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THE HERITAGE OF TYRE

A lecture delivered by
Rear Admiral Charles R. Brown, U. S. N.
at the Naval War College
December 17, 1948

Since man first sat astride a floating log and propelled himself with a piece of driftwood, the waterways have served not only as frontiers but as areas of conflict and avenues of intercourse between peoples. It is, for instance, the ocean routes and not the impassable land barriers between them which truly join North and South America. The same was true in the old world. The Mediterranean, though separating three continents, was the chief means of contact, conflict and the spread of the civilization which grew up along its shores. Here trade, piracy, and organized sea warfare seemed to have flourished from pre-historic times.

The first great seafaring people were apparently the Cretans or Minoans, but Phoenicia with her great port of Tyre was the first maritime nation of which we know the history. Phoenician ships more than 12 centuries before Christ were receiving the wealth of the East, and distributing it along the shores of the Mediterranean. It is hard to overstress the importance of these early mariners as builders of civilization. The venturesome explorer who brought his ship into some uncharted port not only opened up a new source of wealth for himself but also quickened civilization at both ends of his route. The cargo ships that left the Nile Delta distributed the arts of Egypt as well as her wheat.

Greece, was the next nation after Phoenicia to become a sea power, and her great victory over Xerxes navy at Salamis was

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what really ended the menace of Persia on European soil. Upon its issue depended the Golden Age of Athens which reached its flower in the 80 years following, and which could hardly have come had Greece fallen under the demoralizing influence of oriental rule. Salamis was therefore a victory not only for Greece but for all of mankind.

Two centuries elapsed between the Greek victory at Salamis and the Punic Wars, a second great struggle between alien races for Mediterranean control. Here again it can be said that the welfare of mankind rode with victory in that struggle. Compared with the culture of Rome, with its law, engineering and ideals of practical efficiency, the civilization of Carthage was barren and sterile.

Carthage, herself a Phoenician colony, had centuries of experience in seafaring and sea fighting while Rome was predominantly a land power. But Rome was young, lean and hard while Carthage was old, and ripe for plucking. So Rome took to the sea and, after a long struggle, destroyed Carthaginian sea power.

Thus was Rome forced reluctantly upon the sea. Rome then, in turn, became dominant on every Mediterranean shore and, through sea power she gained the world. For the next six centuries the Mediterranean was to remain for the Romans *mare nostrum* (our sea).

In the year 328 A. D., the Emperor Constantine the Great shifted his capitol from Rome to Byzantium now known as Istanbul but best known to us as Constantinople. It is a strange commentary upon the indifference of us of the western world that we could owe an incalculable debt to the eastern Roman Empire and yet remain so ignorant on the subject. While Rome fell apart and Europe broke up in chaos and descended into the Dark Ages, a single citadel of western culture stood fast at Constantinople, a preserver

of Christianity and the cultural heritage of Greece and Rome, as well as a civilizing influence upon slavic people to the northward. For a period of over 700 years, a time longer than from her final fall in 1453 until today, Byzantium alone stayed the westward sweep of Mohammedanism under first the Saracen and then the Turk until the weak states of Europe could grow strong enough to finally halt the sons of the prophet at the gates of Vienna. Again, it is a story of the East against the West, of the struggle of alien peoples for the Mediterranean. And it is a story of sea power.

During her 1000 years of life, Byzantium stood firm only as long as she kept hold on the sea. Each time she failed to do this her strength dwindled until at last she had shrunk to a mere city fortress the doom of which was assured long before it fell. The Turks finally took Constantinople after a brief siege of seven weeks.

The resulting Turkish supremacy in the Mediterranean was the direct cause of the great voyages of discovery. Blocked by the Turks from the old caravan trade routes to China, the West turned toward the open sea to seek Cathay west across the Atlantic and south around Africa.

The rise of Portugal was a spectacular phenomenon of the Age of Discovery. Her intrepid navigators rounded Africa to open a sea route to the Indies and made Portugal the richest nation in Europe, with a great colonial empire and claims to dominion over half the seas of the world. But the Portuguese system of colonial administration or rather exploitation, was even worse than Spain's and Portugal fell back into the ranks of lesser states.

The rise and fall of Spain is a tragic parallel of Portugal's. As Portugal first turned south and east, Spain was to go westward

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to Mexico and Peru to carry her pillage and her conquest. From the ancient Aztec and Inca empires Spain was to wring the gold and silver with which to finance the next centuries of wars, wars whose outcomes were to give racial, religious, and political form to the world in which we live. But Spain, too, was to fail due to many causes which may be roughly summed up as a lack of maritime genius.

Next it was Holland whose turn it was to flash dramatically across the pages of history. Her rise to wealth and power was a tribute to Dutch character, integrity, hard-headed business sense and native maritime genius, for it was the sea alone which gave Holland an avenue to greatness. Her fall came after she had spent herself against the maritime strength of England.

France too was to make her bid for sea power and French naval history is a story of promise alternating with disappointment. The French navy has known periods of great glory and, in its lowest estate, never dishonored the military reputation so dear to that nation. Yet as a maritime nation, France has never held more than a respectable position.

Some peculiar quirk of national character seemed to color the naval strategy of France. Her officers sought to economize their fleet, to use it in commerce warfare rather than in battle. Even when fortune favored France, she lost golden opportunities due to this fatal weakness which corrupted her officers. The English officer, on the contrary, sought out the enemy and took the offensive, retrieving many a blunder in strategy and tactics by sheer hard hitting.

This brings us to England where we will pick up the threads of our story and tie them together, for the true story of modern sea power until after the turn of this the 20th century has been the history of England. While others rose to shine but briefly

though often brilliantly, she was to climb steadily until she became the acknowledged mistress of the seas. This control of the sea exercised by England was not the gift of fortune. It was a prize gained, in the main, by wise policy in peace and hard fighting in war.

England first defeated the Spanish Navy, and then it was Holland who must meet the challenge of the British Isles. There followed three great wars in which the Dutch fought with epic gallantry. But in the Third Dutch War France teamed up with England, and Holland was reduced to the last extremity. Faced on the land by France, the dominating military power, and on the sea by the combined might of the British and French navies, all seemed lost. And yet Holland was not defeated. She opened her dikes to check the armies of invasion and, under her great Admiral deRyder, fought the navies of France and England to a standstill. When peace eventually came all honors were hers but she was an exhausted and prostrate land, and Holland, like Spain, settled back in slow decline.

This enmity of the French king for the Dutch which led him to team up with the English had gained nothing for France and everything for England. Unwittingly Louis XIV had built up the only country that could become the greatest colonial and maritime rival of France. A series of wars were now to blaze forth between England and France with such frequency that the two nations were to remain at daggers' points for the next century and a quarter.

Time permits only the barest mention of a few of these wars, important though they be. In the Seven Years' War, the British Fleet was to prove a priceless weapon. Teamed up with Wolfe, that 18th century master of amphibious warfare, it was

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to wreck the French colonial empire. The Seven Years' War finally ended in terms of deepest humiliation to France. She was compelled to renounce to England all of Canada, the Ohio Valley and the entire area east of the Mississippi, except the then sickly little settlement at New Orleans.

No peace such as that following the Seven Years' Wars could be permanent. Every patriotic Frenchman burned with a passion for revenge. The opportunity came with the American Revolution. From the outset France was unneutral and, after the capture of Burgoyne, she decided to enter the war openly. It may seem startlingly to say, but the Revolutionary War was as much naval as it was military. Before the entry of France, the English kept their army supplied by sea and forced Washington into the cruel depths of Valley Forge. George Washington, himself, acknowledged it was the French Navy that really saved America. And the final victory, which was assured when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, came from a temporary loss of control of Cornwallis' sea communications.

Ten years after the American Revolution British sea power was drawn into a more prolonged and desperate conflict with France following the French Revolution. As the war dragged on, Spain and Holland were to add their navies to that of France and the rise of Bonaparte was to make France supreme on the Continent. But the magnitude of these events on land during which Napoleon fought a hundred bloody campaigns, overthrew kingdoms, and remade the map of Europe, obscures the prime importance of the warfare that went on the sea. For it was Great Britain by virtue of her navy and insular position that remained Napoleon's least vulnerable and most obstinate opponent, forcing him to ever renewed and exhausting campaigns, reviving continental opposition and supporting it with subsidies made possible by control of sea trade.

Finally, at Trafalgar, the English won a signal victory against a much larger French fleet in what is universally accounted one of the decisive battles of the world. Napoleon who had been planning an invasion of England faced his army back towards the Continent saying: "It will be Britain that forces us to conquer Europe." The great conqueror had set his feet on the path leading to Moscow and Waterloo.

It was in that same June of 1812 when Napoleon gathered his "army of twenty nations" for the Russian Campaign that the United States declared war on Great Britain. The tiny American Navy fought brilliantly but was inevitably smothered by weight of numbers and the final peace settled none of the differences that had begun the war.

The remainder of the 19th century was to be a period of relative peace thanks to the British naval predominance which had broken the Napoleonic hegemony, stripped France of practically all of her American possessions and made America north of the Rio Grande English in speech, laws and traditions. The Union blockade crippled the finances of the South, shut out munitions and food stuffs, and was a major factor in the downfall of the Confederacy. The Japanese defeat of the Chinese Navy in the Battle of the Yalu in 1894, marked the emergence of Japan as a formidable force in international affairs and brought in a period of intensified colonial and commercial rivalry in the Far East. And finally in 1898, the last sorry act was played out in dying Spanish sea power. Spain was ignominiously defeated in both the Battles of Manila Bay and Santiago.

In 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out in best Japanese tradition by a vicious attack without declaration of war. This war was marked by two great Japanese naval victories; the first off Port Arthur on August 10, 1904 and the second in Tsushima Straits on the 27th of May, 1905.

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The Russo-Japanese War greatly weakened Russia's position in Europe, leaving the dual alliance of France and Russia outweighed by that of Germany and Austria. This upsetting of the European balance of power coupled with Germany's commercial rivalry and the growing might of the German navy forced England to abandon her neutral position in between and the First World War was to find her on the side of France and Russia.

World War I was fundamentally akin to the Napoleonic Wars, a struggle between land power predominant on the Continent and naval power supreme on the seas. The English blockade was soon to make its strangling power felt. As had the French before them, the Germans retaliated with commerce raiding. But unlike France, Germany had the submarine, which was soon to prove one of the greatest perils of the sea. Its effectiveness was to be deeply underscored by the almost complete English dependency upon the sea. The battle against the submarine was finally won but the margin was dangerously close.

We need not concern ourselves too closely with the various naval actions of the First World War. The English fleet was to keep the sea while the German fleet found it impossible to break out through the steel ring of Britain. However, we should briefly review the one great naval battle of the war which was fought at Jutland. Here England won at least a strategic victory but failed to destroy the German fleet. Had England won an epic victory, Jutland would have marked the turning point of the war instead of leading, in Churchill's own words, "Directly to the submarine peril of 1917." The German submarine campaign could never have attained the effectiveness it did. But most important of all, Russia could have been kept in the war. For, paradoxically, the first victim of sea power in World War I was not Germany, but Eng-

land's ally Russia who succumbed to the German Navy. Ninety percent of Russia's imports were cut off by the combined efforts of the German navy, which blockaded the Baltic, and Germany's Turkish ally who held the Dardanelles. Russia suffered terrible losses from the resulting lack of munitions, and this desperate plight of Russia was the most compelling reason for the British Dardanelles' Campaign. Unfortunately, however, the Campaign was a tragic failure, and Russia fell into ruins.

So much for the First World War. The Second World War, with some justification, has been called a continuation of that First World War which had been interrupted by a period of armed truce. Certainly the twenty-five years which began in 1914, have the qualities of a great tragedy. The League of Nations proved to be an unhappy failure and the world was to watch the clouds of war grow ever more ominous. France by her unwillingness to make timely concessions to a moderate German government hastened that government's fall which brought into power the elements of extreme dissatisfaction. England, disturbed by French predominance, which overthrew the balance of power, was not altogether unsympathetic towards a resurgent Germany. America resolutely turned her back on the world, determined to regain her historic isolation. Germany, far from penitent, wished only to correct mistakes which had somehow robbed her superior war machine of the fruits of victory and hoped yet to wrench rich spoils from decadent neighbors. Japan, the most recent and most irresponsible recruit to Imperialism, was determined to follow her destiny towards a dream of world domination; while Italy, steeped in nostalgic dreams of an ancient glory, skulked like a greedy jackal in the trail of the jungle giants.

By 1933 it was evident that the three nations, Japan, Italy and Germany, were set upon paths leading inevitably and fatally to war. Thereafter, events were to transpire with increasing fre-

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quency which were to carry the whole world into another mortal conflict. It was now too plain that the forces of aggression could only be stopped by force, but out of an anarchy of compromise, a policy of appeasement had been born and Germany's opponents were to absorb even ruder shocks before their deep-rooted anti-war sentiments could be overcome. Finally in 1938, the world saw the supreme humiliation of England at Munich, and when on September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, England and France, pushed beyond all limits, declared war two days later. The Second World War had begun. Or had it begun in 1937 with the Japanese invasion of China; or earlier still, in 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria? Indeed, had the troubled peace—begun by the Armistice and unsolved by the vengeful treaty of Versailles—been other than an armed truce while nations realigned and re-armed to continue the struggle to see which one could claw its way to the top?

In the beginning German victories on the Continent came with such clock-like regularity that, in less than a year, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France had been overrun. On the 22nd of June, 1940, France signed an humiliating armistice which was to reduce her to virtual slavery throughout the remainder of the war.

But across the Channel the British people seemed to suddenly discover a new reservoir of power and confidence. The Chamberlain government fell and behind the courageous and dynamic leadership of Winston Churchill, the English rallied to show a deathless courage, a stamina and fortitude worthy of Englishmen of any other age. An outnumbered Royal Air Force fought back the horde of German aircraft which, with increasing intensity throughout the summer, sought to drive it from the skies as a prelude to invasion.

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Finally, defeated in the air over Britain, Germany was to again turn to the Continent and the Balkan states were overrun or forced into vassalage. Then on June the 22nd, 1941, Hitler, like Napoleon before him, was to begin his fateful Russian adventure. For a while the German army swept all before it and, in October and November, victory seemed imminent. Japan decided that time was ripe for her complete entrance into a struggle bidding fair to recarve the world into totalitarian empires and on December 7, 1941, began war without warning by an air raid against the American Naval Base at Pearl Harbor.

What of sea power during this titanic struggle of land and air warfare, which, in a little over two years, had swept across the face of the earth?

This time a wiser Germany was able to soften the effects of blockade by stockpiling, the development of synthetics, and through conquest, the acquirement of the stockpiles of neighboring states and the incorporation into her economy of vast areas with their sources of raw materials. Thus the negative effect of sea power's denial of commerce was, temporarily at least, defeated; but England and her Allies were to continue to enjoy the positive boon of huge imports throughout the duration of the war.

Germany, recognizing England's complete dependence on the sea, was to bend every effort to accomplish what she had failed to do before—sever the British lifeline. The struggle was to be a seesaw with the submarine finally going down in defeat, but again the margin was dangerously close.

Later as America found her strength the sea was to supply a crushing bomber offensive and make possible a series of amphibious operations which finally liberated Europe and destroyed the German army. It was sea power which won at El Alamein and in the

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later North African invasion. It was the same story in Sicily and in Italy when the foes of Germany were to return to the Continent at last. And, again, it was the long arm of sea power that, in the early dawn of June the 6th, 1944, supported the invasion of France which was to set the final seal of bankruptcy on German strategy.

But it was in the Pacific that sea power more than ever was to prove the handmaiden of victory. Fought across the largest body of water in the world, an ocean only sparsely dotted with small islands, the war in the Pacific was obviously from the start a naval war. For no other reason, Japan's first and choice objective was the American fleet.

You know the rest of the story as well as I. Japan received her first check in the Coral Sea when a seaborne invasion aimed at the capture of Port Moresby was forced to turn back. Then came Midway. Many informed Japanese saw in Midway the turning point of the war, and so calamitous were the results considered, that the story was never announced in the homeland until after final surrender.

Many famous battles were fought and many epic and gallant deeds were done which have added rich pages to our history. I wish I had the time to discuss them. But I must rest content by saying that the United States succeeded in welding land, sea and air forces into an amphibious machine which moved amphibiously across the most forbidding distances in the world and succeeded in severing Japan from her sources of supply and provided the bases and the logistic support required by the Air Force in its great bomber offensive against Japan.

And so to sum up this little thumb nail sketch which covers all of written history, we find that the prime importance of sea power is clearly demonstrable from the days of Tyre until today.

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Sea power denies the enemy the sinews of war and provides them for one's self. Sea power permits us to carry war to the enemy thus forcing him to fight at home where it hurts. This will also ease our own defense requirements, for the enemy will have to expend precious resources in defense that he might otherwise use in attacking us. Worse than that (from his point of view), he will grow to live in constant dread of our landings and will have to spread his forces so thin in order to protect himself in all directions that no matter how big his army and air force, he will find they are never big enough. For the choice of the point of attack is always given to that nation which controls the sea.

“But why seize and build these bases?” I am asked. “Cannot our airplanes fly there, bomb the enemy, and then get back?” No, they cannot; that is, none we have built yet can do it. Nor do our scientists hold out any promise of airplanes that can do so at any time soon. Of course we can refuel them in the air, but that is an expensive way to do it. Besides fighters cannot go along to protect the bombers, and bombers must have their fighter cover.

But, even if we had super long-range bombers and fighters, there is another compelling reason why we must have our bomber bases close to the enemy. If we cut the distance a bomber must fly in half, we multiply its effectiveness by four. If we cut the distance down to one-fourth, we will multiply its effectiveness by sixteen.

This old law of mathematics applies to all weapons, including the guided missile. The day of the long range guided missile is still many years in the future but when it comes, navies will still be needed to take it closer to the enemy so that we can enjoy this enormous advantage of multiplying its effectiveness by many, many fold.

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But what about the atomic bomb? Hasn't this changed the whole complexion of war?

Of course it has. I would be the last to deprecate the terrible potentialities of this weapon which can only be described in words of horror. But nothing has changed our fundamental laws. The way to win a war is still the same and will continue to be the same. To be victorious war must be carried to the enemy. Atomic bombs are tremendously expensive. The number will always be too limited to waste any trying to hit a target thousands of miles away when we have the means of getting much closer. Germany alone absorbed the equivalent of 200 atomic bombs in the last war. Indeed Mr. P. M. S. Plunkett, Nobel prize winner and famous physicist, puts the number in the thousands, but choosing the lesser number, we do not now have that many nor does it appear that we have any expectation of ever having that many in the future. But, even if we do, we must not waste them in a long range effort.

And so, in conclusion, we find that the face of the globe has not changed, though many have chosen to ignore the continued existence of the oceans and seas. Even the pictures in our magazines which so vividly portray the world as round are actually misleading. They usually show the part of the world that is land. They make us forget that three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered by water, and only one-quarter by land.

New weapons and the increased efficiency of land, sea and air transportation, have all served to complicate modern living, but they have not changed the basic facts of life, either in peace or war. The coming of age of air power as a decisive weapon of war, is of enormous and far reaching consequences. I, as one who has spent a quarter of a century in aviation, would be the last to deprecate this fact. But the case for sea power was never so strong as it is today. We can lose another war if we ever permit ourselves to forget it.