he was the dominant personality in the navy at this time, it is often assumed that, under his stewardship, the German navy developed upon exclusively

[3] Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875–1914* (Leiden, 2002). Michael Epkenhans, *Tirpitz: Architect of the German High Seas Fleet* (Washington, DC, 2008), pp. 18–21.

Mahanian lines. This judgement is not without considerable validity. However, the influence of Tirpitz's ideological convictions upon the formulation of German naval policy, especially in regard to the proposed conduct of the German navy in wartime, was actually less pronounced than is often supposed. The reason was in large measure a bureaucratic one. Unlike in Britain, where the Board of Admiralty was the sole body in charge of naval affairs, in Germany, after 1899, the direction of such matters was divided into multiple hands. Not only did the various fleet and station commanders have direct and independent access to the Kaiser, and, therefore, considerable autonomy to develop their own ideas and practices, but, in addition, matters of administration were split between three different and independent organizations: the Imperial Navy Office, the Admiralty Staff and the Naval Cabinet, each of which had its own, distinct field of competence. Tirpitz, as Secretary of State at the Imperial Navy Office, was responsible for all budgetary matters, including ship design and the warship construction programme. Crucially, however, operational doctrine lay outside his remit and, thus, he had no explicit say in the use to which the ships, whose design, ordering and construction he oversaw, were eventually put once they had entered service. This job, along with all other aspects of war planning, devolved instead to another agency, the Admiralty Staff.

Tirpitz, who was well aware of the danger posed to his programme by rival views gaining a voice in other centres of power, strove to ensure that all naval officers in positions of importance, such as those who manned the Admiralty Staff, shared his strategic concepts, especially as regards the belief in the centrality of the battleship as the weapon of the decisive battle, the importance of force concentration and the designation of the North Sea as the main theatre of operations. Those who dissented from Tirpitz's orthodoxy were relentlessly pursued and persecuted by the officials of the news bureau of the Imperial Navy Office, whose sole job was to popularize Tirpitz's ideas.[4] A notable example of this was Vizeadmiral Karl Galster, a distinguished former naval officer and maritime warfare theorist. In a series of pamphlets and articles published in 1907 and 1908, he argued, rightly as it later transpired, that the battleship fleet then being constructed at vast expense would be of absolutely no use to Germany, since Britain's overwhelming superiority would ensure that it would be bottled up in harbour in wartime; instead he maintained that the Reich should devote its efforts to building cruisers and submarines, weapons that could be used to mount an effective campaign against Britain's merchant ships. Galster's advocacy of the *Kleinkrieg* approach was anathema to Tirpitz and led to a ruthless campaign against him by the Imperial Navy Office, an action which ensured widespread public ridicule of his ideas as well as his total ostracism from the naval officer corps. Kapitän zur See Lothar Persius, another of Tirpitz's detractors, suffered similar smears and social stigmatism as a result of his temerity in arguing that more resources should be devoted to submarine construction. For

[4] Wilhelm Deist, *Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda: Die Nachrichtenbureau des Reichsmarineamtes 1897–1914* (Stuttgart, 1976).

many potential critics, these cases served as salutary indicators of why one should be wary of dissenting from Tirpitz's strategic philosophy.[5]

THE ADMIRALTY STAFF AND THOUGHTS OF COMMERCE WARFARE

However, despite the discouraging example of the treatment accorded to Galster and Persius, it is notable that the officers that constituted the Admiralty Staff, while adhering to a broadly similar conception of naval strategy to Tirpitz, did not always view matters identically. In particular, while agreeing with the State Secretary about the importance both of battleships and of a North Sea concentration, they could nevertheless also see considerable value in waging commerce warfare against Britain. The principal cause of this discrepancy was the different function of these two naval agencies. Tirpitz as State Secretary was in office to implement a long-term programme that stretched far into the future. It was his goal to ensure that after 'the work of a generation' Germany possessed a battle fleet that could challenge Britain's. One consequence of this vision was that it encouraged Tirpitz to be dogmatic in his approach: bringing his dream to fruition required him to stick rigidly to his purpose and it is no coincidence, therefore, that he was notoriously unwilling to let issues of the moment interfere with the fulfilment of his grand design. By contrast, the officers of the Admiralty Staff had a different priority: unlike Tirpitz, they were not there to envisage how the German navy would look in two decades' time; rather it was their job to have operational plans ready in case war broke out there and then. As such a conflict could potentially occur at any time, under a baffling array of vastly different circumstances, the task of ensuring instant preparedness positively required them to be adaptive and to think flexibly in the face of difficult strategic problems. This was particularly true when it came to the prospect of a war against Britain, the most challenging of all Germany's potential foes, and, consequently, in planning for such a conflict, the Admiralty Staff could not afford to be too doctrinaire. Rather, in their deliberations over such a conflict, they were willing to embrace numerous possibilities, including stratagems that Tirpitz was keen to rule out. This would have significant consequences for German naval operational planning.

The first tentative studies for a naval war against Britain were undertaken in 1896, following the drastic deterioration in Anglo-German relations occasioned by the Kruger Telegram, and were continued with more vigour in the immediate years thereafter.[6] At this stage, Britain's naval superiority over Germany was so overwhelming as to render the hurdles before Germany's naval planners almost insurmountable. Not only did the strength of the Royal Navy make an invasion of the

[5] Carl-Axel Gemzell, *Organization, Conflict, and Innovation: A Study of German Naval Strategic Planning, 1888–1940* (Lund, 1973), pp. 60–1.

[6] Paul M. Kennedy, 'The development of German naval operations plans against England, 1896–1914', in Paul M. Kennedy (ed.), *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880–1914* (London, 1979), pp. 171–98.

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com