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MAHAN'S INFLUENCE ON UNITED STATES NAVAL STRATEGY THROUGH 1918

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15 January 1973

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MONOGRAPH

15 JANUARY 1973

NATIONAL TECHNICAL
INFORMATION SERVICE

USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Dale N. Hagen, CDR, USN
FORMAT: Monograph
DATE: 15 January 1973 **PAGES:** 49 **CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified
TITLE: Mahan's Influence on United States Naval Strategy Through 1918

Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan retired from the United States Navy on 17 November 1896, following forty years of active service. He became an accomplished writer on the subject of naval strategy during his period of naval service. In 1890 Mahan received international acclaim for his literary efforts and thereafter was acknowledged within his own country to be an expert on naval matters. Admiral Mahan was not a creator of naval strategy. Rather he will be remembered for his unique ability to extract from a study of history those recurring factors, which when put in context, form a basis for sound naval strategy. Throughout his writing Mahan stressed the historical lessons of command of the seas, concentration of force, control by blockade, and politics through power. The central theme of this review is America's gradual adoption of the Mahan philosophy of "defense through offense" from the early struggle for independence in 1775 to her rise to international prominence in 1918.

PREFACE

On 17 November 1896, following forty years service, Alfred Thayer Mahan requested and was granted retirement from the Navy. It was from his time of retirement until his death on 1 December 1914 that the majority of his works were published. Nonetheless, his fame as a writer was established while he was on active duty. The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, published in 1890, won him international acclaim and it was honor abroad which brought him recognition at home. No doubt he formulated many of his theses while serving as a lecturer on naval history and strategy at the Naval War College in 1885 and as President of the War College from 1886-1889 and again in 1892-93. Even following his retirement he continued, until 1912, his association with the Naval War College in a special duty role.

Admiral Mahan has been credited with little "new" in the development of naval strategy. Rather, he will be remembered for his unique ability to extract from the study of history those recurring factors which, when put in context, form a basis for sound naval strategy. In reading his works, both layman and leader perceived the basic tenets of sea power as it relates to national power. The rise of America to the status of world naval power can in large measure be attributed to his influence on American naval policy. It can truly be said that Alfred Thayer Mahan dedicated his life to his country, to the sea and to the United States Navy.

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INTRODUCTION

> The history of Sea Power is largely, though by no means soley, a narrative of contests between nations, of mutual rivalries, of violence frequently culminating in war. The profound influence of sea commerce upon the wealth and strength of countries was clearly seen long before the true principles which governed its growth and prosperity were detected.[1]
>
> ALFRED THAYER MAHAN 1890

With these words, Alfred Thayer Mahan launched his introductory to The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783. In the chapters that followed and on the pages which comprise his nineteen other major works,[2] Admiral Mahan unfolds the history of naval warfare, strategy, policy, and tactics as it relates to the growth of some and to the decay of other national empires. Numerous authors agree that Mahan's works became the "bible" from which nations justified strong navies, trained naval officers, and based their aspirations for world power and domination. Notable among Mahan's avid disciples were leaders of Germany, France, Great Britain, Japan and, finally, the United States.

Mahan provided no cookbook recipe for naval strategy. Some of his precepts, therefore, lend themselves to ferreting out and to interpretation. He alludes to the heart of the matter in the following paragraph:

> Before hostile armies or fleets are brought into contact (a word which perhaps better than any other indicates the dividing line between tactics and strategy), there are a number of questions to be decided, covering the whole plan of operations throughout the theater of war. Among these are the proper function of the navy in the war; its true objective; the point or points upon which it should be concentrated; the establishment of depots of coal and supplies; the maintenance of communications between these depots and the home base; the military value of commerce-destroying as a decisive or secondary operation of war; the system upon which commerce-destroying can be most efficiently conducted, whether by scattered cruisers or by holding in force some vital center through which shipping must pass. All these are strategic questions, and upon all these history has a great deal to say.[3]

To achieve a proper perspective of the development of United States naval strategy through 1918, it is perhaps best to begin at the beginning.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION - BIRTH OF THE NAVY 1775 - 1783

> The US Navy traces its origin to the navy created in 1775 by a reluctant Continental Congress at the insistent urging of General George Washington. That early navy's primary mission was to supply Washington's revolutionary troops with powder and arms. . . . At peak strength in 1777, the Continental Navy mustered thirty-four ships and 5000 men.[4]

Harold and Margaret Sprout, in their book, The Rise of American Naval Power, cite three reasons for beginning at the Revolution in a study of the rise of American naval power:[5]

1. The use of sea power was vital to the winning of independence.

2. The subject of national defense and the Navy's role therein was raised by the events of that struggle.

3. Alfred Thayer Mahan's interpretation more than one hundred years later of the naval operations of the Revolution had a notable bearing on the development of American naval strategy.

The fledgling Continental Navy was indeed no match in head-to-head battle with the larger ships of the strong British Navy. Mahan notes that, consequently, the colonists were forced to abandon the sea to the fleets of Great Britain, resorting only to cruising warfare, mainly by privateers, by which they did much damage to English commerce.[6] Continental efforts to meet the British fleet head-on were typified by the action on Lake Champlain in 1776.[7] The British plan was to isolate New England by controlling the lake and the Hudson River. Under command of Benedict Arnold, the Continentals assembled a fleet to counter the British, in hopes of retaining control of the lake. In the three day series of skirmishes that ensued 11-13 October 1776, Arnold's fleet of 15 vessels was destroyed. Although the battle itself was a Continental disaster, an unanticipated contribution to the war effort was achieved. The English, noting the approach of winter, elected to delay further operations until spring and retreated into Canada. The net effect was the delaying of British army movements for nearly a year, time which was desperately needed by the colonists.

The evolution on Lake Champlain was representative of the Continental plight elsewhere regarding the sea. Continental settlements fronted on the Atlantic, over which English control was uncontested. The luxury of landing forces or supplies at selected points along the seaboard belonged to the British. This is not to say that the Continentals had no options. However as noted by Mahan, those options were limited:

> The control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of port, cannot cross more or less frequented tracts of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coast-line, enter blockaded harbors. On the contrary, history has shown that such evasions are always possible, to some extent, to the weaker party, however great the inequality of naval strength.[8]

The foregoing portrays the maritime posture of the fledgling states. Continental naval vessels and privateers preyed on British commerce, provided a measure of protection to their own commerce departing harbors, served as a modest line of communication (logistics) for the Continental Army, and on occasion conducted raids on outposts of the British Empire. John Paul Jones was best remembered for the latter exploit. His successes in harassing the British at home were largely made possible by the employment of the British Fleet in the task of exerting its influence on the colonies. Nonetheless, Continental feats such as Jones' constituted feeble pecking at an unbreakable cord, a form of guerilla warfare. Thus it must be conceded that the actions of the Continental Navy were

dictated more by weakness than by principles of naval strategy as interpreted by Mahan.

In appraising the inequities of the Continental and British Fleets, one must conclude that the British held all the cards. However, the trump card belonged to France and she played it when she chose to support the Continental cause in 1778. A strong French Navy and a series of fortuitous events provided the lever which pryed England loose from her naval superiority and, ultimately, from her colonies.

The Revolutionary War underscored the strategic importance of maintaining naval superiority and control of the seas.[9] Revolutionary leaders were aware of these aspects. General Washington pioneered the requirement for maritime support to sustain land forces. James Madison noted the flexibility of British forces to selectively probe the coast by sea while weary Continental forces trudged overland. Thomas Jefferson observed that the Continental states were blessed with a measure of isolation due to long lines of communications facing would-be conquerors. He conceded, however, that the maintenance of a naval force equal or superior to that which a European power might detach for conquest was a necessity.

Strategic lessons were shortly forgotten following the Revolution as the newborn nation looked inward. "By the end of 1785, all of the ships had been sold or given away, leaving the United States, under the Articles of Confederation, with neither a navy nor a naval program."[10]

TROUBLE IN EUROPEAN WATERS 1785-1801[11]

The United States was content to concentrate on the expansion of commercial trade following the Revolutionary War. But trouble was only a short turn away. In 1785, less than two months after the order to sell the last naval vessel was issued, Algerian pirates seized the American sloop, Maria. This was only the beginning of trouble with the Barbary powers. By January of 1791 the Senate Committee on Mediterranean Trade had concluded that US trade in that area could not be protected without a naval force. Although no solution seemed attractive, among the US options considered were:

1. An expensive offensive to protect her interests in the Mediterranean, i.e., a naval force, or

2. To "buy off" her adversaries through ransom or blackmail.

In a sense the acts of Barbary pirates, which had intensified by 1793, marked the beginning of sharp disagreement within the Congress over the need for a navy. The Federalists (which represented seaboard states interests) and the Republicans (which formed their strength in the interior states) were near opposite ends of a "strong navy" and "no navy" spectrum respectively. A new development would soon lend support to the Federalist position. While the Congress pondered on problems of piracy, the French, British, Dutch, and Spanish were going to war. In 1793 France announced a policy of seizure of cargo bound to enemy ports in neutral ships. Britain moved in like manner to seize contraband--the American

merchant fleet was about to feel the squeeze. With the pro-navy Federalists in power, Congress, in 1794, enacted legislation to build six warships, an act aimed at solving the problem of the Barbary pirates.

Seventeen ninety five-ninety six were banner years--almost. France repealed her decree on neutral shipping; a treaty was reached with Britain; and the Barbary powers were "bought off." Accordingly, construction was canceled on three of the six warships authorized by Congress in 1794. Unfortunately, France saw the American-British treaty as treason and shortly thereafter the Franco-American treaty of 1778 began to unravel as France proceeded to seize American merchantmen with impunity. By 1798, just twenty years after France had played saviour to the colonies, the romance was over. Congress enacted legislation in that year for the building of the previously authorized warships, sanctioned the procurement of 22 other armed vessels, and once again blessed privateering. The United States was embarked on three years of quasi-war with France and the future of the American Navy seemed assured. By the time an agreed peace was reached with France early in 1801. the United States Navy had built 45 ships. However, of the 33 afloat, all but 13 were sold concurrent with the cessation of war with France. In fact, the Jeffersonian Republican party which took office on 4 March 1801 had plans to put the last 13 ships in dry storage as well, to be saved for another rainy day.

TRIPOLITAN WAR 1801-1805[12]

The sale of over half of the Navy's floating assets may not have been prudent. While the loose ends of the quasi-war with France were being tied down, another tattered flap had broken loose. In May 1801, Tripoli opened hostilities against the United States to satisfy "arrears" on tribute payments. In June Tripoli upped the charge to "non-payment" of tribute and declared war on the United States. Communications were somewhat slow in those days, but on 6 February 1802, Congress recognized a state of war with Tripoli. The Barbary pirates had unwittingly saved the United States Navy from temporary retirement, perhaps from extinction. A begrudging Congress, with a twist of the tail from President Jefferson, authorized a modest naval program to protect American merchants in the Mediterranean. This "modest" program was gradually increased to a point enabling naval blockade of the Tripolitan coast in 1803. By 3 June 1805, the Barbary pirates had been properly humbled and a peace treaty was signed with Tripoli. The payment of tribute was no longer carried as an option in the means of negotiation for the United States.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although America was reluctant to recognize them, some lessons of naval strategy had been clearly demonstrated during the 1785-1805 period:[13]

1. The flow of merchant shipping could be maintained by the use of naval patrols and convoys.

2. Naval ships effectively extended coastal defenses against foreign naval attack, offshore privateering, and blockade.

3. The respect of other seagoing nations could be gained by an adequate show of naval force.

4. Achievement of sea control in the home waters of a maritime enemy was a devastating offensive strategy. Ultimate American success in the Tripolitan war hinged on gaining sea superiority sufficient to effectively blockade the coast of Tripoli.[14]

THE WAR OF 1812

Following a brief respite, from 1801 to 1803, the war in Europe was rekindled with Britain and France being the primary belligerents. The United States meanwhile continued to reap the bounty of a rich merchant trade with all of Europe and Congress had returned to dispute over the value of a naval service. The effectiveness of small vessels for operations in shallow coastal waters had been demonstrated in the war against Tripoli. A Republican Congress was enchanted by that fact and accordingly suppressed the strategic concept of "control of the seas" in favor of a defensive concept. Construction of gunboats was begun for the protection of American harbors, ports, and inland waters. It should be noted here that offensive naval operations were essentially forsaken since "gunboats were manifestly useless

for extended operations upon the high seas. A whole flotilla of them could not keep the open sea against a single frigate or ship-of-the-line, or in fact go to sea at all without first stowing their cannon in the hold."[15]

As the United States was determined to ply her trade in European waters, it became inevitable that her merchant shipping was liable to violation of rules laid down by the dominant sea powers. American cargoes fell victim to French and British reprisals against one another as those two powers struggled to strangle each other's lines of communication. United States neutrality once again stood in jeopardy. Certainly she was in no position to protect her commerce by naval means. From 1806 to 1809 President Jefferson resorted to diplomacy. President Madison who succeeded Jefferson in 1809 continued the established policy. Congress first tested the ploy of prohibiting the importation of British goods. Then economic sanctions were imposed against both Britain and France. Finally, American commerce was restricted to coastal waters. The end effect of all this was the throttling of the United States economy--she was, in effect, initiating reprisals against herself. Britain and France countered American initiatives with blockades, trade restraints, and ship seizures. In 1810, a frustrated America returned her commerce to the high seas, leaving the fate of her trade to the naval might of France and Great Britain. It then became a footrace between those powers to see which one would raise the ire of America to a point of war.

Mahan specifies the two principal immediate causes of the War of 1812:[16]

1. The impressment of seamen from American merchant ships, upon the high seas, to serve in the British Navy, and

2. The interference with the carrying trade of the United States by the naval power of Great Britain.

The impressment of American seamen was viewed as right and proper by England. She was only taking back what was rightly hers--British seamen who had deserted the Royal Navy for a better life on United States vessels. America considered those seamen to be hers once they had become naturalized American citizens or, for that matter, once they had bought "protection" papers.[17] In the process of regaining their own deserters, it should be pointed out, the British also took a few able-bodied, natural-born Americans. The decision on which seamen originally were British was arbitrary at best and rested with the British captains.

Concerning interference with United States shipping, England merely out-did France. Although both made many ship seizures, England was more proficient, carrying her blockade to the front door of America and even taking under fire and boarding the navy frigate, USS Cheasapeake, on 22 June 1807.[18]

A third, and perhaps equally important, cause of the release of American wrath upon Britain was English support to the Northwestern Indians. In 1810, under the leadership of Tecumsen and armed with British weapons, the Indians began attacking outlying white settlements.[19] Enraged America, with visions of grandeur, began to direct her attention to conquest of Canada, and perhaps Florida as well.

Unprepared as she was, the United States declared war on Great Britain on 18 June 1812. "On this date the United States Navy consisted of 17 seaworthy ships," less than half of which carried over 20 guns.[20] Incredibly, the Army was even worse off, with a regular force of less than 7000 men.[21]

There is little point in dwelling on detail concerning the War of 1812. Suffice is to say that the treaty of peace, concluded in December 1814, restored the pre-war status, with the United States achieving none of its aims. The single significant noteworthy factor is that the nation had gained maturity through sacrifice. "The war . . . reinstated the national feelings and character which, the Revolution had given, and which were daily lessening."[22]

Additionally, the War of 1812 offered up a liberal serving of lessons on naval strategy. It remained, however, for Alfred T. Mahan to point out most of them nearly a century later. Harold and Margaret Sprout aptly summarize significant strategic factors from his two volume work, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, the essence of which are here reduced to simplest form:[23]

1. US "gunboat" strategy had virtually eliminated a seagoing capability at the beginning of the war--a tragic loss of offensive strategic capability.

2. Commerce raiding (guerilla warfare) likewise revealed little strategic advantage and could not defeat a strong sea power.

3. Destruction of supporting sea forces compelled withdrawal of land forces.

4. Effective naval blockade could, in time, virtually strangle a nation dependent on the sea.

5. Capital ships were necessary to break blockades.

6. Naval superiority provided means to control strategic choke points and waterways.

7. Advance naval bases facilitated the maintenance of naval operations at great distances from home waters.

8. Naval forces could not quickly and easily be improvised in an emergency.

Obviously most of the pluses in the foregoing were the property of the British. It is a tribute to the United States that by perserverance and some help from the British who had problems at home, she was able to survive the conflict and draw from it lessons for the future. An immediate effect of the war was to ensure a continued naval construction program, with emphasis on major warships. However, the controversy over their use was to continue for decades, as was the propensity to place ships in "mothballs" to relieve the burden of financial support.

THE CIVIL WAR 1861-1865

To most people, mention of the Civil War conjures up a vision of marching armies, musket against musket, sword against sword, long lines of blue against long lines of grey, of wheel mounted

horsedrawn cannon, and perhaps, of slavery. Was there a navy? Many will recall the famed battle of the Monitor and Merrimac, the beginning of ironclad naval warfare. Indeed, both the Federalists and Confederates had navies and between them lay the challenge of offensive versus defensive strategy. Offensive Union naval operations were aimed at blockade of the Confederate seaboard, coastal attack, control of inland rivers, and the movement and support of troops across unbridged waters.[24] The vastly weaker Confederate Navy resorted to the primarily defensive measure of commerce raiding, blockade-running, and protection of harbors and estuaries.[25]

Concerning naval matters, the Confederacy in 1861 was in a sense akin to the colonies in 1775; it had no navy. The need to offset the Union Navy was seen early, but no established shipbuilding industry existed and funds were limited. A program of English contract building of Confederate ships was nipped in the bud by Union diplomacy. Nonetheless, 20 Confederate raiders were commissioned and, as had been the case in earlier American history, achieved considerable fame with singularly sensational exploits.[26] However, once again "hit and run" tactics gave way to the plodding certainty of superior sea power. As the Federal blockade strengthened, the noose was slowly tightened around the neck of Confederate commerce. With sea trade securely blocked, the Union Navy probed coastal defenses and tightened the Union pincer from the sea. On 5 August 1864, the fall of Mobile Bay to a squadron of Union ships under the

command of Admiral David G. Farragut marked the end of the Confederate Navy and heralded the triumph that was to be the Union's. Lessons of sea supremacy were again demonstrated. Historians would agree that the isolation of the Confederacy by the Union Navy hastened the end of the war.

NEW HORIZONS - 1890

> In 1890, just as the Indian war whoop and the peal of cavalry bugles subsided into history, the director of the census announced that the frontier had ceased to exist. Probably the Indian conquest and the closing of the frontier were associated, for each new westward thrust had had to contend with hostile Indians. Now, with the Indians gone, settlement had reached clear to the Western ocean and the land frontier had vanished. But the expansionist spirit did not disappear. The itch to move on, to grow, to settle new lands was far too deeply ingrained in the American character to perish merely upon the exhaustion of the supply of free land. Instead, expansionism changed its name to imperialism and began to wonder if new lands might not be found beyond the ocean barriers. Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, the naval strategist and exponent of sea power, declared openly: "Whether they will or not, Americans must now begin to look outward." Gradually business leaders began to accept Mahan's doctrines.[27]

The decade preceeding 1890 was marked by growth and transition. For America it was a period of national consolidation, growth of technology, increasing international awareness and trade, and an attendant growth in naval construction. For the Navy it meant moderization--the end of wooden hulls and the beginning of the

transition to steel.[28] A gradually shrinking world gave birth to a new appreciation for international relations and Americans no longer rested comfortably on the old dictum that wide ocean expanses assured American isolation. A strong navy began to "fit" as a component necessity to assure American freedoms. Nonetheless, national thinking about the navy remained oriented to a strategy of passive coastal defense and of commerce raiding.[29] While the nation leaned toward an expansionist policy of commerce, it continued its reluctance to adopt a corresponding offensive capacity for its navy. However, despite the inner conflict on how capital ships would be used, Congress saw a need for them and authorized their construction. It was also evidenced that some in Congress had seen a need for extending our horizons. For example, on 3 March 1899, Congress appropriated $100,000 to establish a coaling station at Pago Pago, Samoa.[30] Certainly such an expenditure was questionable if we planned to tie our navy to a defensive coastal strategy.

On the eve of 1890 America rested warily on the brink of expansionism. The time was ripe for directional guidance to consolidate diffuse national thinking. The works of Alfred Mahan were to become a vehicle by which a new sense of direction was achieved. His book, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, published in 1890, was one of the major catalysts that generated a new horizon for America.

From his study of history, Mahan developed his philosophy of sea power based on two distinct theories: "One was a theory of

national prosperity and destiny founded upon a program of mercantilistic imperialism. The other was purely and simply a theory of national strategy and defense."[31] The first theory required the building of a strong merchant marine to carry the goods of America and to share in its prosperity; the second a strong navy to assure its international affluence. Inherent in Mahan's philosophy was colonial expansionism--a requirement which, initially, America was reluctant to pursue. In all her previous wars she had limited her aspirations of conquest to the confines of the North American continent. Now, "according to Mahan's imperialistic thesis, a nation must expand or else decline. It was impossible to stand still."[32] The settlement of the American continent from Atlantic to Pacific had presented the challenge of increased global influence--a momentous step calling for cautious contemplation.

It was soon obvious that isolationism was at a low ebb about to be swept out by the tide of imperialism. A faltering step in that direction began in 1893 when a group of American residents in Hawaii sponsored a revolt which led to the deposition of Queen Liliuokalani and a move for annexation to the United States. On 16 January 1893, Marines from the schooner USS Boston were landed at Honolulu to "protect American lives and property."[33] The move for annexation was deferred, however, by a reluctant President Cleveland who believed the landing of Marines had constituted intervention in the affairs of a foreign state. In its place he

substituted recognition of the new Republic of Hawaii.[34] Annexation of Hawaii was saved for another day. In 1894, inspired by Mahan's writing, Secretary of the Navy, Hilary A. Hebert, strongly endorsed the "capital-ship" theory of naval defense. By 1897, Secretary Hebert had expanded his concept to encompass "protection to our citizens in foreign lands, . . aid to our diplomacy, and [to] maintain under all circumstances our national honor."[35] Harold and Margaret Sprout conclude:

> From this emphatic endorsement of power politics, it was obviously but a step to Mahan's thesis that oversea colonies were necessary to sustain the naval power deemed so essential for the support of national diplomacy, prestige and commerce in distant land and seas. . . . By 1895 . . . Mahan's name and ideas were well known, frequently cited, and widely if not universally endorsed in congressional circles.[36]

MANIFEST DESTINY

The seed of "diplomacy through naval influence" had actually sprouted in the mid-1880's. The tentacles of American "protectionism" were made known by the landing of Marines from naval vessels to guard American lives, property, and interests--Panama and Columbia in 1885; Korea and Samoa in 1888; Hawaii in 1889; Chile in 1890; Hawaii in 1893; Korea and China in 1894 and again in 1895; and Nicaragua in 1896.[37] A pattern for imperialism had been established. It remained only to build the strength to carry it out.

The die was cast in March 1897 by President McKinley's appointment of Theodore Roosevelt to the post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt, a strong proponent of naval power and a stronger advocate of Mahan's principles of sea power than any before him, was to assume a key role in America's destiny. He immediately began the task of strengthening the Navy, building it into a fighting machine, and exhorting the administration and the nation to recognize the virtues of national diplomacy backed by naval supremacy. President McKinley and Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long, were not totally convinced. Roosevelt continued, undaunted.[38]

A long-standing war between Spain and Cuba had been sparked in 1895 by a new drive for Cuban independence. American sympathy, which rested with the "oppressed" Cubans, increased with the passage of time. By 1896, the United States had recognized a state of belligerency between Cuba and Spain. With the dispatch of the battleship USS Maine to Cuban waters she edged closer to war in January 1898.[39] The Spanish government made no move to prevent the entrance of the Maine into Havana harbor on 25 January. Regretfully, three weeks later an explosion of unknown origin sent the Maine to the bottom of the harbor with a loss of 250 American lives. In America, public opinion cried for war. On 11 April 1898, President McKinley requested authority from Congress to end the civil war in Cuba. Congress responded with resolutions demanding Spain's withdrawal from Cuba and authorizing the use of American forces to make it so.[40] To say that Spain was anxious for war with

America would be a gross overstatement. Separated as she was from Amercia by a vast ocean and in a struggle for an island colony, it was likely her fortunes of war would be decided at sea. Spain's ships were old and ill-fitted, her crews poorly trained. The Spanish Ministry was faced with a dilemma--a possibility of revolution at home if they did give up Cuba and a probability of war with the United States if they did not.[41] Rather than accede to the American demand for Cuban independence, Spain did sever diplomatic relations with the United States and the inevitable Spanish-American war was assured. "On April 22, 1898 the Navy Department directed [Admiral William T.] Sampson to establish a blockade of Cuban waters. . . . On April 25 Congress declared a state of war to have existed since April 21."[42]

At the time of the sinking of the Maine, the Spanish Navy was separated, with one element at home and the other in the Philippines. Fearing the inevitability of war, the Spanish Minister of Marine had instructed the home fleet commander, Admiral Cervera, to make plans to attack Key West and then blockade the American coast. Cervera rebelled at such an ambitious objective and pointed out the poor condition of his ships, the lack of strong advance bases, and the hopelessness of maintaining logistics support over such a great distance. He argued instead for a strategy of defense of the homeland, unless or until a strong naval ally could be found (a plea reminiscent of those oft heard earlier in American history). The Ministry relented, but only to the point

of insisting that Cervera at least proceed to the defense of Puerto Rico. On 8 April 1898, a dejected Cervera departed Spain for Cape Verde Islands to await further developments. Word of the Spanish sortie aroused east coast Americans to a state of panic. Now it became the turn of the Navy Department to deal with a dilemma. Though the Department believed that Cervera would head for the Caribbean, the populace was demanding coastal protection. To split the fleet into single units to guard static points on the coast was futile; the necessity to consolidate ships for offensive striking power was now well known to the Navy. Equally well known was the fact that mobility of ships made them suited to offensive missions; port defense could better be provided by fixed installations. A compromise was reached. Obsolete Civil War guns were distributed along the coast and the North Atlantic Squadron was split into two forces, one to protect the Atlantic seaboard and the other for Caribbean operations.[43]

Regarding the Spanish Fleet in the Phillipines, one man in particular had been aware of its existence. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt, foreseeing the inevitability of war with Spain after the sinking of the Maine and taking advantage of the absence of Secretary Long, put the Navy on alert two months before the declaration of war. He had in fact ordered Commodore George Dewey to take the Asiatic Squadron to Hong Kong and stand ready to attack the Spanish Fleet in the Philippines upon the declaration of war. Secretary Long was distressed to discover Roosevelt's

action, but took no action himself to rescind the order. On 27 April, two days after Congress declared a state of war, Dewey was on his way to meet the Spanish Fleet at Manilla.[44] On 1 May 1898 Commodore Dewey's squadron devastated the Spanish Fleet at anchor in Manilla Bay. War in the Pacific ended abruptly.

On the Atlantic side, the problem was a bit more complicated. Admiral Sampson proposed opening the campaign with an amphibious assault on Havana. Navy Secretary Long disapproved the plan, feeling that the division of the Atlantic Fleet had left Sampson with inadequate forces to press an assault against a fortified coast while fending off an approaching Spanish Fleet (the battleship USS Oregon was on the way to lend assistance, but her 15,000 mile trip around South America from Puget Sound meant a long delay). The newly formed Naval War Board, on which Captain Mahan served as a member, agreed with Secretary Long that an alternate strategy to coastal assault was prudent. Sampson was directed to blockade Cuba and maintain command of the sea. Events now moved quickly. Spain reacted to the blockade with a directive to Admiral Cervera to break it. On hearing of Cervera's departure from Cape Verde, Sampson elected to partially lift his blockade and to intercept Cervera at Puerto Rico where it was anticipated that he would stop for coal. Cervera was too smart to be so easily caught and stopped instead at Curacao, then steamed safely to Santiago on the southeastern coast of Cuba. It was there, on 1 June 1898, that the now-combined Atlantic Squadron, including USS Oregon, had

boxed-in Cervera's fleet. Now a stalemate arose. The Atlantic Squadron chose not to test the heavily mined, fortified, narrow, and winding channel of Santiago; Cervera needed the added strength of shore emplacements. So, Cervera could not get out and Sampson could not get in. At this point the United States decided to land an Army in Cuba to break the impasse. In mid-June the Army set sail from Tampa aboard commercial transports. Shortly after landing, the Army was also bogged down on the outskirts of Santiago by a combination of heat, fatigue, and the Spanish defenders. Regardless of the Spanish hope to retain Santiago, the threat of losing the fleet with the fall of the city was too great to bear. Governor General Blanco, at Havana, directed Cervera to take his chances at sea. On 3 July, Admiral Sampson's awaiting squadron laid waste the Spanish Fleet outside Santiage harbor.[45]

By mid-July the war with Spain had run its course and Cuban freedom was assured. Concurrently, the United States took possession of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.[46] The United States had displaced Spain as a first-class colonial power in the short span of three months time. During her imperialistic splurge, America had also annexed Hawaii, on 7 July 1898. To the anti-imperialists who pleaded for American isolationism, President McKinley replied: "We need Hawaii just as much and a good deal more than we did California. It is Manifest Destiny."[47]

On 17 January 1899, Wake Island was added to the now impressive array of claimed territories. Suddenly America was faced with the

spectacle of a sprawling empire--hundreds of miles into the Atlantic and thousands of miles into the Pacific. The old standard of coastal defensive strategy was irretrivably lost, for new possessions lay surrounded by thousands of miles of water. The challenge of Mahan's doctrine of command of the seas rose to the fore. With it rose the spectre of a new competitor--Japan. To protect her new acquisitions, America would soon find it necessary to extend her naval lines of communication to Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines.

ROOSEVELT AND MAHAN 1901-1909

The treaty of peace with Spain was officially concluded on 10 December 1898. But war was not over for America. The initially exultant Filipinos soon discovered that the benevolent Americans were in the Philippines to stay. To them an exchange of Spanish domination for American domination was no exchange at all. The Philippine Insurrection began in February 1899. It was to be bloodier and longer by far than the Spanish-American War. Interestingly, the hopes of Philippine insurgent leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, rested on the American elections of 1900. Democratic presidential hopeful, William Jennings Bryon, carried the torch of anti-imperialism for the world to see. He demanded an end to the criminal war and the defeat of the party supporting it. His supporting Anti-Imperialist League published pamphlets describing variously the cruelty of war, the useless loss of

American lives, and the ultimate bankruptcy of the country. Leaflets were dropped to American soldiers in the Philippines encouraging them not to re-enlist, to come home. Aguinaldo and his followers took heart and hope from the message. Incumbent President McKinley based his re-election campaign on the new prestige of America, on prosperity, and on a Philippine situation of minor proportion. His running mate, Theodore Roosevelt, carried the campaign to the nation and shared in the reward of America's vote of confidence in McKinley. Though Philippine guerilla warfare continued until mid-1902, its flame flickered with the American election of 1900 and died with the capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901.[48]

Whether a "strong Navy" policy would have been continued under the administration of a relatively conservative President McKinley is open to speculation. With Roosevelt relegated to the powerless role of Vice-President, it appeared that the demise of naval power was more likely as the post-war syndrome of inaction set in. But the McKinley chapter of history was suddenly shortened. By a quirk of fate, his assassination in September 1901 made possible the accession of the man with ". . . the knowledge, the initiative and the driving force which were needed to launch imperial America upon an imperial naval policy."[49]

Where does Alfred Thayer Mahan, now at his zenith, fit in the picture? Harold and Margaret Sprout sum it up briefly:

> Mahan's philosophy of sea power entered the White House in the person of Theodore Roosevelt. . . . Naval policy now began to influence the spirit and direction of American foreign relations. And so completely did the President dominate both foreign relations and naval development in these opening years of the twentieth century, that the naval policy of imperial America was, in large degree, the naval policy of Theodore Roosevelt.[50]

On a new threshold of international prominence, America now held the territorial possessions of a great world power, but lacked the wherewithal to protect her position. It is true she had demonstrated the ability to take to the high seas and the world was duly impressed by her smashing victories over an aging Spanish Fleet. More importantly perhaps, she had won the new respect and friendship of England during the war and the bond of Anglo-American harmony was restruck. England withdrew her power to the seas of Europe, leaving the United States to maintain her interests in the Americas. Between the two nations, naval rivalry became obsolete; confirming an unwritten alliance, each looked on the growth of the other as being complementary.[51] This was opportune for the United States because growth of the American Navy was foremost on Theodore Roosevelt's mind. As he came to the Presidency in 1901 the United States ranked fifth among world naval powers, with nine front-line battleships and eight more authorized or in construction.[52] It was not enough--Roosevelt laid plans to build his super-fleet. His own aspirations were largely supplemented by the views of Mahan whose works he read avidly.

From the time he had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt had spurred Mahan to keep him informed of his viewpoints. A close relationship and correspondence continued through Roosevelt's years as President. Mahan provided Roosevelt with his studied position on naval matters and Roosevelt applied what he liked to matters of domestic and foreign policy. Their views on these subjects were much alike.[53]

Mahan's prolific pen had not rested during the period of tension and war with Spain. He was well prepared to shower the benefit of his concepts on Roosevelt and upon the nation. The Spanish-American and previous wars had provided a wealth of analogies. Mahan cleverly used them as a convenient vehicle to air his views to an aroused public about the importance of the navy and of its proper role in national strategy. A compedium of titles of his writings alone would suffice to indicate the vast scope of his literary efforts. His books and articles ranged in tenor from analysis of naval officers to qualities of ships; from preparations for war to lessons learned; from moral aspects of war to nationalism and imperialism; and from naval organization and administration to naval strategy. A single article, Current Fallacies Upon Naval Subjects, carried by Harpers' Monthly Magazine in June 1898, perhaps illustrates how Mahan felt about the American public's "misunderstanding" of the navy.[54] He first aimed an arrow at the heart of any who felt that life at sea was filled with leisure. He then proceeded to lay to rest some popular

public misconceptions as he justified the need for a continuance of the navy. As he saw it, the following were errors in national thinking:

1. That the navy was needed "for defence only."

2. That "for defence only" meant operations proximate to coastlines and seaports.

3. That if we should acquire overseas territory by negotiation or conquest, we would immediately need a navy bigger than the biggest.

4. That the rapid advances in naval improvement make ships obsolete so rapidly the expense was too great to bear.

His counter-arguments followed:

1. "Among all masters of military art--including therein naval art--it is a thoroughly accepted principle that mere defensive war means military ruin, and therefore national disaster." It is a waste to maintain a navy incapable of taking the offensive.

2. Coastal fortifications are superior to ships for static defense. Ships, being mobile, can take the battle to the enemy and should so be used. Offense, in this sense, provides a measure of coastal defense; ". . . the best defense of one's own interests is power to injure those of the enemy."

3. A navy need not be the world's largest to protect overseas territory. It only need be large enough to inflict injury greater than a potential conquestor would be willing to incur.

4. Ships do become obsolete, but that does not mean they become useless. They may only have a lesser capability for certain

tasks. Old ships can assume duties which will release newer ships for more difficult missions. Obsolescence is sometimes a matter of opinion.

Throughout this article, as in much of his other writing, Mahan carefully wove an underlying message of fear and warning, fear that America was open to conquest by the strong naval powers of an aggressive world and warning that America's hope of survival was tied to building her own strong navy. Roosevelt understood Mahan's message clearly.

Looking to matters of Naval strategy in 1901, the nation's problems could be considered in three arenas--Atlantic, Pacific, and Caribbean. The Atlantic for the time being was relatively secure. Britain had expressed her cooperative spirit and, in case she should experience a change of heart, her potential threat to America was neutralized by a strong German rival across the North Sea. The eastern Pacific was also relatively secure, considering the expanse of ocean that lay between it and Japan. The situation in the western Pacific was not favorable. Our Asiatic Navy was not strong enough to defend Hawaii or the Philippines against a Japanese aggressor. Roosevelt feared that possibility and recognized the need to maintain a position to carefully avoid irritating Japan. The United States sorely needed some flexibility to consolidate her far-flung navy if it were to become the backbone of her international diplomacy. For strategic considerations, the separation of east and west coasts by a distance "half-way-round-the-world"

was unacceptable.[55] The 15,000 mile, 68 day trek of the USS Oregon around South America during the war with Spain had broken all existing records. However, 68 days might well be a luxury America could not afford in another crisis. The solution to the problem lay in the third arena--the Caribbean. A trans-isthmian canal would halve the distance between Atlantic and Pacific, make the Caribbean a commercial turnstile rather than a terminus, and "virtually double the strength of American naval forces."[56] The idea of such a canal was not original with Roosevelt, nor with Mahan who had written much about it. Balboa had explored the Isthmus of Panama and discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513. Others had followed in quest of a water passage and many had proposed the construction of a canal. France became the first nation to begin actual excavation. The project, begun in 1881, was plagued with financial trouble, lack of skilled labor, and tropical disease. While the French burrowed on, with little hope of completing the project, United States interest in having such a canal under American control began to blossom. France, seeing a convenient way to dump her bottomless pit, offered to sell her diggings for $40 million. On 28 June 1902, Congress authorized President Roosevelt to pay the price, provided Columbia would cede a strip of land across Panama and sign a treaty giving the United States the rights to build, operate, and control a canal. Columbia rejected the provisions of the proposal in August 1903. Shortly thereafter, a convenient turn of events provided

a solution. On 3 November 1903, a revolt in Panama created an independent nation. Three days later the United States recognized the new republic and twelve days after that a treaty for the building of the Panama Canal was arranged. The Republic of Panama granted to the United States in perpetuity the use, occupation, and control of a zone of land and water extending approximately five miles on each side of the center line of the canal. For these rights and the authority to exercise sovereignty over the zone, the United States paid Panama $10 million and annual rental of $250,000 commencing in 1913.[57]

Roosevelt was exultant over the successful negotiation of the treaty, particularly the right to defend the canal. He had for many years maintained that such a canal would weaken America's strategic posture unless it could be controlled and defended. Having gained sovereignty over the canal zone and with the assured building of a strong navy to control the approaches, Roosevelt took great pride in ownership of a new strategic asset.[58] Mahan had earlier pointed out, in a June 1893 article, the great commercial value of a water passage through the isthmus. He had also noted the element of military weakness if such a passage were to become an uncontrolled access to the coasts of the United States.[59] Writing Mahan on that subject in 1897, Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had assured him, "All I can do toward pressing our ideas into effect will be done. . . . Do write me from time to time, because there are many, many points which you

will see that I should miss."[60] The confidence and high esteem Roosevelt and Mahan shared was revealed through that and numerous subsequent exchanges. The 1890's aspirations of Mahan were becoming realities under Roosevelt's firm hand in the early 1900's.

By 1905, Roosevelt was satisfied that he had achieved for the United States a respectable status as a world naval power. The fleet at that time had reached an authorized level of 28 battleships and 12 armored cruisers. Roosevelt noted that America was now inferior in naval power only to France and England and that a more leisurely policy in shipbuilding could be pursued.[61] No doubt his opponents in Congress breathed a sigh of relief. However, any joy the anti-navy element in Congress was to express was short lived. Two events in 1906 brought Roosevelt back to a hard-sell position on strengthening the navy.

The first event was the launching of a new all-powerful dreadnought class battleship by the British. By comparison, the best of America's front-line battleships had suddenly become obsolete. Top-of-the-line obsolescence was not tolerable. Roosevelt harranged a resistant Congress to build four of the big new battleships. Congress bent but would not break under the relentless pressure of the President. One battleship was authorized in 1906 and another in 1907. Roosevelt's demands added two more in 1908 and again in 1909.[62] By this time his romance with the Congress had been badly strained, but he had achieved his goal of a super-navy.

The second event was a deterioration of Japanese-American relations to the point of a war scare. This problem, combined with opposition to his naval building program, prompted Roosevelt to demonstrate to his countrymen and to the world his own concept of power-diplomacy. On 16 December 1907, by the President's order, the "Great White Fleet," consisting of 16 battleships and their support vessels, departed Hampton Roads, Virginia on a 46,000 mile round-the-world cruise. No other move could have more clearly demonstrated Roosevelt's "big-stick" diplomacy. The Fleet moved from America's east coast to west, then to Honolulu, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Japan, China, Ceylon, the Suez Canal, Gibralter, and finally, back to Hampton Roads on 22 February 1909.[63] Call it a war gamble, circus act, or what have you, the results of the world cruise were spectacular. The Japanese enthusiastically welcomed the visit and talk of war seemingly vanished. The rest of the world acknowledged the might and good will of the United States. The Navy had gained immeasurable training from the cruise. Americans themselves had been duly impressed by the soaring international prestige of their country. Roosevelt's ploy, aimed at winning his personal war with the Congress, failed on only one count. He had hoped to demonstrate by the cruise, the necessity for naval bases and improved facilities on the island possessions in the Pacific. On this point, the President was unable to budge the Congress. The problem of overseas support for extended naval operations would remain for his successor.[64]

One last crisis arose for the Navy as Roosevelt was about to lay down the reins of government in 1909. West coast interests hammered at Congress to split the Atlantic battleship fleet equally between Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Mahan was sorely distressed by such a move which ran counter to the military doctrine of concentration of force. He likened splitting of America's battleships to Russia's division of her fleet between two oceans. Because of it, the two halves of her fleet had been successively overmatched and decimated by Japan. Until such time as the Panama Canal was completed, Mahan saw the strong possibility of the same fate awaiting the United States Navy.[65] Even with a canal, the strategy was questionable. Mahan was not at all confident that President-elect Taft would resist Congressional tendencies to pacify public whims. He wrote to President Roosevelt, urging him to impress upon Mr. Taft to "on no account divide the battleship force between two coasts."[66] The letter reached Roosevelt on his last day in office. Roosevelt found time in the flurry of final day events to write a memorandum to Taft, beseeching him to leave the battle fleet in one ocean or the other, never divided. He then wrote to Mahan, assuring him that the problem had been attended to.[67] The following day Roosevelt stepped down from eight years of frenzied Presidential activity. His aspirations for a super-navy had been fulfilled; to William Howard Taft, he willed control of the second greatest navy in the world.

THE TAFT YEARS 1909-1913

During Roosevelt's last two years in office, Mahan had suffered severe physical setbacks, He became seriously ill in the summer of 1907. Doctors warned him that his heart and arteries were showing the strain of age. By September of that year he was hospitalized for a prostrate gland operation and in December the operation was repeated. He recovered slowly, but began to realize that at age sixty-seven his self-imposed list of tasks might be longer than his remaining life.[68] Though his pace was now slower, he turned to some 'must do" items. His single published article in 1908 was a review of the value of the round-the-world cruise of the battle fleet (He had earlier written an article on the "prospect" of such a cruise). Aside from that, much of his effort had turned to revision of his War College lectures on naval strategy. He wanted to leave his naval brothers the benefit of his latest observations on the past and the future. This final revision was to take nearly three years.[69] As he worked, he diverted his thought from naval matters for sufficient time to complete a book devoted totally to his religious conceptions, completing it in January 1909.

Meanwhile, Mahan's attention had not been totally diverted from current events. He was aware that the citizenry and the Congress had run out of breath by 1909. Despite Roosevelt's laying the foundation for building the world's strongest navy, President Taft lacked the will or the way to stimulate further

progress in naval development. Mahan vainly tried to rouse the slumbering nation with a scare article on German naval developments. Published by Collier's Weekly a month after Taft's inauguration, the article pointed out that Germany would soon surpass the United States in battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. Moreover, her construction capacity had increased to a point she could build eight dreadnoughts simultaneously. Mahan exhorted America, "Such superiority at sea as Germany is now establishing puts in her power to exact whatever reparation she may please."[70] The facts in the article concerning Germany's shipbuilding program were true. Paradoxically, no one could take more credit for that than Mahan himself. For Kaiser Wilhelm II was so inspired by Mahan's book, Influence of Sea Power on History, that he determined at once to make Germany a strong naval power.[71] The fixation of the Kaiser was not on America however, as Mahan would have Americans believe, but on Germany's nearer neighbor, Great Britain.

The announced German shipbuilding program did finally become a singularly important incentive for America to expand her navy. Roosevelt had instilled in America the importance of remaining second to Britain in naval power. President Taft strongly endorsed a continuation of Roosevelt's achievement of building two dreadnoughts a year. Congress obliged in 1910 and 1911. Debate then raged over the necessity to continue the naval race. Over Taft's protest, the construction of battleships reverted to a single hull in 1912 and again in 1913. By this time, Taft was

urging construction of three battleships to make up for lost tonnage, but to no avail. By mid-1912 Germany had displaced America as number two in warship tonnage built.[72] Taft simply lacked the strong-arm capacity to retain the naval rank attained by Roosevelt. Moreover, conditions in Asia had, if anything, worsened during Taft's administration. Naval strategists worried about war with a strengthening Japan in the Pacific where American naval power and base support remained vulnerable. In March 1913, President Taft bowed out, having left America in a semi-isolationist drift. Her empire remained large while her resolve to protect it wavered.[73]

OF WILSON AND WAR 1913-1918

Perhaps a brief look at the 1913 geo-political inheritances of Woodrow Wilson is in order. From a security point of view, the continental United States remained strategically invulnerable. A combination of large ocean expanses and a strong coastal navy made military aggression from overseas technically infeasible. A delicate balance of power in Europe neutralized the threat of danger from that sector.[74] Wilson's greatest cause for worry came from the Far East. President Taft had pursued active policies in China with little regard to the balance of naval power. Where Roosevelt had been careful to leave Japan's northeast Asian interest unchallenged in return for assured Japanese restraints in the southern and mid-Pacific, Taft had pressed to assure the

Open Door in China. As a result, President Wilson had inherited a "neutral Manchuria" policy which was offensive to Japan and which he militarily could not support. Taft's recognition of China's territorial integrity was feared by many to be an open invitation to conflict with Japan.[75]

Wilson had barely assumed his Presidential duties when a second aggravation reopened an earlier Japanese-American rift.[76] In April 1913 the California legislature enacted measures to restrict aliens "ineligible for citizenship" from owning land. The Japanese segment of the California populace was considerable and had little doubt that the legislation was aimed at them. The influx of Japanese laborors to California had previously been hotly contested and the old issue of discrimination was now resurrected. The cry of indignation was as loudly heard from Japan as from California. Tension mounted on both shores of the Pacific. In Washington, the War Department dusted off war plans. To no one's surprise the situation looked bleak. The Pacific Fleet was widely scattered. While Japanese attack against the continental United States remained improbable, the lack of defenses in Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines left them all open to Japanese reprisals. The Joint Army-Navy Board debated alternatives to make the best of a bad situation. The Joint Board's final recommendations included the withdrawal of five ships from China to the Philippines, dispatch of two ships to protect the nearly completed Panama canal, and the remainder of the Pacific Fleet to Hawaii. President Wilson would have none of

it and the planners hands were tied. Warships could no longer change areas of operation without Presidential order. Wilson believed that a change in operations would telegraph a war intent to Japan. As it turned out, his resolve for inaction was appropriate--Japanese indignation abated and war was averted.

As was Taft before him, Wilson was determined to maintain separate Roosevelt's creation of naval-politico policy. It may also be presumed that he intended to continue Taft's isolationist leanings as he pursued an announced policy of social reform at home and of neutrality abroad. His penchant for non-interference in the affairs of other nations was to be short-lived, however. A temporary slip from his isolationist pedestal occurred in 1914. A bloody revolution in Mexico was too close to home for comfort. Seizure of a boatload of American sailors by Mexico capped an explosive situation. In a fit of "national honor," Wilson landed Marines in Mexico. Following the capture of Vera Cruz on 21 April 1914, Wilson suffered a seige of personal embarrassment at having used armed force. A greatly relieved Wilson withdrew when Argentina, Brazil, and Chile offered mediation assistance.[77]

A greater test was to follow shortly. "Some damned foolish thing in the Balkans," Bismarck had predicted would ignite the next war.[78] The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, Austrian heir apparent, by Serbian nationalists on 28 June 1914 provided the catalyst. Like falling dominoes, the pact-infested countries of Europe responded to the call of battle. The irreversible course of war was set.

Initial American reaction to the war in Europe was passive. That a European war had anything to do with America was a thought no one wished to entertain. President Wilson stood firm in his regained neutralist position and discouraged any who sought to write or talk of the war. Perhaps the single American most stricken by Wilson's stance was Alfred Thayer Mahan. During May 1914 Mahan had joined an editorial syndicate, "organized to prepare short articles on current and timely events," suitable for a chain of daily newspapers.[79] That the war in Europe should constitute the mass of these articles was only natural. Mahan also contracted with numerous other publishers to write on the naval aspects of the war. Such a calling seemed ready-made for a naval historian of international repute. A single effort intitled "Sea Power in the Present European War," was the only Mahan article destined for print. President Wilson, in his drive for neutrality, forbade military officers to comment publicly on the World War. A second Mahan article, submitted for governmental approval, was denied publication and Mahan was relegated to the role of historian.[80] But his chance to record those years of history never came--on 1 December 1914, at age seventy-four, Alfred Thayer Mahan was dead.

However, American neutrality was far from being dead. From 1915 on, public and Congressional debate raged over the adequacy of American defenses and the fear of a spreading war.[81] President Wilson himself feared that a German victory in Europe meant trouble for the United States. Germany's submarine warfare finally

tumbled him from his pedestal of neutrality. The sinking of the British passenger steamer Lusitania on 6 May 1915 resulted in the deaths of more than one hundred Americans. Wilson warned Germany that such actions could not be tolerated. The act was to be repeated and "national honor" was once again to be at stake. By late 1915 President Wilson had made up his mind. With his course of action determined, no President was ever stronger. In his drive for preparedness, on 3 February 1916, Wilson publicly charged the nation to build its armament, to include "incomparably the greatest navy in the world."[82] The Naval Act of 1916 shouted the nation's response and ensured the building of a navy second to none. Provision was made for construction of 10 battleships, 6 battle cruisers, 10 scout cruisers, 50 destroyers, 9 fleet submarines, 58 coastal submarines and 12 other auxiliaries.[83]

On 2 April 1917, a sorrowful Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war. On 6 April the United States declared war on Germany. Within three weeks the first naval ships were enroute to join the allied cause against Germany. Although the land battle was to take the lives of countless millions, the importance of naval operations toward winning the war must be noted. B. H. Liddell Hart says it most succinctly:

> Any study of the military course of the final year is dependent upon, and inseparable from, an understanding of the naval situation preceding it. For, in default of an early military decision, the naval blockade has tended more and more to govern the military situation. . . . Helplessness induces

> hopelessness, and history attests that loss of hope, not loss of lives, is what decides the issue of war. No historian would underrate the direct effect of the semi-starvation of the German people in causing the final collapse of the 'home front'. . . . America's cooperation converted it into a stranglehold under which Germany gradually became limp, since military power is based on economic endurance--a truth too often overlooked.[84]

On 11 November 1918 the war was done.

EPILOGUE

From America's beginning to the present day, she has suffered the agony of internal struggle over her role in the world and of the Navy's part in that role. Through the early years marking the American Revolution, Tripolitan War, and War of 1812, she oscillated between the necessity to take to the high sea and the desire to remain in coastal waters. During her own Civil War she found it necessary to wage offensive naval operations to defeat her seceding states. In the War with Spain she learned the meaning of imperialism. With imperialism came the necessity to protect her far-flung possessions and, inherently, the strategic philosophy of Mahan. Had it not been for the literary efforts of Mahan and the determination of Theodore Roosevelt, America might well have chosen a weaker course. Instead, it became her manifest destiny to rise to a status of world power. Though withdrawal to her interior was the recurring aftermath of every cessation of hostilities, she had learned the lessons of command

of the seas, concentration of force, control by blockade, and politics through power. The Mahan philosophy of "defense through offense" had become her heritage. Such was the case in 1918. Of the influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan there is little doubt.

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FOOTNOTES

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4. Daniel J. Carrison, The United States Navy, p. 4.

5. Harold and Margaret Sprout, The Rise of American Naval Power, p. 7.

6. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power, p. 344.

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9. Sprout, pp. 13-15.

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11. David M. Cooney, A Chronology of the US Navy 1775-1965, pp. 15-24.

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13. Sprout, pp. 41-44.

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16. Alfred T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, Vol 1, p. 2.

17. Robert Leckie, The Wars of America, Vol 1, p. 229.

18. Cooney, p. 28.

19. Leckie, Vol 1, pp. 231-232.

20. Cooney, p. 31.

21. Leckie, Vol 1, p. 233.

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31. Sprout, p. 203.

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