JYU DISSERTATIONS 261

Henrikki Tikkanen

Strategic Leadership and Organizational Transformation

A Leadership History of the British Royal Navy during the 'Fisher Era' 1904–1919

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
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ABSTRACT

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This study draws on a number of contemporary concepts of leadership to investigate strategic leadership in the British Royal Navy (RN) during the period of 1904–1919. Significant historians of the time named the period the 'Fisher era' in the RN. Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher (1841–1920) has been identified as the most significant architect of the sizable technological, organizational and cultural transformation the RN underwent during the ten years before the outbreak of the First World War (WWI). The transformation continued in many ways during the war years as the RN learned to fight efficiently with new technological weapons such as the long-range guns of the novel Dreadnought-type capital ships, submarines, torpedoes and mines. This organizational transformation has often been termed 'Sir John Fisher's naval revolution'.

The main objective of the study is to provide answers to the following research question: How does the regime in the upper echelons of an organization influence the organization's strategic capability for learning and change? What is more, the three articles related to the focal study pose the following research questions, which overlap with the main question and pertain more specifically to the context of the Fisher-era British Royal Navy.

What personal and behavioural aspects or facets of Admiral Fisher's strategic leadership can be identified in his mission of reforming the Royal Navy in 1904–1910? In other words, what were Fisher's personal characteristics, and how was he able to capitalize on his 'Fishpond', especially while facing the fierce opposition to his reforms that arose from within the RN? (Article I)

What are the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders who bring about the organizational adoption of a novel concept such as the battlecruiser? How does the process of adoption unfold and change when the technology is gradually proving less efficient than predicted? How do evolving organizational schemas or gestalts emerge and moderate this process? (Article II)

What was the Fishpond in relation to the official structures and institutions of the RN? Who were the most influential officers in the Fishpond? How did their careers evolve in terms of carrying out Fisher's central reforms? All in all, how effective was the Fishpond as a tool in the process of reforming the RN, especially

in the face of the fierce internal opposition to many of Fisher's major reforms? (Article III)

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the quality of strategic leadership and the ability to control the direction of the RN varied considerably across different First Lord-First Sea Lord dyads during the period under study. There was no marked difference whether the navy was at war or not: there were both effective and ineffective regimes before and during WWI, and the onset of war did not ensure the presence of an effective regime at the top of the RN organization. The distinct organizational architecture of the RN did not guarantee the existence of efficient governance channels that would allow the organization to adapt swiftly to changing situations, either. The historical analysis provided in this Introduction and in the attached articles points towards the following dimensions in explaining the quality of strategic leadership in any of the regimes at the top of the RN organization: personality and leadership style, the management of organizational attention and strategic issues, and the building of management teams and networks of influence.

Keywords: Leadership history, strategic leadership, the British Royal Navy, Admiral Fisher

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Strateginen johtajuus on useimmiten määritelty ylimmän johdon kykynä auttaa organisaatiotaan oppimaan ja muuttumaan parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla ja oikeaan aikaan. Erityisen keskeistä taitava strateginen johtajuus on voimakkaan teknologisen tai muun ympäristön muutoksen aikana. Tämä tutkimus soveltaa keskeisiä johtajuusteoreettisia käsitteitä Britannian kuninkaallisen laivaston (the British Royal Navy) strategisen johtajuuden tarkastelemiseen aikajaksolla 1904–1919. Tätä ajanjaksoa on totuttu kutsumaan 'Fisherin aikakaudeksi', millä viitataan laivastoamiraali Sir John Arbuthnot Fisheriin (1841–1920). Fisher oli kymmenen vuotta ennen ensimmäisen maailmansodan puhkeamista alkaneen merkittävän teknologisen ja kulttuurisen organisaatiomuutoksen pääarkkitehti ja aloittaja. Kuninkaallinen laivasto jatkoi tätä organisaatiomuutosta sodan aikana opetellessaan taistelemaan sellaisilla uusilla teknologiasovelluksilla kuten Dreadnought-tyypin taistelulaivojen ja taisteluristeilijöiden pitkän kantaman tykit, sukellusveneet, torpedot tai merimiinat. Tätä kattavaa koko kuninkaallisen laivaston transformaatioprosessia on totuttu kutsumaan 'Sir John Fisherin laivastovallankumoukseksi'.

Tutkimuksen tavoite on antaa vastauksia siihen pääkysymykseen, miten organisaation johdossa oleva regiimi eli kulloinkin keskeisten vallassa olevien toimijoiden ydinjoukko vaikuttaa organisaationsa kykyyn oppia ja viedä läpi merkittäviä strategisia organisaatiomuutoksia? Tämän lisäksi tutkimukseen kuuluvat kolme artikkelia keskittyvät vastaamaan seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin: Mitkä johtajan henkilöön ja johtamistoimintaan liittyvät tekijät selittävät amiraali Fisherin onnistumista laivastovallankumouksensa läpiviennissä, erityisesti vahvan organisaation sisäisen muutosvastarinnan tapauksessa (artikkeli I)? Mitkä ovat ylimpien johtajien keskeiset ominaisuudet ja heidän käyttämänsä vaikutusmekanismit, kun he haluavat organisaationsa ottavan käyttöön radikaalisti uusia teknologioita ja niille perustuvia sovelluksia kuten ensimmäisen maailmansodan aikakauden taisteluristeilijä? Mitä tapahtuu, kun teknologia osoittautuu odotettua heikommin toimivaksi? (artikkeli II)? Mikä oli amiraali Fisherin keskeisimpien kannattajien joukon (jota kuvaamaan on usein negatiivisessa mielessä käytetty termiä 'Fishpond') rooli suhteessa kuninkaallisen laivaston virallisiin raken-

teisiin Fisherin organisaatiouudistuksen läpiviemisessä? Ketkä keskeiset laivastoupseerit kuuluivat siihen, ja miten heidän uransa kehittyivät Fisherin aloittamien uudistusten ympärillä? (artikkeli III)

Yleisesti tutkimus osoittaa, että strategisen johtajuuden laatu ja ylimmän johdon kyky ohjata organisaationsa suuntaa ja oppimista vaihteli voimakkaasti eri First Lord – First Sea Lord -johtajakaksikoiden ja heidän regiimiensä välillä riippumatta siitä, oliko organisaatio sodassa vai ei. Kuninkaallisen laivaston tuolloinen organisaatioarkkitehtuuri ei myöskään taannut riittävän tehokasta ja toimivaa hallintarakennetta mittavan organisaation muutoksen läpiviennille, vaan johtajien oli käytettävä avainhenkilöihin ja keskeisiin eteenpäin vietäviin erityiskysymyksiin perustuvaa epämuodollisempaa toimintamallia. Tutkimuksen johdanto-osiossa ja artikkeleissa esitetyt johtopäätökset tunnistavat kolme avainaluetta tässä toimintamallissa: avainjohtajien ominaisuudet ja johtamistyylit, organisaation huomion ohjaaminen keskeisimpiin strategisiin kysymyksiin sekä johtajatiimien ja vaikuttajaverkostojen rakentaminen. Eri regiimien kyky löytää toimivin malli näillä osa-alueilla vaihteli suuresti tarkastelujakson aikana.

Avainsanat: Johtajuushistoria, strateginen johtajuus, Britannian kuninkaallinen laivasto, amiraali Fisher

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I started this study of strategic leadership and organizational transformation while on a sabbatical at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok in 2013–2014. The original aim was to study top leaders and their leadership activity in three markedly different contexts of significant organizational transformation: the Nokia corporation from 1986 until the divestment of the legacy mobile-phones business in 2013, the Finnish university system before and after the watershed new university law of 2010, and the transformation of the navies of the British and German empires before and during the First World War.

Whereas in the other contexts the research has progressed in varying degrees, this study reports what I have learned about strategic leadership in the British Royal Navy of the 'Fisher era'. Interesting comparisons between the above-mentioned three original contexts are left for the future.

The support and abundant comments of Professors Jari Ojala and Juha-Antti Lamberg are gratefully acknowledged. You have taught me a lot about historical research and fruitful collaboration! Sincere thanks are also due to Professors Pertti Ahonen, Petri Karonen and Vesa Vares for their comments. Many of my collaborators in business studies have read and commented on various versions of this Introduction and the articles. I am grateful in particular to my 'strategy mates' Professors Jaakko Aspara, Tomas Falk and Rami Olkkonen, Assistant Professors Jukka Luoma and Antti Sihvonen, and Doctors Juho-Petteri Huhtala and Pekka Mattila. Associate Professor Joel Hietanen's comments on numerous versions of the text helped me to improve its fluency and to give it a critical edge: thank you for that. I would also like to thank Lieutenant General Ilkka Aspara for his comments on the early versions of some of my papers on military leadership in the naval context. What is more, many thanks are due to the excellent pre-examiners of this work, Professors Mairi Maclean and Hugh Murphy. I am also grateful for Professor Maclean for agreeing to act as the official opponent in the forthcoming doctoral defence.

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At Muistola Manor, on my 50th birthday, July 30, 2020.

Henrikki Tikkanen

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

There are abundant histories of leadership and management thought and related concepts[1], but studies on the evolution of leadership thinking and practice in distinct organizational contexts are more rare, as if scholars thought these 'local' leadership thinkers and practitioners were not potentially as interesting or as worthy of historical investigation as great leadership gurus[2]. However, as I hope to demonstrate in this study, how the dynamics of personalities and styles of leadership at the top of a large organization affect its evolution in a pungently transformative period is a highly interesting subject of study. It has been claimed that many studies on leaders and leadership do not, in practice, concern the leader, in person, exercising leadership[3].

On the other hand, leadership history as part of the broader field of management and organizational history can be appraised from the historian's standard critical perspective on anacronism. Historians are traditionally urged not to try to impose contemporary concepts and categories upon historical actors

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1 See e.g. Wren and Bedeian 2009; Grint 2011; for a critique of dominant management histories, see e.g. Jacques and Durepos 2015, 97–111.

2 On other hand, historiometric and archival studies of the leadership of US presidents have been published in the most prestigious outlets of leadership research, see e.g. Deluga 1997; 1998.

3 Seminal leadership studies from the 19th century until the 1930s tended to focus on 'great men' making history through their leadership. Their leader 'traits', i.e. relatively stable personal characteristics, motives, skills and expertise, for example, were studied extensively, and a debate ensued as to whether such traits could be developed or if leaders inherently possessed them. Studies on psychological leadership published after World War II prompted a reorientation in the research towards effective behaviour (rather than traits or other personal characteristics) and the situational dynamics that give rise to effective leadership. It is thus claimed that a lot of mainstream research on leadership ignored the leader, at least until the late 1980s. Since then, more balanced studies of leaders, leader behaviour and the importance of the context have emerged (see e.g. Day and Zaccaro 2007). Prosopographic studies exemplify studies on historical leadership that purport to investigate the common characteristics of a historical group (whose individual biographies may well be missing) by means of a collective study of their lives, see e.g. Fellman 2014.

and contexts.[4] Is leadership history, which often applies contemporary concepts and understandings of essential leadership questions to the study of leaders and leading in historical contexts, therefore doomed to becoming defunct? There is a more nuanced viewpoint, which Nick Jardine expresses:

> "…anachronism, use of categories alien to the period in question, is often entirely in order precisely when our interest is, like Skinner's, in the historical identity of deeds and works. Their original historical significances, their meanings in their own times and places, are not confined to the significances that were (or could have been) attached to them at those times and places."[5]

It is also argued that if contemporary categories (such as key concepts in strategic leadership) are to be applied to a body of past activities, those activities must have been on an agenda 'sufficiently close' to how we currently conceptualize them[6]. I argue in this study that the highly abstract cognitive activity related to leadership and leading in organizations constitutes such an instance in which contemporary understanding can help shed more light not only on how the original actors led and interpreted their leadership but also on how later historiography has interpreted the same issues over the years[7].

In general, leading in organizations includes actions that could be categorized under the broad conceptions of leadership, management and command. It is argued that leadership (asking the right critical questions from subordinates, providing visionary guidance) is especially needed for solving 'wicked' organizational problems, i.e. those that are complex, novel and intractable, whereas management (of processes) is required in solving more 'tame' problems, which may be complicated but tend to be recurrent and thus resolvable through more unilinear acts. The leadership vs. management dichotomy is one of the best-known (and paradoxical) conceptions in organization and management studies[8]. However, there is also a third leadership style, which concerns military organizations in particular. 'Critical' organizational problems, such as a sudden crisis in a military organization that allows very little time for decision-making and action, tend to be associated with authoritarianism and an 'automatic' command-type mode of leading.[9]

The internal hierarchy of leadership modes is relatively clear-cut in a military organization: more of a command-type style at the bottom of the organization (e.g. a lieutenant leading his men in combat), management-type

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4 Skinner (1969), for instance, forcefully denounced the habit among historians of interpreting historical agents as doing something that they would not accept as an account of what they were doing. On business history, see e.g. Zan 2016, 571–596.

5 Jardine 2000, 252.

6 Jardine 2000, 261.

7 When it comes to Fisher personally, the admiral was very preoccupied with strategic questions ranging from technology to war plans, setting up a Strategy Committee in 1907. 'Strategy' contains one of the longest list of entries in the index of the most authoritative Fisher biography, Mackay (1973, 537). Fisher was also keenly interested in the leadership of key historical Royal Navy commanders, especially Nelson (Mackay 1973, 88, 140, 287–289). Thus, the depiction of Fisher by some historians as having little interest in or understanding of strategy and history seems to be largely inaccurate.

8 Zaleznik 1977; Bennis and Nanus 1985; Kotter 1990; 2001.

9 Grint 2005, 1472–1473; Grint 2008.

modes on the middle levels (e.g. an artillery officer overseeing process development related to his specialty area), and more leadership-oriented modes at the higher levels (e.g. a commander-in-chief providing visionary leadership and asking the right questions of his sub-commanders). However, any leadership position at any organizational level potentially requires mastery of a balanced mix of all three modes in different situations and contexts. Individuals often fail to recognize this, and consequently may fail to develop their higher-order leadership capabilities as they advance in their careers. Thus, a leadership historian is inherently interested in all three modes and their historical interplay in the organization under scrutiny[10].

Consequently, a number of contemporary leadership concepts are applied in this study, which investigates *strategic leadership*[11] in the British Royal Navy (RN) during the period 1904–1919. Significant contemporary historians refer to the period as the 'Fisher era' in the RN[12]. Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher[13] (1841–1920) has been identified as the most significant architect of the sizable technological, organizational and cultural transformation the RN underwent during the ten years before the outbreak of the First World War (WWI). The RN continued the transformation in many ways during the war years, learning to fight efficiently with its new naval technologies such as the long-range guns of novel Dreadnought-type capital ships, submarines, torpedoes and mines, for instance[14]. This organizational transformation[15] has often been termed 'Sir John Fisher's naval revolution'[16].

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10 However, this study primarily focuses on leadership in the upper echelons of the focal organization.

11 For strategic leadership, see e.g. Carter and Greer 2013; Finkelstein, Hambrick and Cannella 2009; Boal and Hooijberg 2000.

12 Marder 1961; Sumida 1996; 2000; Seligmann 2012a; 2013; Bell 2016; Gough 2017.

13 After 1909, the 1st Baron Fisher of Kilverstone.

14 Marder 1961; 1963; 1966; 1969; 1970; on the submarine, see e.g. Dash 1990; on the torpedo, see e.g. Epstein 2014; on long-range naval gunnery, see e.g. Brooks 2005; 2016.

15 According to the punctuated equilibrium model of organizational transformation, organizations evolve through long periods of stability (equilibrium periods) in their basic patterns of activity, which are occasionally punctuated with shorter bursts of fundamental change (revolutionary periods). Revolutionary periods substantively disrupt established activity patterns and install the basis for a new equilibrium period, see Romanelli and Tushman 1994, 1141–1166. In an earlier paper, Tushman and Romanelli distinguish between 'convergence'—a process of incremental change consistent with existing internal activities and strategic orientation—and 'reorientations'—simultaneous and discontinuous shifts in an organization's strategy, structures and control systems. The authors further posit that "*re-creations are reorientations which also involve a discontinuous shift in the firm's core values and beliefs*" (Tushman and Romanelli 1985, 179). This theoretical perspective is highly compatible with the historical situation of the RN before and during WWI. After a lengthy tranquil period characterized by incremental changes during the Victorian era, the organization suddenly faced a swift revolutionary period of rapid technological change and increased international rivalry.

16 Ruddock F. Mackay (1973, 347–348) refers to Arthur Balfour's memorandum (dated 4 December 1905, the day when Balfour resigned his post as the PM) on the subject of Fisher's remuneration, in which the PM used the term 'administrative revolution' when referring to what Fisher had already achieved at the Admiralty. See also Gough 2017, 140–141.

A continuing historiographical debate has emerged concerning the contents, outcomes and personal roles of different actors involved in the change process of the RN during the above-mentioned time period[17]. Since the late 1970s, revisionist scholars such as Jon Sumida, Nicholas Lambert and Nicholas Black have been postulating various novel ideas about key organizational and tactical developments, questioning many earlier interpretations of orthodox scholars such as Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and Richard Hough. The revisionists have tried to induce far-reaching strategic schemes from extant historical sources. However, it is repeatedly claimed that these ideas existed only in the heads of Fisher and his leading admirals, and that many were never implemented in practice. Examples include relying primarily on flotilla defence around the British home isles, the related idea of using fast and powerful but thin-skinned battlecruisers to protect the shipping lanes of the Empire all around the world, and the notion of technical-tactical synthesis, according to which the British main fleet would overcome the enemy fleet with an overbearing mid-range gunnery flurry immediately when hostile contact was established[18]. With regard to a grand strategy, Nicholas Lambert recently reiterated his familiar but contested idea of an Admiralty 'Schlieffen plan' for quickly collapsing the German economy by strangling the global financial system[19]. Finally, post-revisionist or evolutionary scholars have recently presented more nuanced views, disavowing most of the above-mentioned wild schemes put forward by the revisionists[20]. In combination, the key interpretations from the two above-mentioned approaches to British naval history conceptualize most of the developmental trajectories as essentially evolutionary within their complex organizational contexts[21]. For instance, the RN of the pre-war days appears not to have been as strategically reactionary and averse to changes in naval tactics as is often claimed in general WWI historiography[22]. As Matthew Seligmann and David Morgan-Owen argue:

> "…they (post-revisionists) question the validity of forming the historical analysis of a complex administrative organ such as the Admiralty around one man, however remarkable he may have been. In that sense, referring to the naval history of the decade and a half before 1914 as 'the Fisher Era' and the reform process as 'the Fisher Revolution' instrumentalises an out-dated single-personality-driven-approach to the period that is fundamentally inappropriate."[23]

Barry Gough, in his recent study, provides an extensive historical analysis of the personal contributions of the two 'Titans at the Admiralty', Churchill and Fisher, to key Admiralty policies during Fisher's stint as the Second Sea Lord in 1902 until his death in 1920[24]. Albeit thorough and conclusive, the analysis does not

17 Lambert 2002; Seligmann 2013; Bell 2016.
18 Sumida 1989; 1996; 2000; 2003; 2005; 2007; Lambert 1995c; 2002.
19 Lambert 2012.
20 Bell 2016; Seligmann 2018; 2017
21 Bell 2016; Seligmann 2015; Morgan-Owen 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015.
22 Morgan-Owen 2017, 6-9; 227-233; Seligmann 2017; 2018.
23 Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015, 939. Consequently, the author of this study has chosen to refer to the 'Fisher era' (mostly) in quotation marks.
24 Gough 2017.

give a full account of the interplay between the managerial and organizational context and the leadership of these two highly influential figures.

As I argue below, my aim in this study is to open up the 'black box' of strategic leadership in the upper echelons of the RN during the 'Fisher era', and to give new interpretations of the personalities[25] and leadership styles of the key figures[26], and of how all this related to the administrative structure and functioning of the naval organization (i.e. the organizational architecture)[27]. Thus, I do not intend to write another Fisher hagiography[28]. In the related historical analysis I essentially follow the emerging evolutionary stream of RN historiography. The contribution of the study is likely to be primarily to management and organizational history[29], and secondarily to military and naval history. Organizational history in general could be defined as research that combines history with organizational theory and analysis[30]. Although most historians prefer primary sources, it has been argued that those on the organizational side tend to settle for secondary sources[31]. This generally applies in the focal study as well. As I mention below, the key source materials include published and unpublished but publicly available primary materials, interpretations offered in earlier historical studies, biographical materials and media extracts.

Admiral Fisher, a gifted officer from a modest family background born in Ceylon in 1841, had advanced through the ranks of the RN primarily based on his own merits, and without powerful patrons.[32] He rose to flag rank in 1890. Fisher served from 1886 to 1904, among other posts, as Director of Naval Ordnance, Third Sea Lord and Controller, and Second Sea Lord, and as the Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet. In these positions he could observe and

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25 In psychology, a widely accepted definition of personality is behaviour of an individual that is relatively constant over time and does not depend on context: Perugni, Costantini, Hughes and de Houwer 2016, 3. Thus, it is not an entity, but a pattern of fairly repetitive behaviour. The historian, of course, is interested in the fact that psychologists perceive an individual's behaviour as considerably dependent on the context and thus highly variable.

26 In other words, who the leaders are: what are their personal 'traits' broadly understood; and what they do and how, i.e. their conception of how to exercise effective leadership, and the kind of leadership style(s) they adopted and/or developed over their careers.

27 Cf. Hughes and Seligmann (eds.) 2000, 1–9.

28 Fisher's personality has traditionally aroused strong feelings *pro* and *contra* the admiral, his ways of working and achievements, even among professional historians: see Morris 1995. This is even evident in some of the more recent biographies. For instance, one is entitled '*Tempestuous Genius*' (Freeman 2015a). Despite the known fact that historians tend to develop a liking for their study subjects, I have sought in this study to maintain, as far as possible, a neutral attitude towards Fisher, his key disciples and their deeds.

29 As stated, I believe the main contribution of this study is to *leadership history* as part of this emerging tradition.

30 Godfrey, Hassard, O'Connor, Rowlinson and Ruef 2016, 592; on management and organizational history, see e.g. Gill, Gill and Roulet 2018; Maclean, Harvey and Clegg 2017, 2016; Mills, Suddaby, Foster and Durepos 2016; Weatherbee, McLaren and Mills 2015; Bucheli and Wadhwani (eds.) 2014; Kipping and Üsdiken 2014; Burgelman 2011.

31 See e.g. Perchard, MacKenzie, Decker and Favero 2017, 913–914.

32 Morris 1995, 12–14.

occasionally compensate for the shortcomings in the materiél, education and manning of the fleet. However, when he took over as First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty in October 1904 he was free to devise a much more ambitious and holistic scheme of reforms for the entire RN organization. During his first tenure as First Sea Lord (1904–1910) he realized several major administrative and technological reforms. For instance, he introduced the Dreadnought model of powerful all-big-gun capital ships that made earlier designs practically obsolete. He continued in an advisory capacity and as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence after 1910 until his short second period as First Sea Lord in 1914–1915 when war broke out. Still, he succeeded in, among other things, re-commencing the construction of battlecruisers, his favourite design of capital ship. After his unseemly resignation in May 1915, triggered mainly by the failed Dardanelles campaign, his influence in the RN swiftly declined. However, he continued to serve as the chairman of the newly-founded Government's Board of Invention and Research (BIR). Other men, most significantly the members of his so-called 'Fishpond', continued and modified many of his reforms.[33]

As a leader, Fisher was a deeply controversial figure. Headstrong and visionary, occasionally petty and vindictive, he invoked both admiration and hatred among the officers of the RN.[34] As I claim in Article I of this study, he had his own distinctly individual leadership style, which was hard for some people to understand and accept. On the other hand, it has been claimed that he and his hand-picked disciples in the upper echelons of the organization - the 'Fishpond' explicated in Article III - managed successfully to renew the technological basis and key ways of working in the languid RN organization of the post-Victorian era[35]. The global dominance of the RN, which was by far the most powerful navy of the time period, was not seriously challenged by any other nation until the infamous Anglo-German naval arms race before WWI[36]. However, due to the accelerating naval arms race before and after war broke out, the RN had to pioneer many novel technological and operational concepts such as the battlecruiser (explained in Article II). Thus, it could be argued that strategic leadership in the upper echelons of the organization – over and above Fisher's immediate personal influence – constitutes an important yet somewhat neglected topic in the history of the RN.

For instance, as Robert L. Davison states in his recent account of the reinvention of the executive officer corps in 1880–1919, surprisingly little work has been done on the RN's administrative structure and leadership culture in the era of the Great War[37]. Hence, a more precise aim of this study is to shed light on the most crucial aspects of strategic leadership in the upper echelons of the RN organization. These aspects include the personalities and leadership styles of the

33 Bacon 1929a; 1929b; Hough 1969; Mackay 1973; Penn 1999.
34 Mackay 1973; Morris 1995; Ollard 1991.
35 Ross 1998, 76, 121; Morris 1995, 15; Hough 1984, 193.
36 Padfield 2013; Seligmann 2011; 2012a; 2012b; Kennedy 1976; 1980.
37 Davison 2011, 8–16. Gordon (1996) is perhaps the best-known study of the defunct authoritarian leadership culture of the RN in the pre-Fisher era, which Fisher and his disciples strove to change (mostly in vain).

most influential leaders and their ability to form well-functioning teams to ensure that the organization is able, more or less successfully, to renew itself, in other words to learn and to transform itself in a rapidly changing organizational environment. Scholars in the field of strategic leadership commonly argue that top management and the organizational architecture have to be in sync for successful organizational transformation. Strategic leadership has been a vibrant topic in the research on business strategy and organizational research since the 1980s, not to mention the field of management and organizational history.[38] Consequently, most of the studies tend to be qualitative/historical and conceptual accounts of the phenomenon[39]. In essence, strategic leadership merges the study of organizations with the study of the leading individuals and teams in charge.

A widely-cited review characterizes strategic leadership in terms of an organization's ability to change (transformative/adaptive capacity) and to learn (absorptive capability), connected with the leaders' managerial wisdom (related to their age, industry background, education, tenure, visions, leadership style, charisma and network of contacts, for example)[40]. It is claimed that desired organizational outcomes (i.e. the success of a chosen strategy) depend on the quality of the strategic leadership[41]. Kalle Pajunen's rigorous historical study on strategic leadership, for example, provides a detailed account of the phenomenon in an early-20th-century industrial setting dominated by a strong leader[42]. In general, the author concludes that despite significant changes in technology and lower-order managerial techniques, on the deeper level the essence of strategic leadership seems to be based on much more stable elements, that are not subject to rapid change[43]. This viewpoint is shared by the author of the current study.

Knowledge of the formal naval organization is a prerequisite for understanding strategic leadership and organizational architecture in the RN during the 'Fisher era'[44]. During this period, the British Admiralty was governed by the Board of Admiralty, which comprised three political members (the First Lord, the Civil Lord and the Financial Secretary) and various professional

38 Hambrick 1989; Schendel 1989; Shrivastava and Nachman 1989; Westley and Mintzberg 1989; Ireland and Hitt 1999; Boal and Hooijberg 2000; Carter and Greer 2013.

39 Boal and Hooijberg 2000; Pajunen 2006.

40 Boal and Hooijberg 2000.

41 Carter and Greer 2013.

42 Pajunen 2006.

43 Pajunen 2006, 341. This viewpoint coincides with the view of the author of this study – that applying contemporary concepts of strategic leadership to the investigation of leadership in a historical context is not inherently anachronistic.

44 This study focuses primarily on the internal context of the RN organization. However, it should be borne in mind that a large number of actors within the outer context of the organization also significantly affected (and were occasionally affected by) its strategic leadership. These key actors include the Prime Minister and his Cabinet (during the war especially the more narrow War Cabinet), the King and his court (most importantly his secretaries and key advisers), the Defence Minister, Parliament, the top leadership of the Army, various media companies, public opinion, private dockyards and armaments manufacturers, Britain's allies (most importantly France and Russia and later on the US), and its potential and actual enemies at war (Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire).

members (Sea Lords, the Permanent Secretary and some technically competent civilians). In 1912, a Naval War Staff was formed under the leadership of the First Sea Lord and a separate Chief-of-Staff (COS). It was renamed Naval Staff in 1917 and the First Sea Lord also assumed the role of COS. Many supplementary committees (such as Fisher's original Committee on Designs 1904–1907) supported the work of the formal institutions.[45] Moreover, the Committee of Imperial Defence was in place at the outbreak of the war as a peacetime defence-planning organ to coordinate the military strategies of the army and the navy. This was replaced in October 1914 by the War Council, which essentially comprised the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Imperial Staff. However, its work did little to ensure strategic consistency in the conduct of war on land and at sea.[46]

Within the British Admiralty, the First Sea Lord was responsible for all strategic, tactical and organizational matters, assisted by three (later four) subordinate Sea Lords. The civilian First Lord was primarily a political figurehead who, with the exception of Winston S. Churchill (1974–1965, First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911–1915), rarely intervened in professional matters.[47] However, as this study demonstrates, the powerful dyad of a civilian Cabinet member First Lord and a professional First Sea Lord effectively defined the strategic direction of the RN during their respective years in power. As to how much an individual actor such as Fisher was able to dominate the whole strategic leadership scene (e.g. exert personal rule during his first stint as First Sea Lord), it was largely a matter of a fit of personalities and leadership styles, timing and the situation. Within the RN organization, the Second Sea Lord was responsible for the manning and training of the fleet, the Third Sea Lord and Controller for the provision of materiél, whether ships or their armament, and the Fourth Sea Lord for supplies and transport (the Fifth Sea Lord was later responsible for the Naval Air Arm).[48] As demonstrated in Article III, many officers in the Fishpond worked as Sea Lords during their careers.

What is more, governed by the Department of the Controller, the positions of the Director of Naval Construction (DNC) and the Director of Naval Ordnance (DNO) were pivotal for the strategic leadership of the RN. The DNO, for instance, took care of everything related to guns, gun-mountings, magazines, torpedo apparatus, electrical fittings for guns and other electrical fittings.[49] The two positions were particularly influential in developing new weapons systems and novel types of combat vessels, especially in peacetime. Naturally, however, staff positions related to intelligence, planning and several specialty fields had more power in wartime. For instance, the positions of Director of Plans Division (DOP), Director of the Operations Division (DOD), Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI),

45 Bacon (ed.) 1943, 49–53.
46 Marder 1961, 62–63.
47 Gilbert 1991, 239–262.
48 Grimes 2012, 7–40; Bacon (ed.) 1943, 50.
49 Following the formation of the naval staff in 1912, the abbreviation DNO could also refer to the increasingly influential post of Director of Naval Operations, see e.g. Harley 2016.

Director of the Training and Staff Duties Division (DTST) and Director of the Anti-Submarine Division (DASD) were of major importance in terms of organizational learning in the RN during the war years.[50]

When Fisher became First Sea Lord in October 1904 he immediately launched a sizable reform scheme for the RN as a whole. He and his disciples thought of it as a paralyzed organization unable to cope with the rapid progress in naval technology. From the very beginning his reforms encountered staunch resistance from the institution's more conservative and conventionalist ranks, sometimes referred to as the 'Syndicate of Discontent'[51]. As I demonstrate in the historical analysis below and in the attached articles, this group of officers, led by Admiral Lord Charles Beresford (1846–1919), aimed at undermining most of Fisher's strategic designs, seriously hampering learning and transformation on various levels of the RN organization. It was sharply divided into the Fisherite and Beresfordian factions, especially during Fisher's first stint as First Sea Lord. The latter group criticized the top leaders in particular for deploying the fleet in home waters, pointing to the inadequate numbers of flotilla craft, and claimed that the Admiralty came up with no war plans whatsoever.[52] Some of their claims were more warranted than others, but their resistance caused severe practical problems for the RN organization in terms of learning and change.

Fisher's original reform programme essentially comprised the following elements: (1) the novel distribution of the Fleet with a strong concentration of the most modern capital ships in home waters around the British Isles against the increasing German threat; (2) an emphasis on future types of fighting vessels (especially the new Dreadnought type of battleship, the battlecruiser, the torpedo boat destroyer and the submarine); (3) the introduction of the nucleus-crew system for ships in reserve; (4) the withdrawal and scrapping of out-of-date vessels; (5) the overhaul of stations and new ways of defending naval ports; (6) further personnel reforms (especially in recruitment, training, promotions and pay); and (7) a revision of the navy's strategic and tactical doctrine. What is more, (8) the navy dockyards were to be reorganized substantially.[53] Although many of Fisher's reforms proved to be controversial, and it is argued that some failed miserably, there is consensus among historians that, in general, he and his disciples were able to turn around the RN from its languorous state before the war broke out.

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50 Bacon 1940, 161; Marder 1970, 212–220.

51 Freeman 2009; Penn 2000; see also Bennett 1968. Fisher also called this faction 'Adullamites'.

52 McLay 2015. Fisher often stated that war plans only existed in the head of the chief planner, i.e. the First Sea Lord. He was also (mainly) opposed to the creation of a formal naval staff. See Grimes 2012.

53 Bacon 1929a, 1–28; Kemp (ed.) 1960, 9–11; Lambert 2002.

2 RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

As stated above, my main research aims are primarily connected to the field of management and organizational history (and leadership history as a part thereof), with a particular focus on strategic leadership in the RN of the 'Fisher era'. As strategic leadership questions integrally relate to military history (and naval history as a part thereof), this field is of central interest for the focal study, too.[54] I refer above to *strategic leadership* as the ability of an organization to learn and transform both efficiently and effectively, led or at least facilitated by its top leaders. The dynamics of technological development, learning and international (not to mention internal) politics generate a specific challenge with regard to organizational learning in military contexts[55], in which the temporal distance between deployments in conflicts tends to be large relative to the pace of technological change. This issue was especially salient in the naval warfare of WWI, given the rapid and profound developments in key technologies related to hardware such as gunnery, submarines, torpedoes and mines just a few years before war broke out.

Military organizations thus need to develop and learn to use novel technologies on a smaller scale in times of peace, which often implies learning without experience of actual wartime conditions. These conditions are often simulated in exercises such as war games and by rehearsing routines associated with conditions assumed to occur in conflict situations. Practising with new technologies in imagined situations helps those involved to become familiar with the basic routines and skills that may have to be deployed in wartime conditions. When a conflict ultimately breaks out, military organizations must engage in accelerated learning from a small number of data points—the first encounters with the enemy and the first battles—to reduce casualties and to avoid the risks

54 However, as the reader may notice, most of my source materials consist of the abundant historical studies of the RN in the 'Fisher era'. Military leaders and institutions are particularly interesting to scholars in the field of organizational history given that the personalities, events and organizational contexts tend to be extremely richly and meticulously documented, which is rare in corporate contexts, for example.

55 Augier, Knudsen and McNab 2014; on organizational learning, see e.g. Levitt and March's (1988) seminal article.

of technical and organizational malfunction in the future. Thus, interestingly, learning from limited experience merges both direct and indirect learning in a complex configurational interplay with the organization's strategic leadership.[56]

An organization's capacity to bring together a diversity of viewpoints and experiences is often critical for its learning, which is especially salient in military contexts. Collective attention to these heterogeneous perspectives is, in turn and in part, the product of the organizational context in which learning occurs[57]. Consequently, in this study I elaborate on how the upper echelons of the organization shape the organizational context of learning and change, in this case 'Sir John Fisher's naval revolution'. In doing so, I also examine how the *regime* of powerful individuals at the top—intentionally or not—shape organizational attention and interpretation[58] and, consequently, organizational learning and transformation. Thus, my research specifically focuses on *how the regime (i.e. key leader personalities, their leadership styles and the way they were able to work together) in the upper echelons of an organization influences the allocation of attention and the consequent ability of the organization to learn and to change*. My question is the classic one posed in many studies on strategy and leadership: how (and how much) does leadership at the top matter during a forcefully transformative period in the history of the organization under investigation? Despite their continued efforts, scholars in the fields of strategy and management, and from different research traditions [59], have found no definitive answer. Universally generalizable definitive answers hardly even exist. However, as I will demonstrate, responses to that general question are likely to be context-bound and thus highly idiosyncratic. Some regimes could and did do more than others, for a number of reasons ranging from the functionality of the leader teams to the severity of critical events that happened during their reign. Nevertheless, the questions remain: how and why?

My definition of the *organizational regime* reflects, to some extent, the way in which some influential scholars of behavioural strategy and the upper echelons define the concept of a dominant coalition[60]: a group of influential people on the top levels of an organization who are responsible for defining its strategy and leadership style for the time period in which the coalition is in power. The leader, or in this case the leader dyad comprising the civilian First Lord and the professional First Sea Lord, defines the strategic vision and goals on the basis of which the organization consequently starts crafting and implementing the desired strategy (in military parlance, the related tactics and operations).

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56 See e.g. March, Sproull and Tamuz 1991; Lampel, Shamsie and Shapira 2009; Christianson, Farkar, Sutcliffe and Weick 2009; see also Busenbark, Krause, Boivie and Graffin 2012.

57 Rerup and Feldman 2011; Rerup 2009.

58 Ocasio 1997; 2011.

59 At one end of the continuum stand students of organizational adaptation and strategic choice positing that leaders almost completely define the destinies of their organizations (see e.g. Child 1972; 1997), and at the other end are population ecologists who maintain that top leaders can do very little to change the structurally defined destinies of their organizations (see e.g. Hannan and Freeman 1977; Le Mens, Hannan and Pólos 2015).

60 Cyert and March 1963; Hambrick and Mason 1984; Simon 1997; Hambrick 2007.

However, the influence of leaders at the top of an organization is rarely as linear, straightforward or consistent as suggested in many more or less hagiographical studies of great transformative leaders[61].

With regard to other core concepts underpinning the focal study, like many scholars focusing on strategy and organizations from the top-management perspective and the attention-based view of the firm[62], I see *strategy processes*[63] as essentially fluid and distributed in an opaque network of actors within and beyond the focal organization. It is through these processes that leaders constantly shape and reshape the issues in any organization they are more or less directly able to modify with their own actions: vision and goals, people and teams, structures and processes, culture and, finally, the way they lead and coach their subordinates to achieve better organizational results. *Leader personality* further refers to the behaviour of an individual that is relatively constant over time and is not very context-dependent[64]. *Leadership style*, in turn, reflects how the leader or the leading team gives direction, implements plans and motivates people. It essentially concerns the general atmosphere and the institutionalized ways-of-working that prevail in the organization, and it affects (and is affected by) the organizational culture. Dominant leadership styles identified in the literature are often described as laissez-faire, transactional, transformational and servile.[65]

In practice, organizational regimes in the upper echelons develop a more or less intentionally dominant leadership style that moderates how well the organization functions (e.g. learns and makes important decisions) and eventually performs. It does not naturally always fall neatly into any of the categories established in the literature, and it is subject to change over time,

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61 See e.g. Dufour and Carroll 2013.

62 Rerup 2009; Ocasio, Vaara and Laamanen 2018; Ocasio, Loewestein and Nigam 2015.

63 An alternative, possibly somewhat broader term would be *leadership process*. Kramer (2011, 138) argues in his review that leadership is, first and foremost, *a process* that essentially involves social influence between leaders and the various constituents they represent or serve. Another major distinction is between the 'hard' and 'soft' (coercion vs. seduction) nature of this influence process. Finally, the five ways in which leaders are able exert their influence during the process are: (1) contributing to the formation and development of a well-functioning group, (2) providing a compelling direction for the group's work, (3) providing an enabling structure that facilitates rather than impedes coordination and collaboration, (4) providing and maintaining a supportive organizational context (i.e. the development of the cultural dimension), and (5) providing ample expert coaching when needed. My study addresses most of the five above-mentioned issues in an historical analysis of strategic leadership in the 'Fisher era' RN organization.

64 Perugni, Costantini, Hughes and de Houwer 2016, 3. The most frequently cited personality taxonomy in the literature on leadership is the so-called Big Five or OCEAN framework: Openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious), Conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless), Extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved), Agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached) and Neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident), see e.g. Goldberg 1993; O'Connor 2002. However, no generic phenotypical model of personality is applied in this study. Leader personalities are thus primarily described on the basis of extant biographical material.

65 Bass and Avolio 1993; Jung and Avolio 1999; Bass and Riggio 2006; Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber 2009.

especially when the regime at the top changes. These changes in leadership style *per se* are of considerable historical interest, but so far have been scantily studied.

Related to the above, *dynamic leader behaviour* is an emerging topic in leadership research. It is defined in a recent comprehensive review as:

> "…the degree and pattern by which leader behaviour changes over time".[66]

There is more and more empirical evidence showing that behaviour varies as much, if not more, within leaders than between leaders. The authors of this review also refer to the relative lack of rigorous longitudinal studies on short- and long-term behavioural fluctuations among leaders during their time in power in organizations. They conclude that sudden shifts, gradual changes, decay and the ebb and flow of effective leader behaviours should be the focus in future studies on the behaviour of dynamic leaders.[67]

William Ocasio, in turn, defines *organizational attention* as:

> "the noticing, encoding, interpreting, and focusing of time and effort by organizational decision makers on both (1) issues: the available repertoire of categories for making sense of the environment; and (2) answers: the available repertoire of action alternatives".[68]

These strategic issues and dominant answers constitute the *agenda* of the organization and are essential to adaptation and change. In addition, *organizational architecture*, defined as the structure of communications, interactions and authority relationships across the organization's structure, serves to concentrate the focus of attention on its strategic agenda.[69] According to John Joseph and William Ocasio (emphasis added):

> "…an attentional perspective on organizational architecture …suggests that the organizational architecture structurally distributes managerial attention throughout the firm, with managers within various subunits and organizational levels *focusing attention on different aspects of the firm's agenda*. This distribution occurs because managerial attention is situated within the firm's governance channels. We define governance channels as formal collective interactions set up by the firm to control, allocate and monitor organizational attention and resources. …Since the interactions will vary from channel to channel, depending on factors such as who is in attendance, their timing,

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66 McClean, Barnes, Courtright and Johnson 2020, 481.

67 McClean, Barnes, Courtright and Johnson 2020.

68 Ocasio 1997, 189.

69 Joseph and Ocasio 2012, 634–635; relatedly, Smith, Binns and Tushman 2010, 450 define *organizational architecture* in terms of the people, competences, processes, culture and measurement systems that enable an organization to run its business model (creating and appropriating value that the organization is designed to produce). Organizational architecture can also be related to the more traditional 'structuring of organizations' (Mintzberg 1979), meaning arriving at a structural configuration (e.g. a machine bureaucracy) as a function of the organizational design parameters (positions, superstructure, lateral linkages, and decision-making system) and the (mostly external) contingency factors (e.g. technology, political environment). What is more, Mintzberg (1979, 18–34) defines strategic apex, middle line, operating core, technostructure and support staff as the five basic parts of any (traditional) organization. Consequently, this study most focuses on developments at the strategic apex of the RN organization.

> frequency, and the agenda, so too will the way in which attention is engaged and whether or not joint attention is established."[70]

In this study, therefore, I build on William Ocasio's[71] argument that top managers are key players in shaping organizational attention, especially in large hierarchical military organizations such as the RN of the 'Fisher era'. They do this in three ways. First, individuals at the top are responsible for manipulating the organizational structures and communication channels that shape attention-allocation patterns. Second, top management may effect occasional 'hierarchical interventions' to resolve conflicts and to address blind spots created by the organizational structure[72]. Third, these individuals shape the norms and values of communication, influencing the repertoire of issues that can legitimately be brought up vs. those that must be suppressed[73]. The battlecruiser concept discussed in Article II of this study is a case in point. What influences how top managers do this depends on their background, knowledge and expertise, and also on their psychological traits and behavioural dispositions[74].

In general, therefore, I focus on the role played by the upper echelons of the RN in setting up (or failing to set up) what might be called 'learning architecture', which denotes a set of organizational structures, processes, norms and values (i.e., culture) designed to facilitate learning and transformation in peacetime and at war. To be more specific, I am interested in the role of the regime at the top of the organization in creating a more or less efficient organizational context for learning and change (i.e. for organizational transformation).

In sum, my historical analysis explores the following main research question:

How does the regime in the upper echelons of an organization influence the organization's strategic capability for learning and change?

I address this question both in this Introduction and in the three individual articles (I–III)[75] attached to this study.

In addition, the three above-mentioned articles address the following research questions, which overlap with the overall question and pertain more specifically to the context of the Fisher-era British Royal Navy:

What personal and behavioural aspects or facets of Admiral Fisher's strategic leadership can be identified in his mission of reforming the Royal Navy in 1904–1910? In other words, what were Fisher's personal characteristics, and how was he able to capitalize on his 'Fishpond', especially while facing the fierce opposition to his reforms that arose from within the RN? (Article I)

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70 Joseph and Ocasio 2012, 635.
71 Ocasio 2011; 1997.
72 Jacobides 2007.
73 Vuori and Huy 2015; David, Sine and Haveman 2013.
74 Chatterjee and Hambrick 2007; Opper, Nee and Holm 2017.
75 Tikkanen 2016; 2017; 2020.

What are the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders who bring about the organizational adoption of a novel concept such as the battlecruiser? How does the process of adoption unfold and change when the technology is gradually proving less efficient than predicted? How do evolving organizational schemas or gestalts emerge and moderate this process? (Article II)

What was the Fishpond in relation to the official structures and institutions of the RN? Who were the most influential officers in the Fishpond? How did their careers evolve in terms of carrying out Fisher's central reforms? All in all, how effective was the Fishpond as a tool in the process of reforming the RN, especially in the face of the fierce internal opposition to many of Fisher's major reforms? (Article III)

3 THE INTRODUCTORY PART AND THE ARTICLES

The introductory part of the study essentially comprises a history of the strategic leadership of different regimes at the top of the RN during the 'Fisher era' of 1904–1919. The following regimes are described and analysed in terms of how effectively they were able to induce the RN organization to learn and change: the Fisher Regime with Selborne, Cawdor and Tweedmouth in 1904–1908, the McKenna-Fisher Regime in 1908–1910, the McKenna-Wilson Regime in 1910–1911, the Churchill Regime with Bridgeman in 1911–1912, the Churchill-Battenberg Regime, December 1912–October 1914, the Churchill-Fisher Regime, October 1914–May 1915, the Balfour-Jackson Regime, May 1915–November 1916, the Jellicoe Regime (mainly with Carson), November 1916–December 1917 and the Geddes-Wemyss Regime, December 1917–November 1919.

The analysis of each regime covers 1) the personalities and leadership styles of the First Lord and the First Sea Lord dyad, and how they worked together; 2) the most significant events in the history of the RN when a certain regime was in power and 3) the key outcomes of the period of a certain regime; and 4) the era of a certain regime, assessed in terms of how effective the leaders were in inducing strategic leadership and thus moderating organizational learning and change in the RN organization. A presentation of the conclusions and implications related to the study as a whole concludes this Introduction.

The three attached articles cover most of the conceptual issues addressed in this study and should be read with reference to the leadership history of the regimes provided in the Introduction.

Article I, entitled ' "Favouritism is the Secret of Efficiency!" Admiral Sir John Fisher as the First Sea Lord, 1904–1910' [76], concerns the practice of favouritism in organizational contexts in which it is commonly considered dysfunctional and detrimental to organizational performance. On the other hand, it could function as a tacit-knowledge-based mechanism for making sure that the right people are in the right positions, especially under conditions of rapid and forceful change. The article focuses on the leadership of the controversial

76 Tikkanen 2016.

Admiral Sir John 'Jacky' Fisher (1841–1920) who, as the First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty, led the Royal Navy through a significant but disputed technological and organizational transformation during the pre-WWI naval arms race between Britain and Germany. Fisher believed he would achieve his aims by appointing his favourites and cronies to key positions throughout the naval organization. The objective of the study was to highlight the most important facets of the phenomenon from a strategic-leadership perspective.

The focus of Article II, 'Leader Personality, Managerial Attention and Disruptive Technologies: the Adoption of the Battlecruiser Concept in the Royal Navy 1904–1918'[77], is on the issue of managerial attention. The attention of management to the strategic designs of the leader has been identified as a key prerequisite for success in the adoption of new technologies. The aim is to describe and analyse, from the perspective of the top leader's personality and managerial attention, how the battlecruiser concept as an organizational gestalt was developed, adopted and assessed in the Royal Navy (RN) in 1904–1918. The battlecruiser was a pet project of the controversial admiral Sir John Fisher, who instituted a thorough technological, organizational and cultural transformation in the RN before the First World War (WWI). The battlecruiser 'Greyhound of the Sea', which represented the largest and most expensive type of capital ship in the WWI era, was developed to hunt down enemy commerce-raiding cruisers all around the Globe and to act as a powerful scouting arm of the Grand Fleet. In action, however, it proved more vulnerable than expected. The contribution of the article is threefold. First, it highlights the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of the top leaders in ensuring the organizational adoption of a novel concept such as the battlecruiser. Second, it describes the process of adoption and change when the technology is gradually proving to be less efficient than predicted. Finally, it is proposed that evolving organizational schemas or gestalts strongly moderate the process of adoption and correction.

Article III, 'Officers in the 'Fishpond' and their Roles in the Royal Navy of the Fisher Era 1904–1919'[78], focuses on the key personalities in Fisher's network of followers, the 'Fishpond'. It is well known that the controversial admiral surrounded himself with a network of followers who were tangential to the success and continuation of many of his reforms. The Fishpond is often seen as one of his most valuable resources, enabling him to realize his organizational reforms. On the other hand, derogatory views also prevailed, and a 'Syndicate of Discontent' was formed to oppose Fisher's designs. This article examines the role of the Fishpond in relation to the official institutions of the RN. Who were the most influential officers in the Fishpond and how did their careers evolve under Fisher's patronage? What were their roles in carrying out Fisher's reforms? Finally, how effective was the Fishpond in general as a tool in the RN reform process, especially in the face of the fierce internal opposition to it?

77 Tikkanen 2017.
78 Tikkanen 2020.

4 POSITIONING AND CONDUCTING THE STUDY

All in all, my research approach is situated somewhere between the traditional realist and interpretive paradigms in historical research in general, and the study of management and organizational history in particular[79]. As I argue below after briefly introducing management and organizational history as an emerging research field, my approach appears to be well in line with recent developments in this area. Moreover, it is also in line with the recent evolutionary/post-revisionist perspective on the history of the British Royal Navy during the World War I era[80]. In the following I situate my study in the emerging field of management and organizational history (4.1) and give a reflective account of the key sources and analytical methods I have applied in my historical study (4.2).

4.1 Management and Organizational History as a (Slowly) Emerging Research Field

The research field of management and organizational history started to emerge in the late 1980s and the early 1990s at the intersection of economic and business history on the one hand, and management and organizational studies (MOS) on the other. The immediate aim was to bring 'historical consciousness' back to the ever larger and dominant field of MOS, essentially beleaguered by ahistorical, positivist and essentialist approaches to the study of organizations and their management[81]. A pivotal starting point was that when treated ahistorically, organization and management theory and its related constructs become:

> "…timeless and eternal, changeless despite the passage of time and context. Or, when theory is assumed to be universally applicable it gets used irrespective of factors such

79 Vaara and Lamberg 2016, cf. also Clark and Rowlinson 2004; Rowlinson 2004, 2013; Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker 2014; Maclean, Harvey and Clegg 2017; Suddaby and Foster 2017.
80 Bell 2016; Seligmann 2015; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015.
81 Booth and Rowlinson 2006.

as differences in specific organizational context, culture or other sociopolitical contingencies".[82]

The real-life historical complexities of persons, actions and events tend to be methodologically reduced to simplified 'dummy' variables[83]. There have been similar developments in many areas of history in general, as traditional narrative approaches have been gradually losing out since the 1970s to cliometrics-dominated economic history on the one hand and the increasing use of multivariate analysis in social and political history on the other[84]. As Mills et al.[85] bluntly state in their recent reappraisal of the 'historic turn', whereas there is evidence of an increasing interest in the integration of history into organizational research, this "*has not produced a true "paradigm shift"*.[86] In general, however, there is a growing tendency to adopt historical approaches in research on strategy, management, leadership and organizations, as evidenced in recent history-related special issues in prominent journals such as the *Strategic Management Journal*[87] and the *Academy of Management Review*[88].

From a wider perspective, the nascent field of management and organizational history incorporates (business) historical studies on the emergence and dissemination of (American) management concepts such as Taylorian Scientific Management[89], Chandler's widely-referenced historical studies on the birth of the professionally-led, multidivisional (M-form) US corporation[90], and various influential longitudinal studies on prominent global corporations such as Intel and Cadbury, published in the 1980s[91]. Business historian Alfred Kieser's seminal paper about the urgent need for more historical analyses in management and organizational research, published in *Organization Science* in 1994[92], and Mayer N. Zald's[93] calls for the further integration of the social sciences with the humanities have been identified as key points of departure for expanding the field.

Major venues and outlets in which research in this evolving field could be discussed and published include the long-established Management History (MH) Division of the Academy of Management, emerging sub-groups in other communities such as EGOS (European Group for Organizational Studies), and traditional journals of business history including *Business History Review* (BHR) and *Business History* (BH). The *Journal of Management History* was founded in 1995, and 2006 saw the inauguration of another specialist journal in the field,

82 Weatherbee, Durepos, Mills and Mills 2012, 205.
83 Hinings and Greenwood 2002.
84 Weatherbee et al. 2012, 209.
85 Mills et al. 2016, 74.
86 On paradigm shifts and paradigms in organizational analysis, see Kuhn 1962; 1970; Burrell and Morgan 1979.
87 Argyres, De Massis, Foss, Frattini, Jones and Silverman, forthcoming.
88 Godfrey et la. 2016.
89 George 1968; see also Wren and Bedeian 2009.
90 Chandler 1962; 1977; see also Kobrak and Schneider 2011; Wanderley and Faria 2012.
91 Burgelman 1983; 1994; Child and Smith 1987.
92 Kieser 1994; for a contemporary essentialist commentary, see Goldman 1994; see also Kieser 2015.
93 Zald 1993; 1996.

Management & Organizational History. The book *Organizations in Time*[94], published in 2014, also made a substantial contribution to the development of management and organizational history as a separate research field. In a paper published half a decade after the founding of the new journal (*MOH)*, some of its key contributors characterize it as follows:

> "The editorial policy of Management & Organizational History also expanded the domain of what was considered acceptable historical scholarship, pushing back some of the boundaries encountered by MOS researchers interested in publishing in this area, moving beyond purely 'business' or 'realist' approaches dominating the mainstream[95]."[96]

The same authors[97] identify the lack of debate and engagement with alternative 'theories of History' as among the crucial issues affecting the use of history in MOS. They refer in particular to the tendency of historians to be more or less averse to the use of theory in the first place, a discussion that goes on in parallel with a long-running debate specifically within the field of history, and in historiography within the social sciences more broadly.

However, it seems that current scholars in the field have an informed overall picture of the different paradigms or theories of History that have gained ground in historiographical debates in general and in management and organizational history in particular. In an early paper, Rowlinson[98] identifies three distinct historical perspectives in organizational studies: the factual, the narrative and the archeo-genealogical. Similarly, Üsdiken and Kieser[99] describe the supplementarist (theory-driven), the integrationist and the reorientationist (phenomenon-driven) approaches to the use of history in this field. Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker[100], in turn, identify four alternative research approaches to organizational history: corporate history, meaning the construction of a holistic, objectivist narrative of a corporate entity; analytically structured history, involving the narration of theoretically conceptualized structures and events; serial history, using replicable techniques to analyse repeatable facts; and ethnographic history, or the reading of documentary sources "*against the grain*". Vaara and Lamberg [101] specify the realist, the interpretative and the post-structural approaches to the study of history in the field of strategy as practice and process (SAPP) and, finally, Suddaby and Foster[102] identify four models of

94 Bucheli and Wadhwani, eds. 2014.
95 'Mainstream' in this respect probably refers to main lines of research on business history. In general, it is claimed that the emergence of management and organizational history has brought about a significant shift in business history towards management studies, see Ojala, Eloranta, Ojala and Valtonen 2017.
96 Weatherbee et al. 2012, 196.
97 Weatherbee et al. 2012, 204; see also Munslow 1997; 2010, Kuukkanen 2015; Clark and Rowlinson 2004.
98 Rowlinson 2004.
99 Üsdiken and Kieser 2004; see also Kipping and Üsdiken 2014.
100 Rowlinson, Hassard and Decker 2014.
101 Vaara and Lamberg 2016.
102 Suddaby and Foster 2017.

history in the literature on organizational change: History-as-Fact, History-as-Power, History-as-Sensemaking and History-as-Rhetoric.

As the above-cited papers imply, many scholars specializing in management and organizational history make a paradigmatic distinction between the traditional realist approach to history on the one hand and a more interpretive, constructivist approach on the other.[103] The most prominent line of division between these approaches is the focus of the former on key historical events as they unfold over time and the causal relationships between them, and the emphasis of the latter on the actions, meaning-making and meaning-giving of historical actors in their situations and contexts. Last but not least, a diverse and fragmented post-structural approach aimed at providing critical/alternative readings of 'historical truths' in given settings has emerged, in line with increased engagement with the linguistic turn and the arrival of the 'post' in both the humanities and the social sciences.[104] An example of a post-structural approach in management and organizational studies is the so-called ANTi- History[105] – a perspective that is strongly based on Actor Network Theory (ANT),

> "…that, through critical engagement with both history and organizational analysis, seeks to understand knowledge of the past, extant knowledge and the interactions of the two through studies of the relational networks that may be thought to have constituted them".[106]

Summarizing the state of the research field, Mills et al.[107] put forward the notion of what they call 'polyphonic constitutive historicism'. The main point is to focus on multiple and diverse organizational voices to understand how divergent, often competing interpretations of the past emerge and are used by different actors within and beyond organizations.

Consequently, in an account of how management scholars in general have 'theorized the past', Weatherbee[108] puts forward a broad, interpretive approach that he claims is discernible in a lot of work in the field of management and organizational history. He builds on Rowlinson[109], for example, in suggesting that from this perspective the past is about stories constructed around 'traces' of the past rather than the interpretation of facts. He also refers to Munslow's[110] argument that the past and history are ontologically dissonant: the past, having gone, is no longer real and can never be reproduced as such through history. According to Munslow, the past and history are interconnected in a discursive process in which the latter is constantly produced and reproduced as

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103 Most scholars in the more traditional field of business history still tend to follow the traditional realist research approach. See also Weatherbee 2012; Kipping and Lamberg 2017.
104 Cf. Vaara and Lamberg 2016, 638–639.
105 See e.g. Lee and Hassard 1999.
106 Mills et al. 2016, 70; see also Durepos and Mills 2012.
107 Mills et al. 2016., 70–72.
108 Weatherbee 2012, 204–214; see also Weatherbee et al. 2012.
109 Rowlinson 2004.
110 Munslow 2010, 3.

> "…a culturally defined discourse of knowledge implicated in the structures of society and conventions of culture, as much as the given product of the past labour of historians". [111]

Weatherbee further summarizes his preferred approach as follows:

> "…As we are actors in the world we study, we ourselves are also products of particular historical and sociopolitical contexts. So when we work with traces of the past, we need to understand that our interpretation will be influenced by the conditions of our present context, even as the traces of the past were themselves formed under different ones. We must acknowledge the relational nature of the past, its traces, our interpretations, and the history we engage with, engage in or author. Metaphysical coherency and reflexivity, the separation of past and history, of 'facts' and 'traces', will allow us to avoid epistemic fallacy and the pratfalls of either historical or methodological realism." [112]

Thus, proponents of this approach do not contend that the past did not happen, nor do they make a case for 'anything goes'[113] or for historical objective truth. Given that the past remains unrecoverable, we are assigned to work with its 'traces' – whether natural, material or social in nature[114]. Thus,

> "…the ordering of these traces and the derivation of meaning from them in the production of a history is first and foremost an interpretive act." … "…Declarations of 'this is the way it was' or argumentation based on impartial or objective knowledge must fall to the wayside. Accordingly, as this historiography is the result of engagement with traces of the past or representations as found in the MOS canon, it is neither wholly realist nor wholly relativist in account." [115]

In a recent paper, Maclean, Harvey and Clegg identify five core principles of historical organization studies (dual integrity, pluralistic understanding, representational truth, context sensitivity and theoretical fluency). [116] In the perspective of the authors, *dual integrity* underscores the importance of historical veracity and conceptual rigour, extending mutual respect to history and organization studies in uniting the two, such that each discipline informs and enhances the other without either becoming the predominant driver. This is precisely what I am trying to achieve in this study on the evolution of leadership thinking and practice in the British Royal Navy in the early years of the twentieth century, marrying together these two different disciplines and areas of expertise.

In addition to re-creating the historical context and key events, I have tried to re-produce the most significant thoughts and motivations of the key actors in their specific situations through a close study of the correspondence between these personages, for instance [117]. A detailed existing RN historiography also provided ample reflection points in terms of how different authors have interpreted key personages, their actions and the outcomes of them in their

111 Munslow 1997, 3.
112 Weatherbee 2012, 206.
113 Feyerabend 1975.
114 Durepos and Mills 2012.
115 Weatherbee 2012, 213.
116 Maclean, Harvey and Clegg 2016. Cf. also Decker, Kipping and Wadhwani 2015, who argue for a plurality in business history research methods.
117 Collingwood 1994; Dray 1995.

organizational contexts. These materials give scholars focusing on leadership history access not only to original occurrences but also to their effect-history in later historiography. What is more – this is especially the case in the three articles attached to the focal study – relevant literature on strategic leadership and organizational attention allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of leadership in the 'Fisher era' by looking at the developments through the lens provided by these theories.

The starting point for my historical analysis of the different regimes at the top of the British Admiralty concerns the key leaders, their personalities and their leadership styles, and how they worked together. I go on to identify the most significant events in the history of the RN when a certain regime was in power and discuss the key outcomes of the period. Finally, I assess the era of specific regimes in terms of how effective the leaders were in inducing strategic leadership and thus moderating organizational learning and change in the RN.

4.2 Sources and Analytical Methods

Personalities, Leadership Styles and Ways of Working. A key issue in research on the history of leadership concerns the assessment of often long-deceased personalities and the dynamics of their leadership styles. This issue is further complicated in my study because I needed to understand how key leaders in the upper echelons of the RN organization worked, collaborated with each other and chose the persons they considered to be the most suitable candidates for major leadership positions, making its large-scale transformation possible. Every First Lord-First Sea Lord regime was unique in this respect, and the highly varied ways of working and leadership styles of the key actors strongly affected the equally varied outcomes and overall success of each one.

First, I acquainted myself with both the unpublished[118] and the edited[119] papers of Admiral Fisher. These documents contain a large amount of personal (often handwritten) correspondence including notes to and from key personages within and outside the naval organization, as well as the most important professional documentation of the admiral's naval career, published in the edited papers and chosen carefully by professors Marder and Kemp, both early authorities on Fisher and his times.

I also consulted the edited papers of John Jellicoe (1859–1935), the later Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet and First Sea Lord[120], and David Beatty (1871–1936), similarly C-in-C and First Sea Lord[121]. Other sources include the edited papers of Arthur Pollen (1866–1937), inventor of the controversial Pollen

118 The Fisher papers in the Churchill Archive of the University of Cambridge, Britain (FISR 1–16).
119 Marder (ed.) 1952b, 1956; 1959; Kemp (ed.) 1960; 1964.
120 Patterson (ed.) 1966; 1968.
121 Ranft (ed.) 1989; 1993; Chalmers 1951.

director firing system[122], the edited papers of Reginald Brett, Viscount Esher (1852–1930), an influential courtier and eminence grise behind military policy[123], the edited papers of Admiral Herbert Richmond (1871–1946), an intelligent staff officer and later a naval historian[124], the unpublished[125] papers of Sir Maurice Hankey (1877–1963), the influential secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and of the War Cabinet, and the unpublished papers of Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis of Battenberg (1854–1921), First Sea Lord 1912–1914[126]. Jellicoe, Battenberg and Hankey were among the closest associates of Fisher, maintaining active communication with him and other key actors in the upper echelons of the RN organization throughout the study period. These primary sources allowed me not only to familiarize myself with the communication and argumentation styles of many key leaders within and outside of the RN but also to find out how they related to each other and to the most important events and development trajectories during the different power regimes at the top of the organization.

Second, I studied the abundant biographies[127] of key RN officers in the upper echelons of the organization related to the successive First Lord-First Sea Lord regimes from 1904 to 1919. The sheer number of works reflects the general interest in the history and key personages of the RN. They include numerous biographies of Fisher[128], his staunch intraorganizational opponent Beresford[129], Jellicoe[130], Beatty[131], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvett Wilson (1842–1921), First Sea Lord 1910–1911[132], Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman-Bridgeman (1848–1929), First Sea Lord 1911–1912[133], Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis of Battenberg (1854–1921), First Sea Lord 1912–1914[134], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson (1855–1929), First Sea Lord 1915–1916[135], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Rosslyn Wemyss (1864–1933), First Sea Lord 1917–1918[136], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry

122 Sumida (ed.) 1984. On the basis of his thorough knowledge of fire-control issues in the Dreadnoughts, for instance, Professor Sumida has been one of the key revisionist scholars putting forward a number of novel explanations since the 1970s, see e.g. Sumida 2000; 2003.

123 Brett (ed.) 1934; Esher (ed.) 1938. I also used the two biographies of Lord Esher to shed light on the personality of this close confidant of Fisher, Fraser 1973; Lees-Milne 1986.

124 Marder (ed.) 1952a.

125 The Hankey papers in the Churchill Archive of the University of Cambridge, Britain (HNKY 5/1–11).

126 MB1/T Mountbatten Papers: Personal and naval papers of Prince Louis of Battenberg, first Marquis of Milford Haven. University of Southampton, Britain.

127 Fisher's biographer Ruddock F. Mackay gives an exhaustive list and qualitative assessment of the most important biographies of naval persons that had been published before 1972: Mackay 1972, 238–250. These materials are mostly the same ones the author of this study has also used.

128 Bacon 1929a; 1929b; Hough 1969; Mackay 1973; Ollard 1991; Morris 1995; Wragg 2009; Freeman 2015a, see also Gough 1995; 2017.

129 Bennett 1968; Freeman 2015b.

130 Bacon 1936; Patterson 1969; Winton 1981; Schurman 1995.

131 Roskill 1980; Beatty 1980; see also Ranft 1995.

132 Bradford 1923; see also Lambert 1995a; Heathcote 2002.

133 Ross 1998; see also Lambert 1995b; Heathcote 2002.

134 Hough 1984; Kerr 1934; see also Hattendorf 1995; Heathcote 2002.

135 Murfett 1995b; Heathcote 2002.

136 Wemyss 1935; see also Goldrick 1995; Heathcote 2002.

Oliver (1865–1965), Chief of the Admiralty War Staff during most of WWI[137], Admiral Sir Reginald Hall (1870–1943), Director of Intelligence during WWI[138], Admiral Sir Percy Scott (1853–1924), inventor of the Scott director firing system[139], Richmond[140], Hankey[141], and WWI fleet commanders and later Admirals of the Fleet Reginald Tyrwhitt (1870–1951)[142] and Roger Keyes (1870–1945)[143], as well as Admiral Ernest Troubridge (1862–1926), the first COS and naval commander court-martialled for his (in)actions related to the *Goeben* incident at the beginning of the war[144]. These biographies, many of which were authored by distinguished naval historians, perhaps gave the deepest insights into the personalities and ways of working, as well as into the interpersonal-relationship and leadership-style dynamics of the key actors in the RN organization. More recent literature tends to give a more nuanced and multi-faceted picture of these personages, and it is possible to triangulate in an interesting way the views articulated by different authors during more than one hundred years of historiographic writing about WWI-era RN leaders.

In addition, I consulted whatever autobiographies and other personal accounts of the above-mentioned and other prominent officers of the time were available[145]. Fisher's own vivid *Memoirs* and *Records*, and the autobiographies of Jellicoe, Bacon and Scott were the primary publications in terms of constructing a picture of how the key actors perceived the main events and developments during the study period *ex post*. I also consulted the highly perceptive account of the key personages in power and of the critical events during 1917–1918 published by press magnate Lord Beaverbrook, William Maxwell Aitken (1879–1964)[146]. Despite being highly subjective, these publications added considerable nuances to how key actors and their thought, key events and the interrelationships of these were interpreted.

Third, I consulted the biographies of First Lords Reginald McKenna (1863–1943)[147], Winston S. Churchill (1874–1965)[148], Arthur Balfour (1848–1930)[149], Edward Carson (1854–1935)[150] and Eric Geddes (1875–1937)[151], the autobiography of Lord Tweedmouth (1849–1909)[152] and the published papers of

137 James 1956.
138 James 1955; Ramsay 2008.
139 Padfield 1966.
140 Hunt 1982.
141 Roskill 1970; Naylor 1984.
142 Patterson 1973.
143 Aspinall-Oglander 1951.
144 Dunn 2014.
145 Beresford 1914; Fisher 1919; 1920; Jellicoe 2009 (original published in 1920); 2013 (original published in 1919); Scott 1919; Bacon 1925; 1940; Chatfield 1942; Dreyer 1955; de Chair 1961; Domvile 2008 (original published in 1947).
146 Beaverbrook 1956.
147 McKenna 1948; Farr 2007.
148 Gilbert 1991, a one-volume version of the massive eight-volume biography started in 1966 by Randolph Churchill and finished by Gilbert in 1988.
149 Mackay 1985.
150 Stewart 1981; see also Beaverbrook 1956 on the 'Ulster Pirate', 144–185.
151 Grieves 1989.
152 Marjoribanks 2015.

the Earl of Selborne (1859–1942)[153], specifically to highlight their personalities and the all-important relationship between First Lords and their First Sea Lords. Churchill's *World Crisis*, which also comes close to an autobiography, contains interesting (albeit often-contested and inherently subjective) interpretations of key events and the personages behind them[154]. I also consulted the unpublished papers of the most influential 'Fisher era' First Lords McKenna and Churchill at the Churchill Archive of the University of Cambridge[155]. Among the latter abundant manuscripts, in particular, are a large number of documents that, interestingly, shed light on the key naval persons and critical issues during the formative years immediately before the Great War broke out. Finally, I consulted The Churchill Papers[156].

In sum, unpublished and published personal and official papers of key RN leaders and their closest associates reveal a lot about their personalities, leadership styles and ways of working with their colleagues. Much of the autobiographical material complemented these sources. In addition, the plentiful extant biographies of key naval leaders of the WWI era provided rich accounts of how other scholars interpreted the personal development of these personages and facilitated informed comparison with the view that emerged directly from the primary materials. All in all, the main idea behind assessing the essence and influence of different top-leader constellations of the RN is a Collingwoodian one: history should essentially be understood as the history of thought, and thus the re-enactment of past thought is of the essence for the historian of leadership, operating at the top level in terms of the individuals and groups of people in charge of the organization[157]. This approach comes close to how mentalities are studied in the Annales School of historiography: it involves writing a history of mentalities, or the attitudes, values and belief systems of individuals and social groups[158]. Mentalities are formally defined as:

> "what is distinctive about the thought process and the set of beliefs of groups and societies".[159]

The RN in general and its top leaders in particular constitute an interesting and arguably extreme context in which to study how the beliefs and thought processes of key individuals and groups in the upper echelons of the organization affected its transformation.

Key Events, Outcomes and the Relative Success of Each Regime. I found a wealth of historical detail covering the critical events and outcomes during the reigns of different First Lord-First Sea Lord regimes in Arthur J. Marder's iconic five-

153 Boyce (ed.) 1990.
154 Churchill 1923.
155 MCKN 1–5; CHAR 13/1–57.
156 Churchill (ed.) 2007.
157 Collingwood 1994, xxix–xxv.
158 Clemente, Durand and Roulet 2017, 21–22.
159 Lloyd 1990, 1.

volume study on the RN during the Fisher era[160] and Julian Corbett's official naval history of WWI[161]. Groos' edited volume explicates the German view of how Great Britain's strongest enemy perceived the key events of naval warfare[162]. Halpern is a newer and more concise but authoritative account of naval engagements in WWI[163]. I also consulted the edited Admiralty papers related to the Anglo-German naval race in general[164].

In addition, I perused the historical archives containing all articles from *The Times, The Daily Telegraph* and the *International Herald Tribune*[165], using various search terms[166] related to the RN. *The Times, The Daily Telegraph* and the *International Herald Tribune,* respectively, contained 585, 4,463 and 107 articles on the Royal Navy during the period of 1903–1915[167]. In addition to going into a lot of historical detail, these articles gave me additional insights into how contemporaries interpreted the key personages, events and, to a lesser extent, topical leadership-related questions related to the RN organization[168]. The newspaper articles of the era tended to be rather concise and to the point, and hence gave little attention to the last-mentioned issue. However, press campaigns related to matters such as the naval scares of the pre-WWI era and the Fisher-Beresford feud[169] were clearly distinguishable from this rather narrow selection of newspapers.

The last of my major sources comprised various historical studies of the RN in the WWI era. The most significant of these concerned Sir John Fisher's naval revolution in general[170], the Fisher-Beresford naval feud[171], the personal influence of Churchill and Fisher on Admiralty policies[172], the evolution of the

160 Marder 1961; 1965; 1966; 1969; 1970.
161 Corbett 1920; 1921; 1923. After Corbett's death in the middle of the official history project (often argued to be strongly pro-Jellicoe, see Lambert 2017) in 1922, Henry Newbolt finalized the fourth and fifth volumes of the official history that deal with post-Jutland events (Newbolt 1928; 1931). Newbolt's work received mainly positive comments from contemporary reviewers, see e.g. Aston 1929.
162 Groos (ed.) 1923.
163 Halpern 1994.
164 Seligmann, Nägler and Epkenhans (eds.) 2015.
165 These three prominent newspapers owned by different proprietors were included to provide diversity and, in the case of the *International Herald Tribune*, an international viewpoint. *The Times*, owned by Lord Northcliffe, who controlled around 40 per cent of British newspaper circulation in 1914, was the most prominent newspaper of the era; Thompson 2006, 115.
166 Most importantly, the search word 'the Royal Navy' and the names of the First Lords and First Sea Lords.
167 I did not include most of the war years in my search because censorship did not allow most naval issues to be discussed publicly except for propaganda purposes.
168 Historians have traditionally regarded newspapers as, if not exactly biased at least as of lesser documentary value than many other sources, Wilkinson 1995. The main point is that they contain a wealth of interesting socio-historical data, Franzosi 1987. What is more, digital newspaper archives provide the researcher with additional quantitative metadata on matters such as the count of articles that match search parameters and the count of words in each article that is read, Liddle 2012.
169 See also Morris 1984.
170 Lambert 2002.
171 Penn 2000; Freeman 2009.
172 Gough 2017.

overall organization of the British Admiralty[173] with its initiative-suppressing culture[174], its officer training[175], the emergence of the naval staff[176] and its strategy and war planning[177], Admiralty plans to counter the German threat[178], and military and naval intelligence[179]. The general context of the Anglo-German naval arms race is highlighted in a number of influential studies, many of them from the German perspective[180]. I also consulted recent studies on the evolution of the pre-war Home Fleet[181], the battlecruiser[182], long-range gunnery in the RN[183], the submarine[184] and the torpedo[185], as well as perusing a large number of additional historical studies, indicated when necessary in the reference lists in this Introduction and in the respective attached articles.

All in all, the high-quality historical studies of the RN in this rich collection explain the outcomes and relative success of different regimes at the top of the organization from various viewpoints. Earlier orthodox accounts tended to focus on identifying the critical events, providing many original causal arguments concerning how and why certain events occurred or some longer-term developments took place, for example. Since then, both revisionist and post-revisionist scholarship have provided alternative, often-contested explanations and have generally enhanced understanding of the RN of the WWI era. Given the sheer quantity of extant studies, going through the literature has been a time-consuming task. However, because the bulk of what is written on naval history in the WWI era focuses primarily on war events (there are literarily hundreds of accounts by professional historians of the battle of Jutland alone, for instance, not to mention layman historiography), the focus of this study on the management and organizational history of the RN made the array of extant studies considerably more manageable.

Within the emerging field of management and organizational history in general, it is somewhat surprising that histories of leadership are relatively scarce. Although there are generic histories of leadership concepts and thought in various cultural contexts (the Western industrial organization naturally being the most salient)[186], there are few historical studies on the particularities of leadership in distinct fields such as different industries and/or types of organizations[187]. How have key leaders and their teams, armed with differing

173 Hamilton 2011; Bonnett 1968; Gardiner 1968; Rodger 1979.
174 Gordon 1996.
175 Davison 2011.
176 Black 2009.
177 Grimes 2012, see also Schurman 1965.
178 Seligmann 2012a; on British plans to counter German invasion in general, see Morgan-Owen 2017.
179 Seligmann 2006, Seligmann (ed.) 2007; Beesly 1982.
180 Hobson 2002; Herwig 1980; Kennedy 1976; 1980, Padfield 2013; Woodward 1935.
181 Buckey 2013.
182 Peeks 2015.
183 Brooks 2005; 2016.
184 Dash 1990.
185 Epstein 2014.
186 E.g. Grint 2011.
187 A notable exception is the prominent leadership researcher Keith Grint, who often uses historical contexts to highlight the vagaries of (strategic) leadership. See e.g.

ideas about how to lead and what kind of leader action is necessary in different situations, affected the evolution of their organizations? It could be argued, on the one hand, that leader personalities, leadership styles and general ways-of-working among top leaders have had a strong effect on organizational learning and change. On the other hand, the organizational context (in particular the existing organizational architecture and the prevailing organizational culture) and the critical events that affect the organization in its environment (such as rapid technological change and the actions of the enemy at war) also constitute central explananda in any leadership history. These issues should be brought together to give an overall portrayal of the evolution of leadership in any organizational context, such as the RN of the 'Fisher era'. As Denis, Kisfalvi, Langley and Roleau[188] argue in their summary of different schools of thought in the research on strategic leadership (i.e. collective cognition, individual inspiration, political action and social practice):

> "…Common to all four perspectives is a strong need for longitudinal case studies and similar methodologies to explore phenomena such as the interaction between context and the dynamics of strategic leadership, and the links between micro-behaviors of strategic leaders, collective action and organizational outcomes. There remains considerable potential for further development in the understanding of strategic leadership."

This is exactly what I aim at in the focal study.

Grint 2000, 2008. In military history, naturally, a lot of literature on leaders exists but it tends to primarily focus on describing military leaders and their actions, leaving aside more general theoretizations of leadership. An interesting exception, for instance, is Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein who, based on his extensive experience as a military commander, made it his task to explicate the art of leadership also in more general terms. See e.g. Montgomery, 1961.

188 Denis, Kisfalvi, Langley and Roleau 2011, 82.

5 KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN NAVAL TECHNOLOGY BEFORE WWI

Developments in naval technology were extremely rapid during the latter half of the 19th century. Whereas the RN had fought with essentially the same wooden ships-of-the-line reliant on sails for over a century, successive generations of steam-powered ironclads quickly replaced sail ships after the American civil war in the 1860s, in which the first naval battle between ironclad battleships occurred. From then onwards, successive generations of more and more powerful steam-powered battleships were developed by different navies, the RN often taking the lead. The introduction of the 20,000-ton[189], all-big-gun, turbine-powered 21-knot battleship HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906 is often presented as the biggest technological revolution of the Fisher era, making existing Pre-dreadnought battleships obsolete practically overnight[190]. During the Anglo-German naval arms race between 1906 and 1915, Britain built 35 Dreadnought-type battleships against 21 German equivalents[191]. The predominance of the mighty battleship was attributable in part to the fixation of the RN naval officer corps, the media and pro-navy public opinion on the idea of a grand fleet of battleships engaging in a spectacular battle of annihilation with the enemy (i.e. the rising naval power of the German Empire)[192].

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189 The exact figures were 18,120 long tons, normal load, 21,060 long tons, deep load, see Burt 2012, 29. The speed of the *Dreadnought*'s construction at Portsmouth Naval Dockyard was also extraordinarily high: laid down, 2 October 1905, launched, 10 February 1906, completed, 2 December 1906; Burt 2012, 20–41.

190 Ross 2010; Marder 1961, 43–45. There is a long-lasting historiographical debate as to the merits and dismerits of the RN launching the Dreadnought class, see Grove 2011; Brooks 2007.

191 Marder 1961, 439–441.

192 In the tradition of the prominent US naval historian, Rear-Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), whose influential book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Mahan 1988/1890) defined naval strategic thought in many countries, including Great Britain and Germany. For an account of dominant strategic thought in the RN and the role of naval historian Prof. Julian Corbett, see Lambert 2017, Lambert (ed.) 2017; cf. also Goldrick 1993.

When Germany stepped up Dreadnought construction during the so-called naval scares before WWI, Britain had to do the same. Fisher and the Admiralty were confident that the British dockyards and armament companies could out-build any rival nation, and the Empire could afford this financially. At least the former prediction proved to be accurate. The naval arms race accelerated with the new German navy laws in 1908/1909. Emperor Wilhelm II and his primary strategist, Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, also wanted to build a world-class navy in Germany, aggressively challenging the global dominance of the RN[193].

The financial figures for naval construction (in millions of pounds sterling, 1996 prices) at the beginning of Fisher's term in 1904 were 14.1 for Britain compared with 5.1 for Germany. During the later years of the arms race they were as follows: 1908, Britain 9.4 (Germany 9.0); 1909, 11.2 (11.5); 1910, 16.7 (12.7); 1911, 18.9 (13.1); 1912, 17.3 (12.2); 1913, 17.1 (11.2) [194]. The figures clearly demonstrate how Germany gradually lost the naval arms race before the outbreak of WWI. Niall Ferguson has argued that the British government's superior fiscal resources and its ability to fund naval expansion effectively led Germany to launch a pre-emptive strike in starting the WWI in 1914[195]. Be it as it may, as Michael Daunton recently argues, there is no doubt about the fact that Britain had a very effective and efficient fiscal system at place in the beginning of the 20th century that was able to finance the naval expansion with much less difficulty than what was the case with the Germans[196]. In any case, the expenditure was highly taxing for both national economies. What is more, it has been argued that the naval arms race with Germany essentially led the traditionally isolationist Britons to ally themselves with France and Russia in a looming continental war. The threat caused by the aggressive German naval expansion to the maritime empire was perceived as too severe for Britain to tackle alone.[197]

An alternative to the dominant Mahanian idea of building surface fleets of large capital ships that came to light at the beginning of the 20th century was the so-called French Jeune École. As a strategy, it advocated the use of smaller units such as torpedo boats (later submarines) to attack a battleship fleet, and of commerce raiders capable of disrupting the maritime trade of the enemy.[198] However, it was generally considered a naval strategy for weak nations, especially in Britain and Germany. Combining the best of both worlds, Fisher was well ahead of his time in seeing the future importance of the torpedo, the mine, the submarine and the (torpedo-boat) destroyer. In his strategic vision he combined them with a large surface fleet of modern capital ships, which he rightly thought would become obsolete in the long term because of the new technologies.[199] However, at the beginning of the war the RN had not invested sufficiently, especially in the development of sea mines and submarines, not to

193 Seligmann et al. 2015; Padfield 2013; Hobson 2002; Herwig 1980; Hoerber 2011.
194 Stevenson 1996, 8.
195 Ferguson 1994, 141–168.
196 Daunton 2011, 49.
197 Stevenson 1996; Herwig 1980; for British defence policy 1899–1915 in general, see Williams 1991.
198 Roksund 2007.
199 Lambert 1995c.

mention anti-submarine warfare. For instance, it had to copy the German sea mine during the war when it found out that its own mines were inefficient and unreliable. What is more, having concentrated heavily on the construction of capital ships, the RN lacked smaller vessels, especially destroyers, to act as a screen for its fleet of large ships.[200]

Above all, the RN had not fully realized that the rapid evolution of the torpedo as the most potent naval weapon would disrupt naval tactics, disfavouring large capital ships[201]. Finally, even if Fisher and some of his disciples foresaw the future importance of naval aviation, the issue of building a naval air arm was not taken very seriously in the RN before the war. There was a Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) at the beginning of the war, which was used mainly for air reconnaissance. Its role as an offensive force assumed importance during the war as it gained more and more experience of air warfare: it was eventually merged with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in early 1918. The aircraft carrier also emerged as a new type of capital ship during WWI as some of the newest RN battlecruisers were converted to function as carriers[202]. All in all, naval aviation did not yet assume the prominent role it had in WWII, for instance.

Fisher's strong preference when it came to large capital ships was not the battleship. As explained in Article II of this study, this vessel type was later termed the battlecruiser. It was initially referred to as a large or all-big-gun armoured cruiser in the proceedings of the Board of the Admiralty and in the Committee on Designs that Fisher appointed in December 1904. Early on, Fisher set up a special committee to oversee and consider the new designs for battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines. He also set up two further committees in 1905 to consider fleet auxiliaries, especially the use of armed merchant cruisers against armed German liners with the potential to threaten the shipping lanes of the British Empire.[203] Fisher's point was that a novel type of fast, big armoured cruiser was needed to protect British shipping[204]. The Committee on Designs agreed on the introduction of a new type of large capital ship, and the first vessels were laid down in February 1906. This was the *Invincible* class of battlecruisers, capable of 'mopping up' any type of enemy surface vessel around the Empire[205].

The three *Invincible* class battlecruisers were as big as the battleship *Dreadnought* (20,000 tons), armed with eight 12-inch guns and capable of steaming at an impressive speed of 25 knots. However, the additional speed came at the cost of considerably lighter protective armour vis-á-vis battleships.[206] 'Speed is armour,' Fisher declared, claiming that the new vessels could catch any enemy vessel and flee any superior force. In fact, there was a historiographical controversy concerning how much Fisher really wanted to defend the home isles

200 Breemer 2010, 5–21.
201 Epstein 2014.
202 Roskill (ed.) 1969.
203 Peeks 2015, 44–47.
204 Seligmann 2012a, 75–76.
205 Roberts 1997, 25.
206 Roberts 1997, 24.

primarily with flotilla craft (light cruisers, destroyers and submarines), and to use the high-speed battlecruisers to protect the Empire's shipping lanes and communications.[207] He probably thought the narrow seas around the British Isles were becoming too dangerous for large capital ships given the rapidly advancing naval technologies, including naval aviation.

One could argue that the dominant issue in the thinking of key officers about capital ships related to the Anglo-German naval arms race was the *comparison* between British and German vessels. Once the Germans started commissioning their own Dreadnoughts (both battleships and battlecruisers), the RN was locked into this sub-race to out-build and outclass the enemy. In the case of the newer battlecruisers, for example, because neither the older battlecruisers nor any battleship could match their speed, each party to the naval arms race was forced to build ever more powerful classes of ships to counter the threat from the other. HMS *Hood*, the last battlecruiser built by Britain in 1916–1918, was twice the size of and cost three times as much as the first one, HMS *Invincible*[208]. As I argue in Article II of this study, when war broke out in 1914 the entire 'I' class was already practically obsolete in comparison to the most modern enemy battlecruisers. All in all, however, the Germans were comparatively more active in battlecruiser construction: their vessels were more heavily armoured and better compartmentalized to withstand damage, and their fire control was at least somewhat more accurate. From the viewpoint of the RN admirals, successive generations of increasingly efficient German battlecruisers posed a significant danger. If these powerful and fast ships were to break out into the Atlantic to harass allied shipping, no battleship could catch them. Hence, the RN also needed to have the upper hand in battlecruiser construction.

Finally, inter-ship communications related to the tactical handling of large fleets in particular were disrupted by the adoption of wireless telegraphy before WWI. The revisionist historian Nicholas A. Lambert has argued that Fisher played a central role in developing the RN's wireless system worldwide, enabling the Admiralty to assume an increasing degree of operational control over British forces after 1907 and facilitating British plans for waging economic warfare against Germany[209]. On the other hand, it has been recently argued that Fisher's understanding of and support to the centralized use of wireless was far lesser than proposed by Lambert[210]. However, the traditional authoritarian top-down culture of the RN changed little, and most of the signalling in battle practices still relied on flags. Commanders were expected to wait for precise orders signalled from the flagship. On the other hand, German commanding officers were primed to extemporize in the face of a superior enemy. The Germans had also developed more realistic tactical exercises for training, especially in naval gunnery. What is more, as future admiral and training director Captain Herbert Richmond noted in 1914, whereas the RN depended on signals, the Germans tended not to use them as much in action – their captains anticipated

207 Lambert 1995c; Bell 2016.
208 Hough 1975, 244.
209 Lambert 2004, 272–297.
210 Morgan-Owen 2015c, 961–962.

the intentions of their commanders. Unlike the Britons, the Germans had also practised fighting in darkness and in smoke.[211]

Thus, it could be argued that when war broke out the RN was at a tactical disadvantage compared to the Germans when it came to the handling of the fleet. Moreover, the authoritarian culture of the RN did not encourage subordinates to use their own judgment, initiative or what they had learned from experience, which greatly hampered the effectiveness of the RN when war broke out. In general, officers in both navies lacked experience of how to fight efficiently and effectively with their larger and larger fleet and vessels full of new technology. Neither of them had firmly established strategic and tactical plans. For instance, just after the outbreak of the war a key naval historian and strategist, US Admiral Mahan, publicly expressed his conviction that the RN should immediately seek to destroy the German High Seas Fleet[212]. This is also what the British public looked forward to, another spectacular battle of Trafalgar, "der Tag". However, a grand battle was exactly what the British were *not* planning when war broke out. The leaders of the RN were not willing to jeopardize their numerical superiority in capital ships unless the Germans deliberately sought battle. When the war began they saw the intact Grand Fleet primarily as an instrument with which to suppress German international maritime trade and to prevent the Germans from disturbing the transport of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to fight the German army in France[213].

How revolutionary were the technological and resulting organizational changes the RN faced before WWI broke out? As David Morgan-Owen convincingly argues in a recent article, in attaching an overt degree of importance to the role of technological change in the transformation of war-fighting (vide the so-called Revolutions in Military Affairs or the RMA paradigm) and of the Royal Navy before the war, many historians have overlooked numerous aspects of Admiralty policy that could be better understood in terms of continuity rather than 'revolution'. Examples of these aspects include the use of the flotilla to defend the Home Isles, and of the armoured cruiser (later battlecruiser) as an integral part of the fleet. The flotilla craft were the pivot of the Admiralty's defensive strategy long before the introduction of the submarine or the locomotive torpedo, and armoured cruisers had long had a central role in Admiralty thinking, having been used to attack the flanks and rear of the enemy line as part of a fast division.[214] Thus, the recent evolutionary view of the history of the 'Fisher era' also seems to foster a more nuanced understanding of the technological developments of the period. Even if individual technological advances such as the torpedo and the long-range gunnery of large capital ships were revolutionary *per se*, it took naval organizations a lot of time and effort to learn to apply the respective technologies in practice. Jellicoe, for instance, still used ancient fleet formations and tactics when manoeuvring his vessels at the

211 Gordon 1996, 395–396.
212 *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 1914, 8.
213 Lambert 2012, 3–15.
214 Morgan-Owen 2015c, 944–965; see also Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015, 1–7.

battle of Jutland, most significantly by forming a long straight battle line[215] and aiming at 'crossing the T' of the enemy to concentrate the line of fire on its lead ships.

215 Lambert 2017, 190–195.

6 TRANSFORMING THE ROYAL NAVY: FIRST LORD – FIRST SEA LORD REGIMES, 1904–1919

6.1 The Transformation: the Fisher Regime with First Lords Selborne, Cawdor and Tweedmouth, 1904–1908

Admiral Fisher was a person who left nobody cold. When he assumed the position of First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty in October 1904[216] he had already gained a reputation as a reforming zealot, for instance as the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet and the Second Sea Lord responsible for personnel matters.[217] He was an energetic and enigmatic man, friendly and loving to his family, friends and supporters, fierce against his enemies. The *New York Herald* described him on his appointment as:

> "… a man of marked personality with something of the manner of the old-time war-admirals, and officer in whose mind are numerous schemes for improving the training, administration, and financial control of the King's Services".[218]

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216 Fisher was also appointed principal naval ADC to the King on 21 October 1904, succeeding Admiral Sir H F Stephenson; *The New York Herald* (European Edition), 9 November 1904, Issue 24915, 4.

217 First Lord Selborne, aided by the recently appointed Second Sea Lord Fisher, launched a controversial personnel-reform programme in 1902, often called the Selborne-Fisher or Selborne scheme. Among the aims was gradually to make the career path of the increasingly influential engineer officers interchangeable with that of executive officers (as well as marines) up to the rank of lieutenant, as happened in the US navy of the era, for example: see Marder, 1961, 46–52; also Gough 2017, 29–49.

218 *New York Herald* (European Edition), 21 October 1904, 1.

In his official role, the admiral could be:

> "…arrogant, stern, unrelenting, and, when serious mistakes were made, even cruel".[219]

He had a strong vision of how he would transform the lethargic and authoritarian RN organization into a modern machine of naval war, which in Fisher's view the Empire would urgently need in any forthcoming hostilities[220]. He was ready to go to extremes to achieve his goals, and to convert adversaries to supporters or, eventually, to suppress them altogether. Articles I and II of the focal study elaborate on Fisher's personality, leadership style and ways of working when he wanted novel designs (e.g. the battlecruiser concept) to be developed and adopted in the RN. Efficient organizational agenda setting was thus one of Fisher's main ways of advancing the reforms he deemed indispensable. In 1920 *The Times* characterized the late admiral as follows:

> "It is not surprising that Lord Fisher's personality exercised a magnetic influence upon people of all sorts and conditions. His enthusiasm, his earnestness, and the compelling nature of his address had a fascination for most of those with whom he was brought into contact. … Though he could be, and was, stony-hearted, when the occasion required it, his sympathies were given unstintedly to the legitimate aspirations of young and deserving people."[221]

Interestingly, before Fisher assumed the position of First Sea Lord[222] First Lord Selborne had made it the only Sea Lord position with executive functions in the Board of the Admiralty. Fisher himself was evidently behind the strengthening of the role vis-à-vis traditional Admiralty bureaucracy[223]. When he was appointed to the top position he immediately launched the first initiatives of his comprehensive reforms, most of which were to be hotly debated in later historiography[224]. Arthur J. Marder lists the following among the most significant and immediate outcomes of Fisher's naval revolution: personnel reforms (the Selborne scheme, the selection of non-commissioned officers, the creation of the Naval War College, the new promotion policy, the treatment and pay of the lower deck, the training of reserves and crews and the gunnery revolution), the nucleus-crew system, the scrapping of obsolete men-of-war in their hundreds, the redistribution of the fleet and the building of the Dreadnought-type of capital ships (the battleship and the battlecruiser)[225]. The First Lord-First Sea Lord dyad and the most senior officers in (or close to) Fisher's Fishpond highlighted in Article III tended to be the main protagonists of these reforms. As stated above, Fisher's inimitable leadership style and his way of advancing the important

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219 Marder 1961, 15.
220 Gordon 1996, 9–13.
221 *The Times*, 12 July 1920, Issue 42460, 9.
222 Earlier, the position was known as the First Naval Lord. Fisher's appointment saw a return to the earlier title of First Sea Lord.
223 Peeks 2015, 35–36.
224 Gough 2017, 50–101; Bell 2016; Seligmann 2015.
225 Marder 1960, 28–70.

aspects of his reforms (such as building the Dreadnought battlecruiser) are described in Articles II and III, respectively.

As the senior flag officer on the Admiralty Board, the First Sea Lord was expected to provide professional advice and recommendations to his political chief, the First Lord, a cabinet member who often acted as the political guarantor of the First Sea Lord's designs. As Barry Gough remarks about Fisher's first stint as First Sea Lord:

> "…the influence he exerted on the policy-making process when working with a malleable First Lord was simply prodigious".[226]

Fisher's first three First Lords – Selborne, Cawdor and Tweedmouth - proved to be considerably malleable. Fisher clearly wielded power over these gentlemen in initiating and continuing his reforms of the RN.

First, William Waldegrave Palmer, the 2nd Earl of Selborne (1859–1942), known as Viscount Wolmer between 1882 and 1895, was a relatively young liberal unionist politician when he was appointed the First Lord of the Admiralty under the Prime Minister and his father-in-law the Marquess of Salisbury[227] in November 1900. This appointment naturally gave him a seat in the Cabinet. Selborne was able to keep his post when the conservative Arthur Balfour[228] became Prime Minister in 1902. In 1905, he left the position to become the High Commissioner for Southern Africa and the Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies integrated into the Empire after the Boer War a couple of years earlier[229]. Arthur J. Marder describes Selborne as an active and able man:

> "…who, because his mind was receptive to new ideas and because he believed in Fisher's genius, was content to let him have a free rein".[230]

The fact that Selborne was 18 years younger than Fisher must also have made him look up to the older man's naval professionalism and vision. As the son-in-law of the PM and as an Earl, Selborne socialized effortlessly in the upper echelons of British society. Thus, the active lobbying of the then Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear-Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg (later Mountbatten, 1st Marquess of Milford Haven, a fellow reformer and later a First Sea Lord himself) for Fisher to be appointed First Sea Lord must not have gone unnoticed. Even King Edward VII became a partisan of the long-foreseen appointment contested by many in naval and political circles.[231] Prince Louis and John Jellicoe were the two most senior officers with a lot of influence on key reforms in the early, formative phase of Fisher's stewardship. They could also be considered the two most important figures in Fisher's 'Fishpond' (see Article III).

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226 Gough 1995, 17–33; Murfett 1995a, 2–3.
227 Selborne had married Salisbury's daughter Maud Cecil in 1883, see Pugh (online).
228 Salisbury was also Balfour's maternal uncle, Mackay 1985, 4.
229 Boyce 1990.
230 Marder 1961, 21.
231 Hough 1984, 194–195.

Second, Frederick Archibald Vaughan Campbell, the 3rd Earl Cawdor (1847–1911), known as Viscount Emlyn from 1860 to 1898, was a Conservative politician who briefly served as the First Lord of the Admiralty under PM Arthur Balfour between March and December 1905. Marder characterized Cawdor as follows:

> "…a small, mild-mannered gentleman, shrewd and industrious, who had made a good reputation as a sound and alert businessman. Fisher was 'overjoyed' about this appointment."[232]

However, Cawdor did not remain in office long enough to have had a real effect on Admiralty policy. Like his successor Lord Tweedmouth, he was also constantly in bad health. This left Fisher practically in sole charge of key Admiralty policies.[233] With the fall of the Conservative Government, the Liberals came back to power in December 1905 under PM Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who replaced Cawdor with Tweedmouth[234]. However, the consequent Dreadnought building programme accepted 'without prejudice' by the Campbell-Bannerman government bears his name. The Cawdor Programme stipulated that Britain would build four large armoured ships (battleships and battlecruisers) a year to maintain the desired superiority in most modern ships over the two next largest navies (i.e. those of Germany and France). The programme was subjected to a hectic political debate in 1906.[235]

Third, Edward Marjoribanks, the 2nd Baron Tweedmouth (1849–1909) and a British Liberal Party statesman, served as the First Lord of the Admiralty between December 1905 and April 1908[236]. According to Marder, Tweedmouth was a pleasant but colourless man, of barely average abilities, and possessed very little knowledge of naval matters[237]. He could not entirely make up his mind between the Fisherites and the anti-Fisherites in the emerging 'Great Edwardian Naval Feud' that was increasingly dividing the RN organization into two opposing camps[238]. He also lost prestige when he was exposed as a major shareholder in a firm that had received a big contract for supplying beer to the RN. He caused a further scandal by revealing future naval expenditure in an unfortunate letter (the 'Tweedmouth letter' publicized widely in the British press) to the German Kaiser[239]. In general, Marder refers to his tenure as First Lord as

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232 Marder 1961,22.
233 Mackay 1973, 341.
234 Marder 1961, 22–23.
235 Marder 1961, 125–130.
236 Marjoribanks 2015.
237 Marder 1961, 19, 22. Marder (1961, 19) goes as far as to state: "…*There was only one really weak First Lord among them (and that in part due to poor health): Tweedmouth*." Indeed, Tweedmouth died only a few months after stepping down from the post of the First Lord in early 1909; Buckey 2013, 189.
238 Freeman 2009; Penn 2000.
239 Farr 2007, 144. In fact, it was Kaiser Wilhelm II himself who first approached the First Lord by letter, bypassing his uncle King Edward and the traditional diplomatic channels. The Kaiser wanted to assure the Admiralty that new German naval construction was in no way intended to diminish British dominance of the seas. A great public scandal ensued when the press found out about the exchange of letters between the

'undistinguished', as he rarely interfered with the sea lords and had few strategic ideas of his own[240]. However, towards the end of his term, and becoming increasingly ill, Tweedmouth staunchly defended the Admiralty's ambitious plans for new naval construction. His aim to secure the traditional 'two-power' standard – that the strength of the RN in capital ships was to be at least equal to the size of the second and the third largest fleets in the world plus a 10 per cent margin – in the future was thwarted by increasing German naval construction[241].

Thus, Fisher was able to launch and continue his reforms with a relatively free hand from the beginning of his tenure until 1908. According to his first biographer and key Fishpond member Admiral Reginald Bacon:

> "It is impossible, without confusion of narrative, to deal chronologically with Sir John Fisher's work as First Sea Lord. His many activities ran concurrently during the whole period that he held office."[242]

There has been a continuing debate about Fisher's first more substantial policy shift, the redistribution of the fleet to home waters. This also included scrapping older and obsolete vessels in their hundreds and the forming of a nucleus crew system for the best ships in reserve. Marder famously argued that most of what happened was due to an increasing German threat.[243] On the other hand, the revisionist historian Nicholas Lambert later pointed out that Germany was only the fourth- or fifth-ranking naval power when Fisher created the large Home Fleet in 1905. Despite the emergence of the entente cordiale, the French-Russian alliance was still considered a potential menace to the British Empire should the political situation abruptly change. As Fisher's third biographer Ruddock Mackay emphasized in an article from 1970, the RN wanted to retain strategic flexibility over any potential foe[244]. Related to this, the creation of the Atlantic Fleet was also a major development, the strategic basis of which has been debated in later historiography. All in all, a relatively strong 'flexible' force was retained in Gibraltar.[245] More recently, Matthew Seligmann has argued for a more balanced, evolutionary view that stresses the gradual establishment of Germany as Britain's main foe and the incremental adjustment of Admiralty strategies to this development[246]. Referring to practically all of Fisher's main reforms, Seligmann and Morgan-Owen recently stated:

> "…the revisionist interpretation actually focuses rather narrowly upon the person of Jackie Fisher and his supposedly radical reformist agenda. Revisionists paint a picture of Fisher as a frustrated maverick, straining against the institutional conservatism of the Royal Navy with a mixed degree of success. Although he achieved much, he could never persuade his more conservative colleagues to adopt his more radical schemes,

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First Lord and a foreign monarch about sensitive naval issues. See also Hough 2017, 123–125.

240 Marder 1961, 22.
241 Buckey 2013, 181–189.
242 Bacon 1929a, 225.
243 Marder 1961, 41–42.
244 Mackay 1970, 341–346.
245 Lambert 2002, 101–106.
246 Seligmann 2012a; 2012b.

with the result that most of them never got off the drawing board – if they ever existed at all."[247]

Be that as it may, the most significant events during Fisher's regime with Selborne, Cawdor and Tweedmouth concern their reforms of naval education and personnel policy, the scrapping of obsolete men-of-war, the redistribution of the fleet and the creation of novel vessel types, most prominently the Dreadnought battleship and the battlecruiser. All these novel policies created controversy and dissension within and outside of the RN organization.[248] The design of the Dreadnought battleship was hotly debated in the media, for example [249]. From 1906 onwards the malcontents increasingly seized the opportunity to discredit the entire policy of the Admiralty. Much of the discontent was attributed to Fisher's alleged 'personal rule' at the Admiralty and his ruthless way of working. A lot of criticism was directed towards his purported policy of surrounding himself with 'yes men', his 'favourites and sycophants', i.e. with members of the Fishpond.[250]

As I state on many occasions throughout this study, the critical voices grew to an entire 'Syndicate of Discontent' or 'Adullamites' (Fisher's own pet terms) towards the end of his first stint as First Sea Lord, seriously dividing the RN into two opposing factions[251]. In many ways, this opposition also managed to water down or even hinder some major changes Fisher wanted to make in personnel policy and materiél, for example. The highly debated revisionist claim that, in reality, he wanted to rule the sea lanes of the Empire with fast battlecruisers and to leave the defence of the Home Isles to flotilla craft is but one example[252]. Fisher often praised the virtues of the fast and powerful battlecruiser over the slower battleship in his correspondence[253], but he was ready to admit quite early on that the time was not yet ripe to give up building more Dreadnought battleships given that most naval professionals and the public were so fixated on counting their numbers *vis-á-vis* those of potential enemies.

Thus, the key outcomes of Fisher's more or less personal rule at the Admiralty during the tenures of his first three rather weak First Lords relate to the creation of a modern and growing fleet of Dreadnoughts in home waters, and to what at first were significant cost savings due to the scrapping of a large number of obsolete vessels. However, after 1906, as the Anglo-German naval

247 Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015, 938.
248 Marder 1961, 28–70; Gough 2017, 102–129.
249 See e.g. *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 1907, Issue 16373, 4, in which a Royal Navy official gives a positive account of the Dreadnought design in the light of recent experiences of the Russo-Japanese war.
250 Marder 1961, 79. Despite acknowledging many of Fisher's faults, Marder (1961, 79–88) writes a lengthy defence of the admiral against the usual charges that were levelled against him. These included being a 'one-man show' at the top of the Admiralty, 'reckless haste' in designing the key reforms and favouritism in key appointments. Moreover, criticism was also directed to Fisher's alleged 'public advertisement' in the media, his alleged 'espionage' in the Fleet, and his treating of the entire Navy as his 'pocket preserve', harassing independent officers outside of the Fishpond.
251 Marder 1961, 77; Gough 2017, 102–129.
252 See Lambert 1995c; see also Bell 2016.
253 For instance, in a letter to King Edward in October 1907, see Marder (ed.) 1956, 140.

arms race was gathering momentum, increasing expenditure related to proposed new naval construction started to cause considerable debate and opposition among the public and in Parliament. In light of the 'invasion scares' and increased public pressure, the Committee of Imperial Defence conducted an invasion inquiry in 1907–1908 in which the threat of German invasion was formally assessed. Fisher behaved high-handedly in the inquiry and bluntly declared that an invasion was impossible.[254] The Liberal Cabinet was sharply divided on the issue of new naval construction, with many members favouring the 'economist' solution of limiting military expenditure. Fisher and his disciples thus needed stronger political support arguing for the 'big navy' cause. This support soon came from a slightly surprising quarter, the 'radical wing' Liberal politician Reginald McKenna.

6.2 The Zenith of the Fisher Era and the 'Great Edwardian Naval Feud': the McKenna-Fisher Regime, 1908–1910

Henry H Asquith succeeded Henry Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in April 1908 following the latter's sudden illness and resignation[255]. The Liberal politician and banker Reginald McKenna (1863–1943) was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in Asquith's Cabinet reshuffle, and Tweedmouth was 'kicked upstairs' to take the position of Lord President of the Council[256].

In Marder's view McKenna was the most influential of Fisher's pre-war First Lords[257]. He has been described as a first-class administrator with a clear and cool mind, with the barrister's gift of stating his case courageously, logically and lucidly[258]. According to his most recent biographer Martin Farr, McKenna resembled his friend Admiral Jellicoe in many respects, especially in his calm and rational judgment[259]. On the other hand, he was an unpopular First Lord and generally a failure as a politician, mainly due to his curtness and 'donnish and superior' manner in the House of Commons[260]. There was a dire need for McKenna's "*…grasp of financial detail and a great deal of natural tenacity*" at the Admiralty after three weak First Lords[261]. However, earlier in his political career in the Liberal Party McKenna was regarded as a radical, supporting increased

254 Fisher's press advisors thought he should have kept a lower profile and merely demanded more resources for the Navy, which was undergoing the Dreadnought revolution, Morris 1984, 138; see also Morgan-Owen 2017, 174–190.
255 Campbell-Bannerman died only 19 days after his resignation, on 22 April 1909; Jenkins 1986, 178.
256 Buckey 2013, 189.
257 Marder 1961, 22.
258 McKenna 1948, 1–10.
259 "*Similar in stature and appearance, from similarly modest backgrounds, both had married late to much younger, more extroverted women and had succeeded in their careers through a combination of mathematical expertise, attention to detail, and general dedication*"; Farr 2007, 175.
260 Marder 1961, 22–23.
261 Farr 2007, 142–144.

social spending and savings in the naval realm [262]. Consequently, many individuals (probably including the PM) were astonished at how quickly he became a 'Fisher man' after taking up his new position. There was also speculation that Asquith had sent McKenna to the Admiralty to kick Fisher out of his post altogether. Many major political figures were growing tired of the internal feuding that was seriously dividing the RN organization[263].

To the surprise of many, Fisher and McKenna made a famously effective team:

> "… working together closely, loyally, and cordially, and becoming affectionate friends".[264]

Fisher described McKenna as follows in a letter he wrote to Lord Esher in 1910:

> "The sacred fire of efficiency burns brightly in him! And he's a born fighter and a good hater, which I love… with all my heart".[265]

Many of Fisher's personal letters at the time were also directed to McKenna's socially active and assertive young wife, Pamela Jekyll McKenna. He continued to actively interact with the McKennas[266] during his interregnum in 1910-1914 and throughout the war years[267].

Fisher was promoted to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet on 6 December 1905, potentially giving him five additional years in office (as a mere Admiral he would have had to retire in January 1906 when he reached the age of 65)[268]. He often speculated on what would happen to his reforms when he eventually stepped down. For instance, he wrote to McKenna on the 28 October 1908:

> "…I am anxious both to assure you of my sense of your kindness and to remove any impression that I wish 'to lag superfluous on the stage'. My only desire is to avoid the wreckage of the various arrangements now in progress … and the next two years will

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262 Eloranta 2003 provides an extensive analysis of military spending among the Great Powers (and some additional smaller states) in 1870–1913. He concludes (p. 272) "*…for the UK higher economic development meant lower military spending, which is not a typical response by a hegemon. Curiously enough, the UK considered the United States an ally and vice versa, even though such a formal alliance did not exist, implying that both held unrealistic expectations of one another. Moreover, the introduction of the Dreadnought, surprisingly, usually decreased military spending, perhaps indicating that all states were not willing to commit to the naval arms race before the First World War. …Higher military spending by the United States and Great Britain might have made the spending and capability gap between Germany and its rivals too large to overcome, thereby discouraging the expansion of the arms race and, ultimately, the First World War.*"

263 Buckey 2013, 192; Gough 2017, 126–127.

264 Marder 1961, 23; see also McKenna 1948, 84–85.

265 Marder (ed.) 1956, 285.

266 PM Asquith was wont to call them the *McKennae* as he saw the deep affection and bond between the newly-wed husband and wife. Pamela McKenna was to have a lot of influence on McKenna's thinking and political actions. See e.g. Farr 2007, 166.

267 See e.g. Marder (ed.) 1956, 503; MCKN 3/4 consists of correspondence between McKenna and Fisher.

268 Mackay 1973, 341.

> make them safe, and only for that reason had I any desire to wait the time of my retirement. … However, the real limit is the period of cordial harmony between the First Lord and First Sea Lord. There is no other condition."[269]

In fact, Fisher engaged in fierce internal politics to get the right persons appointed to key positions after he left the Admiralty. These positions naturally included the posts of Sea Lords and other senior Admiralty officials, and the most senior commands at sea. It was also of the utmost importance to promote the right Captains to the Flag List[270]. The most influential members of the Fishpond were naturally Fisher's preferred choice for many positions, although other sympathetic figures such as Admirals Wilson and Bridgeman were also at the heart of his machinations. Members of the 'Syndicate', led by Beresford, continuously tried to outmanoeuvre the Fisherites in the making of many major decisions and appointments. Another key issue was the establishment of a naval staff, which Fisher deliberately delayed as long as possible. He thought that the leadership of the Admiralty could manage without a large bureaucratic staff, which he also regarded as a potential threat to information security.[271] On the other hand, the army had already created a powerful and rather well-resourced staff in 1906–1907[272], and it was increasingly evident that the navy needed one as well. It was only a matter of time until a formal naval staff was established, but most commentators thought Fisher (and probably also McKenna) needed to leave the Admiralty first.

While Fisher was continuing his reforms on the operative level, McKenna had three main policy concerns. The first one related to the rights of neutrals at sea in the event of a major European war. Britain wanted to reserve the wide-ranging right to inspect neutral vessels and to confiscate contraband being shipped to the enemy. The second one was the recurring issue of increasing naval expenditure, especially *vis-á-vis* the army and the Liberal government's aim to increase social spending. The Anglo-German naval arms race intensified during McKenna's tenure as First Lord as Germany considerably stepped up naval construction. Following the failure at the second Hague conference in 1907[273] to reach an international agreement on the reduction of expenditure on armaments, there were a number of infamous naval scares in 1909–1910[274], and Britain also decided to accelerate its Dreadnought building programme.[275] The third concern related to Britain's continental commitment in the event of war. It was well

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269 Marder (ed.) 1956, 199.
270 A list of admirals of a particular navy, often presented in order of seniority.
271 Farr 2007, 180; McKenna 1948, 86–87; McLay 2015.
272 Gooch 1974, 97–130.
273 The Second Peace Conference (15–18 October 1907) aimed to expand upon the 1899 Hague Convention (in which Fisher had represented Britain personally) with an increased focus on naval warfare. The British wanted a limitation on armaments, but the Germans dismissed this as an attempt to limit the growth of the German navy. However, the conference managed to promote voluntary arbitration and established conventions regulating the collection of debts, rules of war, and the rights and obligations of neutrals, among other issues. Fisher thought that the conference "*will be futile*", Hough 1969, 256.
274 Morris 1984, 89–202.
275 Gough 2017, 130–135.

known that the army preferred close collaboration with entente partner France and her ally Russia, but the prevalent opinion in the upper echelons of the RN was not as clear, nor was it in the Cabinet. McKenna's fellow Liberals generally saw the navy as a vehicle for protecting free trade and keeping the Home Isles safe. Most of them wanted to keep Britain out of any future continental conflict,[276] and Fisher was also inclined to this opinion.

Most tellingly, McKenna emerged as the champion of the navalist movement to build considerably more capital ships than originally set out in the 1909 and 1910 estimates. Many of his fellow liberals thought that in doing this he had betrayed his earlier radical conviction of decreasing naval spending in favour of social spending. What is more, his staunch fight to increase naval construction to counteract the German menace led to a significant rupture within the Liberal Cabinet between McKenna on the one hand and David Lloyd George and Winston S. Churchill on the other. Lloyd George served as the powerful Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1908–1915, and Churchill as the President of the Board of Trade in 1908–1910, and from February 1910 onwards as Home Secretary until his accession to the position of First Lord in 1911. Lloyd George and Churchill systematically fought against the supporters of the 'big navy' to reserve funds for some essential social reforms such as the provision of old-age pensions. In McKenna's view some of their political tactics were 'dirty' and mendacious, and he developed a deep mistrust of both men. In the Cabinet, initially the First Lord was supported by Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane[277] and Foreign Secretary Edward Grey, two very notable political figures who added extra weight to the arguments of the relatively junior politician McKenna. It has been pointed out recently that British intelligence information on German actions in naval construction was, in fact, more accurate than has been acknowledged in earlier studies[278]. To the frustration of the McKenna and Fisher duo, the PM vacillated between the two camps. On the other hand, McKenna's offhand style alienated many fellow Cabinet members and his victory in getting a maximum number of capital ships accepted in Parliament[279] was eventually to prove a Pyrrhic one. As an outcome, he was increasingly isolated in the Cabinet.[280]

All in all, however, McKenna provided the strong political support to Fisher's strategic designs that was desperately needed during the formative years of creating a strong Dreadnought-based home fleet, which was soon to evolve

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276 Farr 2007, 144–173; McKenna 1948, 70–83.

277 Later on, Fisher in particular developed an extreme dislike of Haldane because of his role in the row over the 1909 estimates, his advocacy of a naval staff and of a 'Ministry of Defence' (coordinating the policies of both the navy and the army), and for his allegedly pro-Beresfordian attitude in the inquiry committee of 1909; Marder 1961, 205; see also Gough 2017, 138–139. Haldane was influential in ousting McKenna from the Admiralty in 1911, and relations between the two gentlemen became irrecoverable; Farr 2007, 220–221.

278 Seligmann 2010, 37–59.

279 The matter immediately became political theatre in the House of Commons, best summed up in Conservative MP George Wyndham's famous declaration "*We want eight, and we won't wait!*"; Buckey 2013, 211.

280 Farr 2007, 149–161; 168–171; 183–190; Gilbert 1991, 201–203; Buckey 2013, 207.

into the Grand Fleet that successfully protected Britain in the forthcoming Great War[281]. According to Christopher M. Buckey, in fact there was no departure from the original building programme delineated in the Cawdor Memorandum. Despite much debate and argumentation, the proscribed minimum of four capital ships per year was adhered to by both the Campbell-Bannerman and the Asquith Cabinet in 1906–1910:

> "…Temporary cuts to capital ship construction in sympathy to the political necessities the Liberals faced ultimately this had little effect on actual construction in the long term. In fairness, however, to those who criticized the reductions in construction, it had been a great struggle simply to maintain this minimum building tempo."[282]

By early 1909, McKenna and Fisher had finally decided to merge the Channel and Home Fleets and consequently to rid the RN of the troublesome Admiral Beresford, who had been the Commander-in-Chief of the former. Having been ousted from his sea command, Beresford began using his political connections and soon managed to persuade PM Asquith to set up a sub-committee within the Committee of Imperial Defence to investigate central 'Syndicate' charges against the Admiralty. The PM agreed to chair the sub-committee personally, which emphasizes how important the issue was to Asquith's Cabinet. As mentioned, these charges concerned the deployment of the fleet in home waters and its readiness for combat. Beresford also pointed to the inadequate numbers of flotilla craft and claimed that there was a complete lack of war plans provided by the Admiralty for commanders afloat. The entire enquiry was an embarrassment to the McKenna-Fisher regime. On the strong advice of McKenna, Fisher wisely remained silent throughout the process. Beresford performed poorly and inconsistently in the sixteen committee hearings during the spring and summer of 1909, and the former lawyer McKenna was generally able to dismiss his case[283].

However, the final report of the sub-committee of 12 August 1909

> "…amounted to the increasingly apparent Asquithian casuistry: it was, as Fisher told McKenna, 'a cowardly document'".[284]

Despite the fact that Beresford's case was shattered in the hearings, the report did not state this very clearly. In its concluding passages, to the particular irritation of Fisher, it chastised the Admiralty for failing to set up a proper Naval War Staff.[285] Thus, the general effect was a *de facto* victory for Beresford. The proceedings had also preoccupied the Admiralty for six months while producing no evidence of mismanagement in the end. The fight continued in the media[286] and in Parliament, where Beresford was elected Unionist MP for Portsmouth in

281 Buckey 2013, 171–213.
282 Buckey 2013, 190.
283 McLay 2015; Buckey 2013, 194–202; Gough 2017, 135–139.
284 Farr 2007, 179; the original letter is reproduced in Marder (ed.) 1956, 260.
285 Marder (ed.) 1956, 260; see also Marder 1961, 199–204.
286 In addition to the British media, the New York Herald, for instance, published conspicuously on the Fisher-Beresford feud; *New York Herald* (European Edition), 1 November 1909, 3.

the January 1910 election. Fisher had already begin to realise during the autumn of 1909 that he needed to step down, and he eventually resigned on 25 January 1910.[287] As a farewell gift, he was elevated to the peerage as the 1st Baron Fisher of Kilverstone, with "*Fear God and Dread Nought*" as his motto. The personal rule of 'Radical Jack' at the Admiralty was over.

Many observers sighed in relief because it was widely believed that the warring factions did unquestionable damage to the Senior Service from within. Pamela McKenna wrote in her diary after visiting the retired Fisher at his son's estate, Kilverstone Hall in Norfolk, in June 1910:

> "…It is a little sad to see this man of boundless energy and initiative planted out in a backwater where he is not even his own master".[288]

However, Fisher continued as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, the later secretary of which, Colonel Maurice Hankey (1877–1963)[289], had become the old Admiral's admirer and friend[290]. Fisher corresponded actively with Hankey over the years[291]. Hankey himself become one of the forces that kept Britain's scattered top-level military strategic leadership[292] together immediately before and after the outbreak of war, with his cool judgment and diplomatic demeanour. He was especially good at trying to reconcile inter-service disputes and turf wars.

Ruddock F. Mackay summarizes the key outcomes of Fisher's later reign (in fact the McKenna-Fisher regime) as follows. On the one hand, the 'crowning innovation' of a general staff was deliberately withheld from the Navy, which resulted in a serious lack of strategic coordination between the Admiralty and the War Office. On the other hand, the Dreadnought construction programme of 1909–1910 restored earlier unwise cuts, the problem of the lower deck was handled wisely, gunnery was improved thanks to Fisher's appointment of Admiral Percy Scott as the Inspector of Target Practice, officers were promoted to flag rank at earlier ages, minesweeping began, and 13.5-inch guns were

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287 Farr 2007, 179–180; Mackay 1973, 412–419. *The Daily Telegraph* reported that the chief pen of the German Navy League, Count Reveutlow – evidently referring to Ernst Christian Einar Ludvig Detlev, Graf zu Reventlow (1869 –1943), a German naval officer, eminent naval journalist and later Nazi politician – had described the retired admiral as "*one of the most remarkable organizers that the British Fleet has ever possessed*". However, in the same article, the Count gave a warning to Germany concerning the adoption of uniform military training for officers of all branches of the service, as implemented by Fisher in the RN. The same article mistakenly describes Fisher as a former 'First Lord' of the Admiralty. *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 1910, Issue 17084, 12.

288 Farr 2007, 192.

289 Hankey was appointed Naval Assistant Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1908 and became Secretary to the Committee in 1912, a position he held for the next twenty-six years. See Roskill 1970, 17–18.

290 Mackay 1973, 422, 428, 442–443; Roskill 1970, 108–112; Naylor 1984, 13, 26.

291 HNKY 5/2 contains correspondence between Fisher and Hankey, and many letters exchanged between the two gentlemen are to be found in FISR 1.

292 At the core of the problem was the insufficiency in inter-service coordination and collaboration. The Committee of Imperial Defence of the era was not an effective or efficient organ in terms of solving the coordination problem; Naylor 1984, 8–48.

mounted in most of the new Dreadnoughts. In general, Mackay concludes that these later reforms were no match for the great reforms of 1904–1905, and Fisher was personally to blame for much of the bitter dissension during 1907–1909.[293] All in all, the working relationship between McKenna and Fisher remained excellent up until the departure of the latter. Both leaders complemented each other, McKenna in the political-economic sphere and Fisher in the professional sphere. However, the old admiral seemed to lose his personal touch in his later years in power and he was increasingly prone to overshooting and aggressive reactions towards his numerous opponents within and outside the RN organization. Thus, his departure in early 1910 was probably more than timely.

6.3 Continuing the Reforms in the 'Old 'Ard Art' Way: the McKenna-Wilson Regime, 1910–1911

McKenna (and Fisher) considered appointing Admiral Sir William May, the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, to succeed Fisher as First Sea Lord[294]. However, the final and slightly surprising choice was the retired Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson (1842–1921), who had been a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence since 1909 and had kept a sane distance from the Fisher-Beresford feud[295]. Both MacKenna and Fisher evidently thought that Wilson would not try to reverse any of Fisher's key reforms, and that he would only be an interim holder of the post of First Sea Lord until a more suitable candidate was found. It is telling that the list of twelve active-duty full admirals contained many members of the 'Syndicate': Beresford, Custance, Beaumont, Moore and Curzon-Howe. On the other hand, non-Syndicate full admirals May, Drury, Fawkes and Bridgeman commanded less respect than Wilson. Thus, after three years in retirement, Wilson reluctantly took over on 25 January 1910.[296]

Wilson, nicknamed 'Old 'Ard Art', was an old-school sailor and disciplinarian, and the holder of a Victoria Cross for his personal bravery in combat in Egypt in 1884[297]. He is said to have been known for his abrasive and uncompromising personality, and he was not a very articulate orator either. What is more, he was secretive and unable to delegate. Wilson's biographer in the 1920s, Edward E. Bradford, describes the post of First Sea Lord as 'an onerous task' for Wilson[298]. With the possible exceptions of Fisher and Captain (later

293 Mackay 1973, 420; cf. Marder 1961, 204–207; Gough 2017, 102–129.

294 At the time, Fisher had already started to develop a personal grudge against Admiral May, whom he earlier thought of as a loyal colleague. This was primarily due to the fact the May had seemingly opposed some of his reforms. Mackay 1973, 425, 470; see also FISR 1/10, 519/36.

295 Roskill 1970, 98.

296 Lambert 1995a, 35–36.

297 In Wilson's obituary, *The Times* described the late admiral as follows: "*…somewhat austere, and a man of iron constitution and stoic endurance himself, he seemed at times to have little consideration for the harmless foibles of the less robust temperaments*.", 26 May 1921, 13.

298 Bradford 1923, 223.

Admiral) H F Oliver, his naval assistant, he seems to have trusted nobody. On the other hand, Wilson has been characterized as kindly and human, not lacking in dry humour in his free time. It soon became apparent that Wilson was not a good choice. Throughout his tenure as First Sea Lord he maintained distant and formal relations with both the First Lord and the Board. His leadership style was predominantly autocratic and he disregarded the opinions of others almost totally. Second Sea Lord Admiral Francis Bridgeman had early doubts about his autocratic style as soon as Wilson took the reins at the Admiralty: he treated his fellow admiral like "*a second lieutenant on board a ship*".[299]

McKenna soon regretted his choice. Wilson proved to be very obstinate over appointments, preferring to appoint only officers he personally knew. Like Fisher, he believed that the grand strategy of the fleet should only exist in the head of the chief strategist (i.e. the First Sea Lord), and also like Fisher, he wanted to stall the introduction of a naval war staff to the RN organization. On the one hand, he was not as inactive in his strategic and tactical planning for war, especially in the North Sea, as is traditionally claimed[300]. For instance, he clearly realised that the long-used close blockade of enemy (i.e. German) ports would no longer be feasible. Wilson soon replaced Fisher's earlier war plans with more realistic alternatives when he took over.[301] He also actively considered the possibility of a German invasion of the home isles, and deemed it practically impossible[302]. On the other hand, he was primarily responsible for the unfortunate decision not to fit the new Dreadnoughts with the superior Pollen fire-control system[303], and his Board also made the fateful decision not to address known quality problems with the 12" armour-piercing (APC) shells[304]. Both of these decisions were to have profound negative repercussions regarding the ability of the Grand Fleet effectively to wage war against the German High Seas Fleet in the forthcoming conflict.

Wilson was bureaucratically minded and slow to make decisions, which frustrated many top officers who were used to Fisher's swiftness and informality.

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299 Lambert 1995b, 35–39; Roskill 1970, 98–99; Marder 1961, 211–214.

300 In his foreword to Admiral Bacon's memoirs *From 1900 Onward* (Bacon 1940, 11–14), naval author Sir Archibald Hurd goes as far as to state that had Wilson been five years younger, he would probably have successfully commanded the Grand Fleet in the 1914–1918 war.

301 Morgan-Owen 2015b, 880–884.

302 *The Times*, 17 January 1911, 10.

303 The Pollen system developed by inventor Arthur Pollen and sold to the RN by his Argo company was a long-range-gunnery fire-control system based on the use of an analogue computer to solve the equations that arise from the relative motion of engaged men-of-war and the delay in the flight of the shell to calculate the trajectory and the consequent direction and elevation of the guns. Before the war broke out the Dreyer system developed in-house competed with the Pollen system in the RN organization. There has been a historiographical debate about the relative merits of the two systems, in which the Dreyer system tends to be characterized as inferior to and plagiarized from the Pollen system. However, Brooks (2005, 292–298) demonstrated that the performance difference between the two systems was not that significant and the supposedly plagiarized elements only concerned minor details. The main problem with naval gunnery at the beginning of the war was that many capital ships, especially Beatty's battlecruisers, lacked gunnery practice in realistic settings.

304 Lambert 1995b, 39–41.

On the other hand, recent research also shows that he was much less prone to conservatism in tactical terms than has been argued. In fact, he initiated many tactical reforms that were widely tested in fleet and squadron exercises. Towards the end of his tenure he made an increasingly unfavourable impression on the CID and key politicians, and in the autumn of 1911 the PM finally decided that he had to be replaced at the Admiralty by another flag officer.[305] In fact, Haldane, Lloyd George and Churchill had strongly influenced PM Asquith's views on desirable change at the top of the Admiralty. This also involved the First Lord, as well as War Minister Haldane who thought that Wilson was a hindrance to effective inter-service collaboration. McKenna and Churchill thus swapped positions in October 1911. McKenna reluctantly left the Admiralty to become Home Secretary, and Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. Fisher wrote to his son Cecil about McKenna as follows:

> "…He has pretty nearly wrecked himself for the Navy's good!"[306]

Wilson's biographer Edward E. Bradford writes about the outcomes of Wilson's tenure as First Sea Lord as follows:

> "…Confidence and harmony had been restored; and although the policy of the previous regime was continued and the organization and distribution of the Fleet remained unchanged, the heartburnings and strife incident to it ceased at once; and there had been maintained a steady progress of the development of the material and of the training of the personnel of the Fleet."[307]

In hindsight, however, the more general outcomes of the Wilson-McKenna regime were not nearly so favourable. Both men were strongly opposed to the creation of a naval war staff, which they thought of as an army concept that was utterly unsuitable for naval use. Fisher's thinking may have influenced their opinions here.

After the Agadir Crisis of mid-1911[308], Wilson was charged with 'extraordinary apathy' with which the Admiralty was claimed to have regarded the crisis. He famously disagreed with Brigadier General (later Field Marshal) Henry Hughes Wilson of the General Staff over the appropriate grand strategy of how to react to the crisis in the historic CID meeting of 23 August 1911 (sometimes called the 'War of the Wilsons'). As Director of Military Operations, the pro-French General Wilson presented an elegantly communicated and sophisticated plan for a continental strategy, with six divisions of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the continent to help the French army fend off imminent German invasion. It was thought that the British divisions would tip the power balance in favour of the entente partners on land. At sea, the General

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305 Morgan-Owen 2017, 190–202; Morgan-Owen 2015b, 880–884.
306 Farr 2007, 216–222.
307 Bradford 1923, 228.
308 The Agadir crisis resulted from a French attempt to establish a military protectorate in Morocco, and the bellicose German reaction to this. In the new military-political situation, the British soon realized that there was a need to develop a more consistent strategy for collaborating with their allies; Morgan-Owen 2017, 196–197.

Staff of the Army primarily saw the role of the RN as protecting troop transportation to the continent and preventing a German landing on the Home Isles. General Wilson also intended to prove that the Navy could not bring a war against Germany to a victorious conclusion alone. On the other hand, Admiral Wilson could only give a crude account of the sea operations, which he communicated poorly at the meeting. The First Sea Lord obviously thought that the sea should be the only theatre of war for the British in any future conflict involving continental powers. What is more, none of what Admiral Wilson proposed (e.g. joint operations involving the army and the navy to seize or destroy strong enemy coastal fortifications) had been discussed with the army General Staff beforehand. Consequently, the First Sea Lord was immediately criticized by key decision makers for his defensive attitude and lack of credible and coordinated war plans. In the end, no grand strategy was agreed on by the increasingly divided (imperial vs. radical liberalists) Asquith Cabinet, and the debacle only increased inter-service suspicion and rivalry.[309] The old navy attitude of keeping the grand strategy in the head of the leader until war broke out and then setting the commanding admirals afloat to decide on the best ways of implementing the strategy in each situation clearly clashed with the emerging professionalism in the conducting of large-scale land operations that required machine-like precision in logistics and supply, based on extensive staff work and detailed planning[310].

Thus, a general assessment of the McKenna-Wilson regime cannot be very positive. The working relationship between the two leaders was distant at best, and Wilson's autocratic and slow-moving style did not fit well in an organization that was used to having a more dynamic personality at its head. Wilson also fit poorly in Fisher's shoes as a visionary professional head of the Senior Service. Moreover, a more dynamic approach would have been required from the First Sea Lord in an era in which the army and its General Staff were increasingly questioning the traditionally dominant position of the navy in British military strategy and expenditure. The army was taking the initiative more and more, and even crafted its own war plans without Cabinet consent. Lord Esher, courtier and grey eminence *par excellence*, recorded in his journal on 4 October 1911:

> "…we talked about the General Staff scheme of landing an army in France. The Prime Minister is opposed to this plan. He will not hear of the despatch of more than four Divisions. … I reminded him that the mere fact of the War Office plan having been worked out in detail with the French General Staff (which is the case) has certainly committed us to fight, whether the Cabinet likes it or not … It is certainly an extraordinary thing that our officers should have been permitted to arrange all the details, landing, concentration, etc., when the Cabinet have never been consulted."[311]

As the regime came to an end, both McKenna and Wilson had practically exhausted most of their political and social capital when it came to military issues. McKenna fell out with Lloyd George and Churchill, and later on even more

309 Marder 1961, 239–250; 388–395; Morgan-Owen 2017, 196–201; see also Morgan-Owen 2015b.
310 Morgan-Owen 2017, 202; see also Keegan 1993, 301–315.
311 Esher (ed.) 1938, 61.

vehemently with Haldane, but he continued in Asquith's Cabinet during the war years until Lloyd George took over as PM in 1916. Moreover, the scars of the bitter Fisher-Beresford feud started gradually to heal towards the end of 1911, and the RN organization was ready for a different kind of regime to take over. At the heart of the new regime was the mercurial young politician Winston S Churchill.

6.4 A Brief Interlude: The Churchill Regime with Bridgeman, 1911–1912

Former Second Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Admiral Sir Francis Charles Bridgeman Bridgeman[312] (1848–1929) took over as First Sea Lord on 9 December 1911[313]. As a personality, Bridgeman has been characterized as somewhat slow and cautious, but he got along well with his colleagues and subordinates. He was more of a sea commander and not a very able administrator in his Admiralty positions. On the one hand he was capable of effectively delegating authority to younger and often more able officers, a rare talent in those days, and he was also apparently a good listener and who was praised for his ability to grasp the essence of an issue. On the other hand, he lacked the confidence to express his views in the company of skilled, extrovert debaters such as Fisher and Churchill, and when pushed to make hasty decisions he tended to resort to caution or even stubbornness. He was an obvious choice to act as gatekeeper until Prince Louis of Battenberg was appointed Second Sea Lord in Churchill's Admiralty Board reshuffle. The problem immediately arose that, even if Churchill (and Fisher behind him) expected Bridgeman to act as a mere figurehead for an interim period, he did not realize this, which put him in immanent conflict with his impetuous superior, Churchill. [314]

As mentioned, the strong-willed rising young political star Winston S. Churchill (1874–1965), was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in October 1911. It was the norm that the civilian First Lord did not interfere much in professional matters at the Admiralty, especially on issues related to naval strategy and tactics. The professional members of the Board of the Admiralty, led by the First Sea Lord, traditionally carried full responsibility for these matters. Churchill turned this logic upside down, determined to be the master in his own house. Like a whirlwind, he set about reforming many Admiralty policies and ways of working in the Navy that he considered obsolete or even hazardous in terms of its ability effectively to wage war. Despite the fact that a lot of his ideas proved unsound and even dangerous, he was still able to force the RN organization to renew itself more vigorously than had been the case earlier, especially during the

312 The future admiral Francis was recorded in the early Navy Lists as Francis Charles Bridgeman-Bridgeman-Simpson. In 1896, Francis changed his surname to Bridgeman but added an extra 'Bridgeman' to his forenames. See Ross 1998, 4.
313 Ross 1998, 157–175; Lambert 1995b, 55–74.
314 Ross 1998, 141, 148, 172, 174; Lambert 1995b, 56–59.

McKenna-Wilson regime. For all of his overbearing single-mindedness, Churchill was the figure the RN needed to be better prepared for war in 1914.[315] With boundless energy he tried to familiarize himself with the most minute details of the naval profession, spending more than 200 days on the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* during the first two-and-a-half years of his tenure. He seriously considered adopting novel strategies such as war in the air, which were utterly alien to most senior RN officers of the period.[316] The increasing threat from the German Navy was naturally his first and foremost concern. He wanted a modern fleet that would be ready for war in a couple of years.[317]

Fisher's proven planning system, which had worked quite well without a formal naval staff before 1910, more or less broke down under his two arguably less charismatic and weaker-willed successors. The focus was on the Naval Intelligence Department and the new War College as expert organs effectively informing the Admiralty Board's decisions. Churchill was brought into the Admiralty charged with the task of setting up a proper Naval War Staff, but all he actually managed to do in 1912 was rename the old Naval Intelligence Department, add some administrators, and put an officer in charge with the title Chief of Staff. An Admiralty War Staff was thus formally instituted in January 1912 to cope with:

> "… the complexity of strategy, tactics, technology, communications, finance, and administration at the turn of the century required flexibility, specially trained officers, and an effective bureaucracy to attain wartime fighting efficiency".[318]

The separation of the roles of First Sea Lord and COS created an organizational problem of split authority that was not effectively solved until Churchill left the Admiralty. In fact, Churchill aggravated this problem by working directly with the newly-appointed COS, Captain Troubridge (later Vice-Admiral Ernest Troubridge, 1862–1926). His choice of the self-contained and superficial Troubridge over some more intelligent and experienced officers was a questionable decision, and Troubridge and the First Lord soon fell out.[319] In general, Churchill's habit of bypassing the First Sea Lord in many important decisions thoroughly annoyed Bridgeman. The Naval War Staff took several years to grow and mature as an organization:[320] it had fewer than 50 employees in 1912, and more than 600 by the end of WWI[321]. Churchill consulted the retired Fisher on several occasions[322], and the two men developed a seemingly cordial relationship. However, his influence on Churchill regarding key strategic matters

315 Ross 1998, 167; Gough 2017, 147-169.
316 Fisher was also an early proponent of naval aviation. As early as in 1908 the influential Fishpond member and DNO Captain Reginald Bacon suggested that the RN commission a Zeppelin-type rigid airship. This led to a discussion in the CID and, eventually, to the establishment of an Aerial Navigation Sub-Committee in 1909. See Roskill (ed.) 1969, 3-7.
317 Gilbert 1991, 239-248.
318 Grimes 2012, 171.
319 Dunn 2014, 58–63.
320 Grimes 2012, 159; Lambert 1995a, 48; Black 2009, 1–14.
321 Black 2009, 18–19. Of the latter figure, about one third were civilians.
322 Bell 2015.

such as the adoption of flotilla defence and the battlecruiser as the preferred type of capital ship was probably much weaker than suggested in some (revisionist) studies. Senior appointments both in the Admiralty and afloat were also discussed actively[323]. Churchill listened attentively to Fisher[324], but the First Lord made his own decisions, sometimes to Fisher's great exasperation[325]. This is clearly evident from Fisher's correspondence to Lord Esher at the time, for example[326].

Bridgeman's efforts to have a say in the formulation of Admiralty policy were also greatly impeded by his continuous ill health throughout 1912[327]. Second Sea Lord Prince Louis happily acted as his stand-in when Bridgeman was forced to be absent. What is more, under Churchill's instructions, the prince often took the initiative in strategic matters that would normally concern the First Sea Lord. Bridgeman resented this, and did not share Churchill's and Fisher's high opinion of Battenberg. The key strategic matters in question mainly concerned naval gunnery fire control, the construction of the new Queen Elizabeth class Super-dreadnoughts, and the setting up of the Naval War Staff in general. For instance, Prince Louis was primarily responsible for maintaining the sensitive collaboration with the General Staff of the army. The burning issue of fire control (the planned adoption of Pollen's Argo clock together with Scott's director firing system) was also given close attention. Bridgeman was actively involved in many of these issues, too, and was far from the technological reactionary his predecessor has been described as[328]. Admiral Scott describes the entire period as the 'gunnery muddle' in his biography[329]. John Brooks, in turn, in his meticulous study of Dreadnought gunnery and fire control at the battle of Jutland, discredits and proves inaccurate the revisionist claim that the Dreyer Tables eventually adopted by the RN over Pollen's innovative Argo Clock were plagiarized from the Argo system. Brooks further refutes the claims that the former would have been an absolutely wrong choice of fire control for heavy naval gunnery, and that wartime conditions would have proven this to be the case. On the contrary, Brooks attributes the defeat of the British battlecruisers' gunnery at Jutland primarily to poor training, but also to bad tactical choices,

323 Harley 2016.

324 There is abundant correspondence to Churchill from Fisher in the Churchill Archives, see e.g. CHAR 13/56–57. Recurrent themes in this correspondence include choosing the most suitable leaders, technologies and ways of working for the RN organization.

325 Bell 2015; 2011.

326 See e.g. Marder (ed.) 1956, 461–462.

327 Lambert 1995b, 58; MB1/T20 Naval papers (129–49), 1912: 144.

328 MB1/T20 Naval papers (129–49), 1912: 147 (Manuscript letter from Rear Admiral A G H W Moore to Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg on Pollen's plotting system, September 1912); MB1/T21 Naval papers (150–9), 1912–13: 151 (Interchange of officers on the Admiralty war staff and general staff of the War); MB1/T22 Naval papers (160–78), 1912: 161 (letter from Vice Admiral Sir Percy Scott to Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, November 1912); 163 (minute from Admiral Bridgeman to Winston Churchill about further experimental firings from HMS *Thunderer*, November 1912).

329 Scott 1919, 124–136; see also Dreyer 1955, 47–62.

stating that the outcome might have been even worse had British fire control depended on the Argo true-course plotter[330].

Starting the construction of the five large and fast oil-fired Queen Elizabeth class Super-Dreadnoughts with powerful 15-inch guns was probably the most important (at least it was the most expensive) naval decision made during Bridgeman's tenure as First Sea Lord. These remarkable ships served successfully in two World Wars. Battlecruiser construction was halted because most professionals thought the new fast battleships would be fit for battlecruiser duty, although Fisher thought the new ships were too slow and overly expensive.[331] Churchill chose simply to keep Bridgeman out of the loop or even uninformed on many other strategic issues, such as crafting war plans and moving capital ships from one station to another. Lower-ranking officers took care of many practical matters.[332] This was a total change from earlier policy, when the First Sea Lord led all strategy development in the RN organization. Bridgeman and some other members of the Admiralty Board tried in vain to contain Churchill's interference in professional matters in the autumn of 1912[333]. This only irritated the First Lord, who decided to get rid of Bridgeman as soon as possible. The official reason for his eventual resignation was ill-health[334]. According to Nicholas Lambert, it is impossible to judge Bridgeman's real contribution to Admiralty policy with any accuracy given the short duration of his tenure as First Sea Lord. His prospective ideas were overshadowed by Churchill's continuous torrent of initiatives.[335] All in all, by the end of the Churchill-Bridgeman regime, the strategic leadership of the RN was almost entirely in the hands of the First Lord, with a submissive Board following his orders. From an historical perspective this was a peculiar situation, but Churchill obviously thought he could master both the political and, with the help of his key advisors, the professional side of the job.

6.5 Preparing for War: the Churchill-Battenberg Regime, December 1912–October 1914

Admiral (later Admiral of the Fleet) Prince Louis of Battenberg (1854–1921, later renamed Mountbatten, the 1st Marquess of Milford Haven) succeeded Bridgeman as First Sea Lord on 7 December 1912[336]. He was a German prince of

330 Brooks 2005, 292–293.
331 MB1/T22 Naval papers (160–78), 1912: 160.
332 MB1/T22 Naval papers (160–78), 1912: 165.
333 Most of the official correspondence between Churchill and Bridgeman from this time period only concerned minor operational details, see e.g. CHAR 13/12/36, 37, 39, 40,41, 47–48, 51, 78–80, 91.
334 In Bridgeman's obituary, *The Times* describes Churchill's decision to replace Bridgeman with Prince Louis of Battenberg as 'a great disappointment to Sir Francis'; *The Times*, 19 February 1929, 19.
335 Lambert 1995b, 69–70; MB1/T22 Naval papers (160–78), 1912: 167, 169.
336 Hattendorf 1995, 78.

royal blood, albeit also a British subject because of his close family ties to the British royal family (Queen Victoria was his grandmother). Arthur Marder describes Prince Louis thus:

> "…a first-rate, all-round seaman, a born leader, an efficient, even brilliant tactician and strategist (he was not defeated in manouvres until 1912)".[337]

Prince Louis was clearly a sound naval professional, but he lacked the strength of character to confront Churchill on most matters. To Fisher, who actively commented on naval matters and communicated with key decision-makers even during his retirement, Prince Louis seemed occasionally to be so much under Churchill's spell that he referred to him as "*Winston's facile dupe*", which of course was a gross exaggeration[338]. On the other hand, despite having been an influential Fishpond member, Battenberg also developed an increasingly critical attitude towards his old patron[339]. He obviously thought the old admiral was increasingly out of touch with the realities of naval strategy and leadership. In his diplomatic way, he was able to moderate the relationship between the First Lord and the flag officers on the Admiralty Board on many occasions. The flag officers were frequently exasperated by Churchill's impulsive interference in professional matters.[340] Consequently, the main problem with a lot of the war planning in the period immediately before war broke out was the fact that the resourceful but inexperienced Churchill was able to get his way on many matters of strategic importance. Fisher's original strategic idea was to focus on an offensive inshore blockade, and amphibious operations in the North Sea where the growing Grand Fleet had gradually accumulated. Fisher also actively weighed up the chances of taking the offensive through Germany's back door, in other words the Baltic, in conjunction with Russian forces.[341] However, despite the fact that Churchill also listened actively to Fisher during the latter's interregnum period, he made many surprising and sometimes unfortunate changes to key Admiralty policies. He saw himself as a 'war lord' and his interference in Admiralty strategy became increasingly pervasive and disruptive immediately before hostilities began.[342]

The organization of the war staff, however, continued to operate with its serious structural flaws, which were not modified until 1917. Key leaders at the top deliberated on the workings of the new naval war staff immediately before the war, but no structural changes were made at the time. They thought it was up to the individuals in leading roles (such as the COS) to continuously develop better ways of working.[343] Fishpond member Vice Admiral Henry B. Jackson replaced Ernest Troubridge as COS in early 1913 after the latter had been in the

337 Marder 1961, 406–497.
338 Hough 1969, 322–323.
339 Hattendorf 1995, 77.
340 Hattendorf 1995, 79–80.
341 Grimes 2012, 107; Bell 2016, 124.
342 Grimes 2012, 175.
343 MB1/T26 Naval papers (231–40), 1913: 235.

position for only a year [344]. What is more, Vice Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee, a prominent pro-Syndicate officer, became COS in July 1914 [345]. A burning issue was that the Chief of the War Staff had no direct authority because he was not a Board member. Moreover, because the formal structure of the staff was over-centralized in that everything had to pass through the COS, and many new staff officers who lacked proper staff training were deemed unfit for their duties. A staff course was instituted at the War College in 1912, but proved slow in making progress in terms of officer training, which many prominent officers in the Service's naval education department severely criticized. Modern staff work was prevalent in the Grand Fleet only by mid-1917 through the efforts of senior War College graduates such as Beatty. One significant tactical development was the War Room/Plot system that was instituted at the Admiralty to form a coherent overall view of the strategic and tactical situation at sea.[346]

All in all, historians have tended to over-emphasize the role of the formal staff organization *per se* in the successes and failures of the Admiralty in the WWI era. In terms of real organizational learning and change, the formal staff and its ways of working could be considered a necessary but not a sufficient condition for success. The team in charge and its dynamics matter more than the formal staff organization, especially when the performance of the staff is not optimal. On this question, Fisher was probably right. However, the core belief behind the Prussian-style staff organization was that an efficient and effective staff (doing the right things in the right way) would be of great help to the top leaders of the military organization, especially if they did not happen to be military geniuses themselves [347]. Such effectiveness and efficiency were clearly lacking in the relatively untrained pre-war British naval staff until shortly before the end of the war.

The old Admiralty vision of a close or observational North Sea blockade against Germany, together with the seizure of advanced flotilla bases, had given way to the imposition of a distant blockade by 1910. The combined Home and Atlantic Fleet exercises in spring 1910 tested east-coast flotilla defence and indirectly simulated observational patrols of Germany's coast. [348] This close blockade was officially cancelled in April 1912, to be replaced with an 'intermediate blockade'. This was almost as flawed as its predecessor strategy because the RN lacked the cruisers and destroyers to maintain an observational blockade line of 300 miles across the North Sea. Excessive mining of the enemy's coast was proposed as a solution to the vagaries of both the close and the intermediate blockades. War plans and orders embodying the distant blockade

344 Dunn 2014, 62.
345 Heathcote 2002, 235.
346 Grimes 2012, 170–175.
347 Dupuy 1977, 7–11. Approximately at the time of the creation of the British naval staff in 1912 (and of a general staff for the army in 1904 and the Imperial General Staff in 1909), there was a heated public and professional debate on the merits of the Prussian-style general staff organization as a whole. See e.g. Spenser Wilkinson 1913 (earlier versions of this popular book appeared as early as in 1890 and 1895).
348 Grimes 2012, 162–164.

scenario were issued in late 1912. The main goal was to utilize Britain's geographical advantage to cut off all German shipping from oceanic trade, to secure England's coastline from invasions and raids, and to cover the transport of the BEF to fight in France.[349]

Churchill drew up several offensive strategic designs in 1913–1914, including a British 'push' with flotillas into the Heligoland Bight. However, when war broke out the RN could only muster some 140 destroyers against 200 German torpedo boats. The Operations Division of the War Staff became increasingly frustrated with Churchill's designs. The First Lord had also instituted his own pseudo planning body, led by Rear Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, which considered the possibility of seizing some North Sea islands as forward bases against Germany. The responses of the staff and C-in-C Admiral Callaghan were neither complimentary nor supportive of these designs. In the end, a distant blockade was reconfirmed as the Grand (Home) Fleet's primary strategy in July 1914, just before the outbreak of the war.[350] The strange dichotomy between cautious defensive and daring offensive schemes persisted throughout the war period, undermining the RN's strategic consistency. Thus, this problem was not specific to Churchill's reign.

According to Andrew Lambert, the apathetic and increasingly physically ill Prince Louis proved to be a disaster towards the end of his stint as First Sea Lord, especially in relation to the young and energetic but inexperienced Churchill:

> "No cabinet advised by Fisher would have made such a blundering, incompetent, disastrous response to the July Crisis".[351]

The Germans clearly did not anticipate that Britain would follow its entente partners France and Russia into a continental war, not even when the German Army violated the neutrality of Belgium. The war between Britain and Germany formally broke out on 4 August 1914. In line with his earlier intentions, and not least on the basis of the strong anti-German sentiment among the British public and the press, Churchill decided in late October 1914 to discharge German-born Prince Louis and to recall Fisher as First Sea Lord.[352] Before stepping down the prince, together with the then COS Vice Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee, made the fateful decision to send Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock's obsolete cruisers against the superior German East Asian Squadron commanded by Vice Admiral Maximilian Graf von Spee, resulting in a humiliating British defeat at Coronel near the Chilean coast on 1 November 1914. Cradock was killed and most of his ships were destroyed in the battle: it was the first full-scale naval defeat for the British in more than a century.[353]

The problems that beset Battenberg during his last months as First Sea Lord at the beginning of the war, from August until October 1914, easily overshadow

349 Buckey 2013, 249–369; Grimes 2012, 176–178.
350 Buckey 2013, 395–396; Grimes 2012, 182–189.
351 Lambert 2008, 317.
352 Hough 1984, 307.
353 Marder 1965, 101–117.

his earlier successes in 1912–1914 such as building and organizing the entire Grand Fleet and organizing the new Naval War Staff[354]. Battenberg's problems included the *Goeben* incident, in which a modern German battlecruiser operating from the Austro-Hungarian port of Pola evaded a British force in the Mediterranean and fled to Istanbul, effectively bringing the Ottomans into the war on the side of the Central Powers, the sinking of the three large and obsolete Créssy class armoured cruisers by a single German submarine in the narrow seas, and the ever-increasing submarine and mine menace, as well as the above-mentioned crushing defeat at Coronel[355].

The RN did have a taste of success in the battle of Heligoland Bight on 28 August 1914, soon after war broke out. The British battle plan was based on the observation that German light cruisers and destroyers were regularly patrolling in the Heligoland Bight of an evening. The idea was thus to send a superior force in the dark to annihilate the German destroyers as they returned from their patrols. Consequently, the Germans were taken by surprise and were overwhelmed in the ensuing battle. Although the troops fought gallantly, three German light cruisers and one torpedo boat were sunk. The German Dreadnoughts at the Jade could not join in the battle the following morning because the low tide prevented them from exiting the estuary. The battle was publicly hailed as a great victory in Britain, even if the German ships proved difficult to sink despite being heavily damaged, and the German gunnery and seamanship were deemed to be excellent. What is more, the battle revealed practical problems in the British tactical handling of the fleet, but these were not addressed immediately. [356]

Another serious issue at the beginning of the war was the fact that the RN had seriously neglected the building of a secure home base for the Grand Fleet. Its traditional main base at Scapa Flow was not fully secure against submarine attacks, and hasty measures had to be taken early on to build defences around this large natural anchorage.[357] The First Sea Lord, the professional members of the Board and the leaders of the naval war staff were specifically to blame for this catastrophic neglect. The effectiveness of the German submarines and mines was also grossly underestimated. Lacking a proper base in 1914, the Grand Fleet was taken to sea by the newly appointed C-in-C Admiral Sir John Jellicoe to make unremitting 'sea sweeps' that tired out the crews and wore out the engines. It soon became clear that the German *Hochseeflotte* (High Seas Fleet) was unwilling to challenge the Grand Fleet in a large battle of annihilation in the North Sea, and the tiresome sweeps proved unnecessary because the anti-submarine defences of the Scapa Flow base were hastily put in place.[358]

All in all, Churchill worked well with Battenberg, whom he trusted as a professional and as a good subordinate. Battenberg often acted as a moderator between the First Lord and many professionals who were frustrated with

354 Black 2009, 75–103.
355 Marder 1965, 20–30, 55–77, 64–69; Corbett 1920, 56–68.
356 Marder 1965, 50–54; Corbett 1920, 99–120; Osborne 2006.
357 Buckey 2013, 322–325; Marder 1961, 420–428.
358 Marder 1965, 64–69.

Churchill's impulsiveness and his unorthodox ways of working. Churchill listened to Battenberg, and often changed his mind as a consequence. Many major initiatives were successfully carried through during the Churchill-Battenberg regime, although and as stated above, some burning issues remained unresolved. However, it was always clear that Battenberg did not have the upper hand in dealing with his superior. A general problem with the whole regime was the *ad hoc* type of leadership style preferred by Churchill, often ignoring the line of command and expert opinion. Echoing his behaviour with Bridgeman, Churchill bypassed Battenberg on many important matters and dealt directly with the involved lower-level officers if he saw fit. On the other hand, the general atmosphere in the RN organization was no longer tainted by the warring factions: an example of this is the (many say unfortunate) appointment of Sturdee, a former Syndicate member, as COS in summer 1914. Finally, Churchill decided he needed Fisher back after the outbreak of the war and enticed the PM, the Cabinet and the reluctant King George V to agree to the old admiral's being reinstated. As mentioned, Fisher and Churchill corresponded actively throughout Fisher's interregnum.[359] Churchill did not necessarily always agree with Fisher on many strategic issues, but he was undoubtedly well informed about the man's opinions.

6.6 The Old Maverick Reinstated: The Churchill-Fisher Regime, October 1914–May 1915

Upon his somewhat unexpected reinstatement, Fisher promptly dismissed Sturdee from his position (replacing him with trusted Fishpond member Rear Admiral Sir Henry Oliver) and sent the now former COS with a strong force centred surrounding two battlecruisers (HMS *Invincible* and HMS *Inflexible*) to annihilate von Spee's force in the South Atlantic. Coronel had to be avenged and von Spee's force destroyed. Moreover, Fisher sent a third battlecruiser (HMS *Princess Royal*) to guard the Panama Canal should the German admiral attempt to enter the Atlantic via that route. Sturdee encountered von Spee's cruisers with his superior Dreadnoughts at the Falklands on 8 December 1914. He swiftly chased them down and sent most of his adversary's ships to the bottom of the ocean. Again, the British public hailed the achievement as a great victory[360]. The battlecruisers had done their planned job of mopping up and destroying raiding enemy cruisers, despite the fact that because of their inefficient gunnery most of

359 CHAR 13/2, 14–16, 21, 56–57.

360 King George V immediately congratulated Sturdee on 9 December 1914 via the Admiralty on 'your most opportune victory'. However, neither Fisher nor their Lordships (i.e. the Admiralty Board) sent an additional congratulatory telegram, which Sturdee lamented in a telegram he sent back to Their Lordships, "Admiralty congratulations not received till today."; Spencer-Cooper 2011, 140–141. Apparently, Fisher did not want to congratulate the pro-Beresford Sturdee for cleaning up a mess that he thought the ex-COS had helped to create.

their ammunition (more than 75 per cent) was expended during the chase after von Spee's ships.[361]

The German *Hochseeflotte* made a number of hit-and-run raids to the British coastal towns of Yarmouth, Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby in November 1914. The raids caused a number of civilian casualties in these coastal towns and the Admiralty was severely criticized in the media for not being able to prevent them.[362] What was not generally known at the time was that the Russians had handed over to the British a copy of the official German code book captured from a grounded German destroyer in the Gulf of Finland. The Admiralty promptly established the so-called Room 40 to decode German wireless traffic.[363] Thus, the Admiralty had known about the planned raids in advance but did not want to reveal to the enemy that it had such an ability given the limited scope of the planned German operation. The ability of the RN to decode enemy messages and to locate enemy vessels by means of wireless-source triangulation was paramount throughout the war in allowing it to counter many German naval actions. The Germans never suspected that their encryption had been compromised so early on in the war.[364]

Fisher also energetically set about reviving the wartime construction programme of the RN. After making some major changes to the upper echelons of the Admiralty, he ordered five new battlecruisers (the so-called 'Sir John Fisher's oddities', which despite much criticism served the RN well in two world wars – Fisher never intended them to last so long[365]), focused more strongly on building flotilla craft, especially destroyers, and allocated resources to the development of more effective anti-submarine equipment and measures[366]. However, the anti-submarine question was far from resolved during this period, as I demonstrate below[367].

The battle of Dogger Bank between British and German battlecruiser squadrons was fought on 24 January 1915. German battlecruiser commander Admiral Hipper suspected that British fishing trawlers were providing intelligence to the RN and decided to attack them on Dogger Bank in the middle of the North Sea. The British had learned of the planned sortie a day earlier through Room 40 and decided to dispatch a considerable force to counter the enemy. Beatty sailed from Rosyth with a force of five battlecruisers and four light cruisers. A number of cruisers and destroyers were sent from the Harwich Force as well. Beatty encountered Hipper's weaker and slower force in the morning, and the Germans immediately turned away and headed for their well defended home port. The British slowly caught up with them during a chase that lasted several hours, finally engaging them in the first long-range gunnery battle

361 Marder 1965, 118–129; Corbett 1920, 168–177; Spencer-Cooper 2011, 64–124; CHAR 13/28/68–69.
362 Corbett 1921, 21–48; CHAR 13/28/78–79, 111–112.
363 Beesly 1982.
364 Marder 1965, 132–134.
365 Harkins 2015.
366 CHAR 13/28/82–83, 86–87.
367 Arthur Marder even writes about the 'disappearance of inertia' at the Admiralty directly after Fisher's return; Marder 1965, 92–100.

between Dreadnoughts. The British disabled the obsolete armoured cruiser SMS *Blücher*, the rear German ship, but the Germans also put Beatty's flagship HMS *Lion* out of action, inflicting heavy damage. Heavy damage was also inflicted on the battlecruiser SMS *Derfflinger*, Hipper's flagship, which almost exploded due to a fire in one of its main turrets. Following a severe signalling error by Beatty's signals officer, the remaining British ships discontinued their pursuit of the fleeing enemy force to finish off the *Blücher*. The rest of the German force thus managed to escape.[368]

Unlike the British, the Germans took the lessons of the battle seriously. It had revealed flaws in the protection of the German Dreadnoughts' magazines, as well as dangerous ammunition-handling procedures[369]. The British ships had similar flaws, but very little was done at this stage. The battle of Dogger Bank was not strategically consequential in itself. Despite the fact that the Admiralty and Beatty regarded it as a failure, however, the naval victory at Dogger Bank gave British morale a big boost given that the war on land had resulted in stalemate in France and Flanders[370]. German gunnery had again turned out to be more accurate than that of the British. However, lessons about fire distribution were not learned by Beatty's battlecruisers, and similar targeting errors were made later at Jutland.

The British started to make plans for the forcing of the Dardanelles at the beginning of 1915, the idea being to knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war and to secure a shipping route from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and its ally Russia. Churchill was a staunch advocate of the Dardanelles plan, originally believing that Royal Navy would be able to force the straits alone, without a landing force to capture the strong forts and German-assisted movable artillery units defending the straits. Fisher was very much opposed to the plan, and so was Jellicoe. At the time, Fisher seriously considered the possibility of joint action with the Russians in the Baltic Sea, whereas Jellicoe did not want to weaken the strength of the Grand Fleet in the North Sea. The Secretary of State for War, Field-Marshal Herbert Kitchener, did not like the idea either. He thought that a sizable landing force would be necessary, adding that he could not spare the troops because of the difficult stalemate on the Western Front in France. Nevertheless, he was eventually persuaded to support Churchill's plan. Fisher, too, reluctantly agreed to advance the plan for naval action in the Dardanelles, but afterwards he maintained that he had never supported it, claiming that he had always believed naval action would have to be accompanied by a considerable landing force. Churchill and Fisher incessantly quarrelled throughout the campaign since its beginning in February 1915, and Fisher finally resigned on 15 May in the same year, having repeatedly threatened to do so. Churchill himself had to resign in

368 Marder 1965, 156–175; Corbett 1921, 82–102; Philbin 2014.
369 Groos (ed.) 1923, 210–211; 234–240.
370 "*Admiral Beatty's splendid victory has caused the greatest satisfaction throughout the Empire, and it is notable also that the fine quality of the British achievement is recognized in America*." *The Times*, 26 January 1915, Issue 40761, 8.

the aftermath of the quarrel and the duo was replaced in the Admiralty with the Balfour – Jackson administration, which lasted until late 1916.[371]

What was to become the Battle of Gallipoli, a 10-month battle of attrition, began in the early morning of 19 February 1915[372]. Following the failure of the main naval assault, support increased for the idea that land forces could advance around the back of the Dardanelles forts and capture Istanbul as an alternative strategy. Consequently, the Dardanelles Campaign was launched on 25 April 1915. Significant naval forces – mostly comprising obsolete Pre-dreadnoughts from both the RN and the French navies but also including newer destroyers and submarines – were dedicated to supporting the operation. The campaign put a significant strain on the resources of both the navy and the army, which were hard-pressed by the Germans on the Western Front. The RN was occupied in Gallipoli throughout the summer of 1915. This difficult operation lasted until 9 February 1916, when the last Allied forces were evacuated from the peninsula. The operation was ineffective and caused terrible carnage: it is estimated that up to 200 or 250 thousand men perished on both sides.[373] Although the original idea of opening up an additional front at the 'soft underbelly' of the Central Powers may have been strategically sound, the execution of the Dardanelles campaign was severely flawed. Army units should have been there at the very beginning, and haphazard naval attacks starting in November 1914 revealed to the Turks that an attack was imminent. Above all, collaboration and coordination between land and sea forces were seriously wanting: Fisher was pointing out these deficiencies throughout the early months of 1915. Norman Dixon, in his widely cited account of the psychology of military incompetence, presents the Gallipoli campaign as a prime example of severe paralysis in military leadership[374]. In his more recent account, Christopher M. Bell refutes many myths about the campaign, and especially about Churchill's role in it. He shows, for instance, that Churchill deliberately tried to manage the largely negative public opinion regarding his responsibility for the campaign after the war, and popular opinion did gradually shift in his favour during the two decades before the Second World War broke out. What is more, Fisher's level of support seemed to be fluctuating and inconsistent until his final definitive decision to turn against the campaign in the late spring of 1915.[375]

In general, N A M Rodger concludes that the RN entered the war totally unprepared, without any effective means of formulating or executing naval policy: Churchill's admiration

> "…for Fisher, undimmed in 1914, began to fade rapidly with closer acquaintance. By 1914 Fisher had lost none of his reputation or his popularity with the public, but his powers were declining, and the demands of war showed to least advantage a man who

371 Marder 1965, 199–329; Penn 1999, 128–239.
372 For a detailed official history of the campaign, see Aspinall-Oglander 1929; 1932.
373 Marder 1965, 329.
374 Dixon 1976, 80–81.
375 Bell 2017, 1–11.

had no use for a staff, whose strategic sense was poor, and whose tolerance for colleagues was fading fast."[376]

The rapid and surprising disappearance of both Fisher and Churchill from the leadership of the Admiralty left a significant void at the top of the organization at a very critical moment. However, as the above citation illustrates, neither of them was sorely missed in the organization of the RN after their departure. Fisher's self-important ideas about soon returning to the Admiralty with close to dictatorial powers came to nothing and show how far from the political reality the old admiral had drifted. In fact, after Fisher's famous 'New measures demand new men' letter and memorandum of 19 May 1915 to PM Asquith[377], practically everyone in power in Whitehall agreed that Fisher could no longer serve in any responsible capacity, and a message conveying the acceptance of his resignation caught up with him a few days later on 22 May while he was travelling to Scotland .[378]

In hindsight, one might say that the ageing Fisher just played his cards terribly badly (and "*…was badly advised in an influential quarter…*"[379]) in trying to become a 'Lord High Admiral' at the top of the Admiralty. The frequently expressed claim that he "*indicated signs of mental aberration*" [380] is probably an exaggeration. Fisher readily acknowledged in his immediate correspondence to his nearest collaborators that his return to any significant position in the naval administration may well be impossible, at least in the immediate future[381]. However, not until almost the end of the war did he give up hope of being recalled to the position of First Sea Lord (or some other leading role in the Admiralty) [382]. The crisis at the top of the Admiralty that started with a disagreement between Churchill and Fisher over the appropriate Dardanelles strategy on the one hand and how the fleet should be distributed and its conduct

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376 Rodger 1979, 128–129.

377 Fisher essentially set out the following demands in his letter and memorandum to the PM: 1. Mr. Churchill is not in the Cabinet and Fisher will not serve under Mr. Balfour, 2. A.K. Wilson immediately leaves the Admiralty and the C.I.D., 3. an entire new Board of Admiralty will be created (names listed in the enclosed memorandum), 4. Fisher should have complete professional charge of the war at sea, 5. The First Lord will be absolutely restricted to policy and parliamentary procedure, 6. Fisher should have the "*sole absolute authority*" for all new construction and complete control of the whole of the Civil establishments of the navy. If the six conditions were agreed to, Fisher promised "*the successful termination of the War and the total abolition of the submarine menace*". Fisher further claimed that 60 per cent of his time and energy in the past had been spent on his First Lords and he wanted to devote his future energies to the successful prosecution of the War. See Marder (ed.) 1959, 241–243.

378 Hough 1969, 344–345.

379 As Fisher states in a letter to his former naval assistant Captain Crease dated the 29th of June 1915, Marder (ed.) 1959, 265.

380 Hough 1969, 345.

381 Marder (ed.) 1959, 248–265.

382 This is evident, for instance, from his active correspondence with his loyal assistant at the B.R., Captain Thomas Crease, see e.g. FISR 1/21/1122/4; 1124/6; 1127/9; 1134/20; 1140/32. Crease, who acted as Fisher's eyes and ears in the RN organization, could be described as a Fishpond member *par excellence*.

of war controlled on the other[383] had surprisingly escalated beyond the control of either of these two strong-willed gentlemen[384]. It is also telling that PM Asquith let the crisis escalate out of all proportion at such a critical moment. This was not the first nor the last time that Asquith acted in this manner.

6.7 Lethargy in Action: the Balfour-Jackson Regime, May 1915–November 1916

When the one-time conservative Prime Minister (1902–1905) Arthur Balfour (1848–1930) replaced Churchill as First Lord, with Admiral Henry B. Jackson as First Sea Lord[385], nobody expected much from the new regime. Although a politician of repute and a brilliant mind, Balfour quickly turned the position of First Lord back into its traditional backstage role. On the other hand, Jackson, a technical expert, was not a particularly happy choice either, although perhaps the best possible one at that critical time. As a person he has been characterized as profoundly professional (an 'electrician & engineer'), but as a personality he was colourless and lacking in imagination. As Arthur Marder points out, he was lacking in all the 'three aces' of a successful admiral: leadership capability, fertile imagination (except perhaps in technical matters), and the ability to use the brains of juniors[386]. Many historians have tended to characterize the Balfour-Jackson administration at the Admiralty as lethargic and void of initiative[387]. N A M Rodger describes the duo as follows:

> "Balfour was a judicious and considerate First Lord, and has perhaps the finest mind in a government not composed of fools. Jackson was an able and sensible man, albeit prickly and withdrawn. Between them they supplied a balanced judgment which had often been lacking. Unhappily, this was at the expense of dynamism and imagination…".[388]

Most importantly, the rate at which capital ships were fitted with director-firing slowed down, and the completion dates of a great number of ships that Fisher had ordered were extended far into the future[389].

The new regime first had to wind up the disastrous Dardanelles campaign and thereafter go through a thorough investigation into the Dardanelles

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383 See e.g. the letter from the three other Sea Lords to the First Lord and the First Sea Lord, in which they specifically back Fisher in his claim that Churchill was seriously interfering in the First Sea Lord's professional conduct of naval war in 'a national crisis of the first magnitude', Marder (ed.) 1959, 234–235.

384 Gough 2017 still insists on calling them 'Titans at the Admiralty'.

385 Fisher and some other admirals had forecast that A K Wilson would be recalled as First Sea Lord, which they thought would have disastrous consequences for the Navy. However, Wilson refused the post as soon as he was asked. Marder (ed.) 1959, 243–247; Hough 1969, 344.

386 Marder 1965, 298–299.

387 Heathcote 2002, 128; Murfett 1995b, 91–92; Rodger 1979, 132.

388 Rodger 1979, 132.

389 Hamilton 2011, 237–241; Black 2009, 131–132.

commission and find reasons for the dismal failure. At the same time, the German submarine threat was increasing, as was the threat from the enemy's offensive minelaying. No effective solution to the submarine problem was found during the Balfour-Jackson regime, and merchant-shipping losses began to mount as Germany stepped up submarine construction and use. At the same time, public confidence in the RN was eroding in the face of its perceived inactivity, and there were calls for Fisher to be brought back to the Admiralty. Following his resignation, Fisher agreed to act as the chairman of the new Board of Invention and Research (BIR), overseeing many major technological innovations and improvements.[390]

The infamous battle of Jutland[391] was fought at the turn of May and June in 1916. In brief, in the largest naval engagement of the war (151 British ships against 99 German vessels), the battlecruiser fleet commanded by Beatty was able to lure the entire German High Seas Fleet into the arms of Jellicoe's Grand Fleet approaching from Scapa Flow. However, the cautious Jellicoe did not want to expose his numerically superior fleet to enemy torpedoes and mines in direct pursuit when the German Commander-in-Chief Vice Admiral Reinhard Scheer twice decided to use his well-rehearsed tactic of quickly turning away (the *Gefechtskehrtwendung*) from the approaching British force.[392] The literature on the battle of Jutland is immense, and many of its events are still contested.

It is evident that the outcome of the battle was tactically indecisive, the British losing fourteen and the Germans eleven ships. However, due to the sinking of three British battlecruisers and three older large armoured cruisers, the number of British casualties was considerably higher: 6,094 officers and ratings lost *vis-à-vis* 2,551 among the Germans. The Germans were forced to scuttle their newest and most powerful battlecruiser SMS *Lützow* during the battle. The outcome did little to change the strategic path of the RN in terms of controlling the North Sea and endorsing a distant blockade of Germany.[393]

In the aftermath of the battle, the Admiralty found several reasons for the appalling loss of so many battlecruisers and armoured cruisers. Much of the blame was attributed to insufficient armour protection, and additional belt and deck armour was soon installed in most of the remaining ships. Later historiography highlights the dangerous ammunition and cordite-handling procedures onboard as key explanations for the losses. It has also been claimed that inefficient British gunnery combined with the wrong tactical decision to use the vulnerable battlecruisers as a fast wing of the entire fleet significantly contributed to the loss of so many vessels. Finally, Beatty's leadership has been described as unnecessarily aggressive and even reckless.[394] Indeed, Beatty used his fast ships as the 'cavalry of the fleet', luring the Germans into the potentially deadly embrace of the entire Grand Fleet[395]. After the battle there was a long-

390 Marder 1965, 342–372, 378–407.
391 In Germany (just as in Finland), the battle is referred to as the battle of Skagerrak.
392 Bennett 1964; Steel and Hart 2003; Brooks 2016; Jellicoe 2016.
393 Marder 1966, 37–195.
394 Brooks 2016, 497–505; 2005, 284–287, 292–298; Lambert 1998.
395 Peeks 2015.

lasting controversy between supporters of the cautious Jellicoe on the one hand and the aggressive Beatty on the other[396]. In general, the Germans first declared (a tactical) victory but it was quickly realized that strategic victory belonged to the RN.

After Jutland the RN made sweeping changes in matériel, adopted new battle tactics and found some of its central strategic conceptions flawed. Consequently, director firing was fitted to practically all Dreadnoughts and changes were made to fire-control procedures in general to improve its accuracy. The serious problem of the poor quality of British heavy armour-piercing shells was finally tackled efficiently, and anti-flash doors and extra armour protection were fitted to the battlecruisers. Moreover, intelligence arrangements were improved, including the reorganisation of the vital Room 40 of the Admiralty. Tactically, Grand Fleet Battle Orders were revised to allow for greater flexibility and the decentralization of command in battle, and greater emphasis was put on countering torpedo attacks, deploying offensive destroyer tactics, and being able to fight at night, for example. Finally, strategy was revised to clarify the relationship between the Battle Cruiser Fleet and the battle fleet.[397] This post-Jutland reformation required a lot of energy from the RN organization, and it lasted at least until the end of 1916. Towards the end of the year the Admiralty came under incessant fire on account of the stepped-up U-boat offensive, German destroyer raids in the Channel and the worsening tactical situation in the Mediterranean. Churchill and Fisher were active commentators on the Admiralty's asserted inactivity, and the press intensified its anti-Balfour campaign. Finally, both Jackson and Balfour were forced to resign, and Jellicoe and the relatively unknown Irish politician Edward Carson (1854–1935) replaced them as First Sea Lord and First Lord, respectively. Beatty became the C-in-C of the Grand Fleet.[398]

6.8 A Calm Man at the Top: the Jellicoe Regime, November 1916–December 1917

The regime change at the Admiralty was essentially related to the sudden creation of a new Coalition Government in December 1916 when the more aggressive David Lloyd George succeeded the cautious and exhausted Herbert H. Asquith as Prime Minister. Mr. Balfour announced the "main outline" of the Admiralty changes in the House of Commons on 29 November 1916.[399] The new First Sea Lord was Admiral (later Admiral of the Fleet) John Rushworth Jellicoe,

396 Roskill 1980, 322–349; Lambert 2017.
397 Marder 1966, 260–284; Brooks 2016, 451–513.
398 Marder 1966, 308–344.
399 In addition to Jellicoe's appointment as First Sea Lord in place of Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, it was announced that Vice Admiral Sir David Beatty would assume command of the Grand Fleet in succession to Jellicoe, and that Jackson would assume the vacant position of President of the Royal Naval College; *The Times*, November 30, 1916, Issue 41338, 9.

1st Earl Jellicoe of Scapa (1859–1935), who had been Fisher's favourite to command the Grand Fleet in the event of a major war. This came about in August 1914 after the outbreak of war, and Jellicoe commanded the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916 following which, as mentioned, his cautionary actions and failure to annihilate the German High Seas Fleet were seriously criticized by the pro-Beatty faction in the RN. On the other hand, as Churchill's famous adage goes, Jellicoe was "*the only man who could lose the war in one afternoon*", and he obviously did not want to jeopardize the material supremacy of the RN with daring moves in battle. What is more, he was able to deploy his vast fleet in an exemplary manner at the height of the battle and to cross his German opponent Scheer's T twice at Jutland. [400]

Sir John Jellicoe has often been described as a calm, rational and unassuming man. He was highly appreciated by his officers and loved by the lower deck. On the other hand, he was unable to delegate and often buried himself in work that could easily have been taken care of by his staff. [401] According to Arthur Marder, Jellicoe possessed all of the 'three aces' of an excellent admiral: a gift for leadership, a fertile imagination and a creative brain, and an eagerness to make full use of the ideas of those in junior positions. Nevertheless, he may have been somewhat wanting in the 'fourth ace', namely an offensive spirit.[402] In any case, he was through and through a product of the traditional RN culture that downplayed subordinates' own initiatives. Unlike Fisher, he preferred to craft very detailed strategies and battle orders. After a tiresome stint as the C-in-C of the Grand Fleet[403] he was not entirely successful during his term as First Sea Lord. He became increasingly prone to pessimism, and in particular he could have done more, and earlier, about introducing the convoy system that eventually gradually countered the German submarine menace in 1917. All in all, he was one of the most talented and influential officers in the Fishpond, a personality who could, when necessary, present even Fisher with cold facts and effective counterarguments[404]. Donald M. Schurman writes about him as follows:

> "…In many ways he was remarkable and successful, and certainly he has been the most generally undervalued of the entente leaders during World War I".[405]

The First Lords with whom Jellicoe worked during his stint as First Sea Lord, Sir Edward Carson and Sir Eric Geddes (1875–1937), had less influence in the Admiralty than their immediate predecessors Balfour and, especially, Churchill. Carson made an ideal political chief, quickly establishing a cordial relationship with Jellicoe and the other Sea Lords while totally depending on and trusting

400 Patterson 1969, 118–124.
401 Schurman 1995, 101–112.
402 Marder 1963, 8–11.
403 C-in-C Jellicoe's deteriorating health was also noticed at the top of the Admiralty during the Churchill-Fisher regime, CHAR 13/56/12, 25.
404 Patterson 1969, 154–209; Schurman 1995, 101–112.
405 Schurman 1995, 110.

their professional opinion[406]. Newspaper magnate Lord Beaverbrook describes Carson ("the Ulster Pirate") as follows:

> "…He was one of the most interesting personalities of the war. His position in British public life was unique. As the "uncrowned king of Ulster" …he was more than a political leader. He was a man of very high intellectual attainment, his mind possessing a startling clarity …He had the talent of lightning at once upon the defects and weaknesses in the situation. This made him formidable in counsel, powerful in opposition, but a source of danger and weakness in harness."

PM Lloyd George (whom Carson called the 'Little Man') was suspicious of the strong-willed Ulster politician and did not initially allow him to join his newly formed War Cabinet[407]. The reorganization of the Admiralty Staff was the most significant administrative task undertaken by the Carson-Jellicoe regime. Among other things the First Sea Lord took on the role of COS (renamed Chief of Naval Staff).[408]

On the other hand, PM Lloyd George was gradually getting exasperated with the admirals who were strongly backed by Carson not getting to grips with the increasing U-boat menace. The Germans started an unrestricted U-boat warfare campaign at the end of 1916, and Carson was thus replaced with Geddes in 'a revolution in the Admiralty' in July 1917. Despite Lloyd George's misgivings, Jellicoe was allowed to continue. The RN gradually became more successful in introducing the mercantile convoy that eventually started producing positive results in the autumn of 1917. Lloyd George's political and public position was not yet strong enough for him to be able to sack Carson and Jellicoe simultaneously. Thus, in July 1917, Carson became a minister without portfolio and joined the War Cabinet and Geddes replaced him as the First Lord of the Admiralty. As stated, Jellicoe was allowed to continue as First Sea Lord until Christmas 1917. Carson resigned from the War Cabinet in protest against Jellicoe's blunt dismissal, which caused an outcry both in the press and in naval circles. However, his resignation was reported as if it had been over the condition of Irish affairs and not Jellicoe's dismissal.[409]

Geddes, a railway engineer, joined the Admiralty earlier that year as the first civilian Controller on the Board, an action instigated by Lloyd George[410]. From the beginning of his tenure as PM, Lloyd George was prone to interfering in military and naval matters and was strongly detested by both general and flag officers. For instance, he descended upon the Admiralty in April 1917 and took over the full reins of Government from the First Lord to immediately institute the convoy system and thereby more efficiently protect merchant vessels from German submarines. This was an unprecedented action from a PM.[411] On the

406 Marder 1969, 54–56; Stewart 1981, 108–111; Beaverbrook 1956, 144–185.
407 Beaverbrook 1956, 144–149; 160.
408 Marder 1969, 177. In his 'New measures demand new men' memorandum of 1915, Fisher already demanded that the First Sea Lord assume the duties of the COS as well, see Hough 1969, 344.
409 Beaverbrook 1956, 176–181.
410 Marder 1966, 174–176; Murphy 2012, 47.
411 Beaverbrook 1956, 154–155.

other hand Geddes, like Carson, promised not to interfere in Admiralty strategy or in other professional naval matters but – professional manager as he was – he quickly began turning around its antiquated (he called it 'amateurish') administration. He was an energetic and clever man but he did not stay in his post long enough to make his mark at the Admiralty.[412] The Admiralty was further reorganized during the latter half of 1917 and several offensive schemes demanded by the Cabinet were explored (e.g. mining, a naval air offensive and another potential Baltic offensive). As mentioned above, the convoy system was gradually improving the once devastated state of British shipping following losses to German submarines. More importantly, the unrestricted submarine warfare waged by the Germans brought the United States into the war against the Central Powers in 1917 and saw the inclusion of US Dreadnought battleships in the Grand Fleet at Scapa.

6.9 Victory under More Assertive Leadership: the Geddes-Wemyss Regime, December 1917–November 1919

Admiral (later Admiral of the Fleet) Rosslyn ('Rosy') Erskine Wemyss, 1st Baron Wester Wemyss, (1864–1933) was appointed First Sea Lord in late 1917 at the suggestion of First Lord Geddes, who just like PM Lloyd George had also grown tired of the lack of assertiveness of Jellicoe. Wemyss was first made Deputy First Sea Lord but Jellicoe refused to cede any of his core responsibilities to him.[413] Wemyss was a surprise appointment with only limited experience of command. Arthur J. Marder describes him as follows:

> "Wemyss was …regarded as a Court sailor – an officer without exceptional ability, let alone the ability to conceive brilliant strategic surprises. …an officer of good judgement and common sense… he had clear ideas as well as a will of his own. … By decentralizing and trusting his colleagues on the Board he was able to concentrate on the essentials and larger issues. Yet he maintained control."[414]

Lady Wester Wemyss later described Wemyss's appointment as First Sea Lord as one her husband

> "…had assuredly neither wished nor sought for. His desire was far more for an active command, for he loathed office work, and his response to many congratulations which poured down upon him was lukewarm indeed."[415]

Wemyss gradually drifted into the anti-Fisherite faction of the RN during his career. A predominantly hostile tone towards Fisher and many of his reforms

412 Marder 1966, 214–215.
413 The Admiralty announced as early as 7 August 1917 that it had appointed Vice Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss Second Sea Lord with his duties so rearranged so as to relieve him of administrative work connected with Fleet personnel. *The Times*, August 7, 1917, Issue 41550, 7.
414 Marder 1970, 4–5.
415 Wemyss 1935, 368.

and disciples is clearly discernible in Lady Wemyss' writings about her late husband in *The Life and Letters of Lord Wester Wemyss*.[416]

Geddes and Wemyss worked well together, and a number of organizational and personnel changes were immediately made at the Admiralty with the intention of delegating and decentralizing command to trusted officers. The staff organization was successfully revamped once again to increase efficiency and professionalism in carrying out staff functions.[417] Many former Fishpond members had to go. For instance, Admiral Bacon was relieved of his Channel command, replaced by the more aggressive Keyes. Wemyss was the most senior British armistice negotiator when Germany was forced to agree with the Allied terms at the end of 1918. The unarmed German High Seas Fleet was interned at Scapa Flow under the guns of the RN, where the Germans decided to scuttle it in summer 1919.[418] Most of the German warships were salvaged in a massive scrap-metal operation during the 1920s and the 1930s[419].

The RN faced further problems in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea during the last year of the war, the fear being that the defeated post-revolution Russia would cede its entire fleet to the Germans. Other problems concerned the joint command involving British, French and Italian naval forces in the Mediterranean, which made joint operations against the Austrian fleet in the Adriatic very difficult.[420] More importantly, the newly appointed Dover Straits barrage commander Keyes infused new life into this command, introducing, among other things, massed patrols and new deep minefields to counter German destroyer and submarine raids[421]. The RN also took a more offensive approach in laying a vast minefield ('The Northern Barrage') across the North Sea and conducting a daring and partially successful raid against Zeebrugge and Ostend harbours, which were occupied by the Germans[422]. Finally, 1918 saw the convoy system in full bloom, several different systems having been tried out in practice. All in all, the Admiralty assessment of the convoy system remained ambivalent, and even towards the end of the war there were growing anxieties about the submarine threat that was again assessed as intensifying. More efficient mines (the horned mine became available in large quantities only in late 1917) and depth charges used by escorting vessels were responsible for most of the recent sinking of U-boats. Afterwards, the Germans admitted that the submarine campaign had been effectively lost by the beginning of autumn 1918. It is worth mentioning that the new British armour-piercing shell finally became available in large quantities in 1918, painted green to distinguish it from the old defective ones. Up until then the Grand Fleet was forced to act defensively against the German surface forces. The development of this projectile was one of Britain's best-kept war secrets.[423]

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416 Wemyss 1935, e.g. 105, 185–186, 341, 369.
417 Black 2009, 214, 228–231.
418 Marder 1970, 3–5; 9–11; Heathcote 2002, 252–253.
419 George 1973.
420 Marder 1970, 20–38.
421 Marder 1970, 39–44; Aspinall-Oglander 1951, 219–221; Dunn 2017, 163–206.
422 Marder 1970, 45–76.
423 Marder 1970, 85–120.

As the war was coming to an end the so-called 'Young Turks', led by Captain (later Admiral) Herbert Richmond (then Director of Training and Staff Duties Division at the Admiralty) and Commander (later Vice-Admiral) Kenneth Dewar, vehemently criticized the overall conduct of the war on three counts: the alleged passive strategy and the failure (apart from Jutland) to meet and destroy the German surface fleet in battle; the general unpreparedness for war, especially in peacetime training and exercises; and a series of blunders in the conduct of war (such as the *Goeben* incident, the Dardanelles campaign, and the tactical blunders at Dogger Bank and Jutland). [424] However, those in the upper echelons of the RN organization did not always listen to the opinions of these gifted younger-generation officers.[425]

However, the fact remains that, after all, the RN was able to claim a significant strategic victory over the German navy. It had been able gradually to strangle the German empire into submission with its distant blockade, protect troop transportation to France and from the US, and ensure the continuation of most of Britain's maritime trade throughout the war. [426] Although the RN organization was over-centralized and its staff work was ineffective for most of the war, its senior officers performed outstandingly well and the morale of the Senior Service remained high throughout. This is in sharp contrast with what happened in Germany, where poor officer-ratings relationships and general inactivity caused a massive mutiny in the fleet in autumn 1918 that significantly contributed to the demise of the whole Empire after the armistice in November 2018[427].

Both Nicholas Black and James Goldrick point out that, despite the considerable merits in their systematic and practical problem-solving approach, the Geddes-Wemyss regime owed a lot to the early efforts of Jellicoe. What is more, with the gradual mobilization of the United States the burden of naval war

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424 Goldrick 1993, 83–102.

425 There is an interesting historiographical side-note to this alleged rift of opinions between the top leaders at the Admiralty on the one hand and the critical young turks on the other in the Hankey papers (HNKY 5/3, 10–11) at the Churchill Archive of the University of Cambridge. Naval historian Arthur J. Marder points out in a letter to the aging Lord Hankey he wrote in late 1959 what a correspondent commenting on a recent manuscript had written: "*…it surprises me you don't mention the consequences of the snobbish arrogance which was such a feature of Edwardian England, and was magnified under service conditions. They were, mostly, well-born and wealthy; and immensely sure of themselves. Such men don't listen willingly to new ideas from 'upstarts' such as Dewar or Richmond. I feel sure this had evil consequences on the speed with which the service adapted itself to the revolutionary changes then pressing on it from all sides.*" Marder then asks Hankey's "*opinion on his opinion*". Hankey promptly answers in a handwritten letter dated 12 December 1959, "*I never heard of it before…" and lists Balfour, Asquith, Haldane, McKenna, Churchill, Fisher and Prince Louis as the "leading men" of the era: "…None of them could conceivably be convicted of snobbish arrogance… It was a time when professional men would rise rapidly… If Richmond and Dewar were not always listened to the reason must be sought from elsewhere, and that is more than I can tackle today.*" Be that as it may, the above discussion between Marder and Hankey could be taken as an indication that the service culture of the RN did indeed undergo significant changes during the first two decades of the 20th century, shifting away from an elitist system towards a more meritocratic approach.

426 Marder 1970, 297–329.

427 Wolz 2015, 139–182.

was shared. Wemyss's role in the peace negotiations was pivotal, and he was able to ensure that practically all the RN's demands were met (e.g. the disarmament of Heligoland island and of the Baltic Coast, and severe restrictions on the size and type of vessels in the German navy after the war).[428]

On 3 April 1919, the Admiralty announced the promotion of both Jellicoe and Beatty to Admirals of the Fleet, in addition to the current numbers, in recognition of their distinguished services during the war. Jellicoe was to proceed to India and the Dominions on a special mission, and Beatty was to haul down his flag as C-in-C of the Grand Fleet on 7 April, when it was be announced that the Grand Fleet ceased to exist[429]. Finally, on 13 October 1919, an official announcement was made concerning the long-awaited replacement of Wemyss with Beatty as First Sea Lord[430]. Beatty's lengthy period at the helm of the Admiralty thus began. To all intents and purposes this marked the end the Fisher era in the RN, as the challenges faced by the post-WWI RN were totally different from those the organization encountered before and during the war. The RN now faced a period of rapid downsizing and restructuring in a totally changed political situation in which the British Empire was no longer the leading global actor. This era requires a leadership history of its own.

428 Black 2009, 214–237; Goldrick 1995, 113–125.
429 *The Times*, 3 April 1919, 3.
430 Wemyss was also promoted to Admiral of the Fleet, in addition to the ordinary number of (three) Admirals of the Fleet in the RN. *The Times*, October 14, 1919, Issue 42230, 12.

7 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Above I have described each First Lord-First Sea Lord regime in terms of the personalities and leadership styles of the first-lord and the first-sea-lord dyad and how they worked together, the most significant events in the history of the RN when a certain regime was in power, and the key outcomes of the period in question. I also analysed the era of a certain regime in terms of the extent to which the leaders were able effectively to induce strategic leadership and thus moderate organizational learning and change in the RN organization. As mentioned, the three attached articles set out most of the conceptual issues covered in this study, and should be read against the backdrop of the regimes and their leadership history. I take the opportunity in this final chapter to draw together the key lessons learned from the leadership history described in this Introduction and from the three articles on strategic leadership and organizational transformation in the British Royal Navy in 1904–1919. In conclusion, I acknowledge the limitations of the study and propose some avenues for future research.

I have defined strategic leadership in this study as an organization's ability to change (transformative/adaptive capacity) and to learn (absorptive capability), connected with the managerial wisdom of its leaders (in terms of their age, industry background, education, tenure, visions, leadership style, charisma and networks of contacts, for example)[431]. I further define a regime as a group of influential people in the upper echelons of an organization who are responsible for defining its strategy and leadership style for a time period during which this coalition is in power. Organizational attention is identified as an underlying concept behind strategy-making in general. It is also argued that desired organizational outcomes (i.e. the success of a chosen strategy) are a function of the quality of strategic leadership exerted by the regime in power. In other words, the quality of its strategic leadership essentially explains how a certain regime at the top of an organization is able to formulate and successfully put forward its

431 Boal and Hooijberg 2000.

strategic designs through the organizational architecture that is prevalent during a certain time period.

As I show in the above historical narrative, the quality of strategic leadership and the ability to steer the direction of the RN varied considerably across different First Lord-First Sea Lord dyads during the period under investigation. It is surprising that there was no marked difference in terms of whether the navy was at war or not: there were both effective and ineffective regimes before and during WWI, and the onset of hostilities did not necessarily mean that an effective regime was steering the organization. Nor did the distinct organizational architecture of the RN guarantee the existence of efficient governance channels that would facilitate swift adaptation to changing situations. On the contrary, the entire 'Fisher era' was a period of temporary arrangements and 'quick fixes' to provide the organization with rapid solutions to emerging challenges. Typically to a military organization of its time period, the RN tried to provide these solutions by appointing more resourceful commanders and directors to take care of the emerging problems, not usually by adapting the organization, its processes and governance channels themselves[432]. Naturally, the establishment and evolution of the naval war staff turned out to be the most significant governance-channel reconfiguration of the era. It took several years and increasing amounts of wartime naval resources to build an efficient and effective naval staff and fine-tune it as an expert organization.[433]

However, the establishment and functioning of the staff organization was not the only prerequisite for successful strategic leadership in the RN. In the end, the success or failure of organizational adaptation and change essentially hinged on the leadership capabilities of the key individuals in its upper echelons. As the three articles attached to this Introduction demonstrate, the ability effectively to form and work with teams of subordinates was a key success factor in all the well-functioning regimes at top of the RN organization. De-centralization and the ability to delegate authority – which are potentially challenging in a military organization – were key issues in the success or failure of this teamwork. As I show in the previous chapter, there were marked disparities in this regard between the different regimes. As a prime example, the McKenna-Fisher regime was in many ways ideal, efficiently using teams to solve many burning problems that emerged with the progress of 'Sir John Fisher's naval revolution'. However, the appearance of the secretive centralizer Wilson at the top of the professional naval hierarchy changed this completely almost overnight. Without a cooperative First Sea Lord, McKenna was not able to continue to work in the same way as he had with Fisher. Eventually, the Geddes-Wemyss regime also succeeded in appointing new leaders and forming effective teams.

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432 One could argue that the 'Fisher era' RN was only incrementally developing into an essentially 'modern' organization (thanks to many of Fisher's reforms and developments in the British society in general), abandoning many 'pre-modern' organizational practices such as the importance of nepotism, group heritage and fraternal cohesion, and unreflective imitation of and obedience to senior authorities, cf. Boje 1994, 439. In Mintzbergian (1979, 466–467) terms, the RN of the Fisher era could be described as a professional bureaucracy with occasional adhocratic elements.

433 Black 2009.

In sum, the historical analysis provided in this Introduction and in the attached articles highlights the following dimensions explaining the quality of strategic leadership in the regimes at the top of the RN organization: personality and leadership style, the management of organizational attention and strategic issues, and the building of management teams and networks of influence.

7.1 Personality and Leadership Style

It is evident that the personal charm and charisma of the key leaders of a regime have a very significant impact in terms of attracting, motivating and mobilizing people in an organization that is undergoing strategic change. Fisher, for instance, was a strong, traditional leader who used very direct and often overly abundant means of communication (ample personal discussions, public speeches, and written communications to various audiences and individuals). His identification with and loyalty to his followers, and his selfless recognition of other people's merits constituted the essential behavioural antecedents of the functioning Fishpond. At his best, Fisher was visionary, cooperative and charming. However, as I have also demonstrated, a once compelling personality and communication style in a strong leader may deteriorate over time, alienating a significant number of key actors. In this case it seems that Fisher's initially impressive personal traits became less attractive even to members of his Fishpond the more bitter the aging admiral grew – especially after the infamous Fisher-Beresford feud during his first stint as First Sea Lord and after his dramatic resignation from his second stint in May 1915. At his worst, Fisher was short-sighted, petty and vindictive. It thus seems that leaders have a more or less defined life-cycle in the top position depending on how well their once attractive and efficient personal traits continue to mobilize supporters. Clearly, different kinds of leaders are needed in different leadership situations and contexts. These are hardly novel conclusions on leadership from an historical perspective. However, the analysis of strategic leadership in any regime has to go beyond the individuals to study the teams and coalitions that are in power during distinct organizational eras. As stated above, distinct First Lord-First Sea Lord dyads constitute a much more fruitful unit of analysis than mere individual leaders in terms of how well they were able to develop and promote successful transformational strategies for the RN. What was the match of personalities and leadership styles in this duo? How did collaboration between the civilian head of the Admiralty and the professional leader evolve as key historical events unfolded during the era in which a certain regime was in power? The above historical narrative gives some ideas about this interesting setting, augmented by the portrayal of the leadership style and dominant ways-of-working of Fisher and some other key RN leaders in Articles I and II.

As to the most successful First Lord-First Sea Lord dyads, the McKenna-Fisher and Geddes-Wemyss regimes stand out from the others as more efficient and effective leadership formations. Both McKenna and Geddes were efficient

civilian administrators who favoured direct and ambitious exploits. Both acted in a way that left ample room for the naval leader to manoeuvre in professional matters, thereby protecting the naval apparatus from outside political intervention as much as possible. Despite the striking differences in character and demeanour between Fisher the social climber and Wemyss the aristocrat, both naval professionals proved effective in managing strategic issues on questions that were paramount in their respective eras: in Fisher's case his aim to secure his transformation scheme and in Wemyss' case his quest to secure a victory against the Central Powers in war at sea. The key individual piece in the leadership puzzle was the fact that both dyads worked extremely well together, in terms of agreeing on the most important strategic issues to put forward in the organization and in selecting the most suitable individuals to place in key leadership positions in the naval hierarchy. The glue that held the whole together was the constructive atmosphere these leaders created by example and in their interactions to get the right things done quickly and promptly. Of course, peacetime Fisher had to deal with the frequently overwhelming forces of both internal and external opposition, whereas wartime Wemyss had the easier task of leading a more harmonious and motivated organization towards hard-earned victory in the Great War. First Lords McKenna and Geddes both gave political and personal support to their First Sea Lords.

One could also identify two archetypes among the least successful regimes. The Wilson-McKenna regime failed from the start due to the fact that the two gentlemen simply could not find a way of working together. Wilson's stubborn centralization aims, his paternalistic leadership style even among the admirals on the Admiralty Board, and his reluctance to take anyone into his confidence added to the regime's predicaments. The fact that McKenna had gradually fallen out with a lot of key cabinet members including Churchill and Haldane, and no longer had the influence he enjoyed earlier did nothing to help any of this. In other words, both collaboration at the top and individual-level leadership failed in the case of this regime. Wilson may have restored the internal status quo in the RN organization after years of fierce Fisher-Beresford infighting, but he failed to create a constructive and collaborative atmosphere at the top. On the other hand, the Balfour-Jackson regime exemplified well-functioning collaboration between top leaders, and in principle both leaders were also doing their best in their spheres of influence on the practical level. However, despite the grim war situation in which the British forces found themselves both on land and at sea, a certain sense of urgency and drive was missing from the top of the Admiralty in this case. This problem further underlines the importance of creating a positive atmosphere in which the right strategic issues are swiftly identified, agreed upon and put forward for rapid implementation. Even gifted and profoundly professional individuals such as Balfour and Jackson working together as a good team may be unsuccessful if they fail to understand this. One of the main problems with the Balfour-Jackson regime could have been the groupthink[434]

[434] Janis (1972) famously identified overestimations of the group and its power and morality, close-mindedness, and pressures toward uniformity as the key symptom

among these two leaders and their key subordinates that all was going fine when they were doing their best to solve the tricky operational problems they were facing in their work at the Admiralty during the war. They did not seem to think much about strategic priorities, for example. The characteristics of the leaders and their leadership style, the core team and the situation may have caused the group-thinking to emerge and to get worse over time. This problem brings me to the burning issues that constituted the clear weak spot in the above-mentioned regime: organizational attention and strategic issue management.

7.2 Organizational Attention and the Management of Strategic Issues

This study reveals a previously unrecognized tension in strategic leadership pertaining to the relationship between organizational learning and the characteristics and modes of leadership employed by the top leaders of an organization. A key question concerns the kind of strategic issues that were put forward in the organization, and how the leaders aimed to direct sufficient organizational attention to the designs they considered strategic. At first, the energetic, charismatic and uncompromising leadership style of Sir John Fisher was pivotal in helping the RN through large-scale technological and organizational change before WWI. However, Fisher's leadership also paved the way for a succession of less charismatic and visionary leaders who fostered a top-down management culture, discouraged improvisation and blocked knowledge sharing around key strategic initiatives. What is more, Fisher's contested reform scheme drove the RN to factionalize, which meant that the visionary viewpoints of highly gifted individuals such as Admirals Scott and Jellicoe were more or less suppressed before the war. These factors contributed to the impoverished tactical learning both before the war (simulated learning) as well as after initial encounters with the enemy had taken place (accelerated learning). It would seem that the RN's inability to learn effectively from limited experience when war broke out was the unwanted side-effect of the 'Fisherite' strategic leadership, albeit it had earlier made large-scale organizational change possible.

The regime in power may have significant positive or negative effects on organizational learning processes in any organizational context. Key leaders and

groups related to the emergence of groupthink in organizations. In Janis' view, causes of groupthink included high group cohesiveness, structural faults, and the characteristics of the situational context. As one alternative to Janis' model, which is widely contested in the psychological literature, Baron (2005) proposed what is called 'a ubiquity model of groupthink', which offers a revised set of antecedents, including social identification, salient norms and low self-efficacy. The case of groupthink in the French General Staff before the defeat of 1940 may come close to what happened in the Balfour-Jackson regime: see Ahlstrom and Wang 2009. However, the main objective here is not to test or refine social theory related to groupthink as a psychological and organizational phenomenon. It would require another study explicitly to test whether and how groupthink occurred in the era of the Balfour-Jackson regime, for example.

their ideas on how to facilitate learning played a key role in enabling the RN to use long-range gunnery in its vessels more efficiently before and during the war, for instance. Many other, often overlapping strategic issues have been identified in the literature, the battlecruiser concept highlighted in Article II of the focal study being among the most salient. Others concern the use of torpedoes and mines, naval aviation, adopting the wireless in naval warfare, and the use of convoys to protect allied shipping from the German U-boat menace during the critical years of 1916–1917. The Admiralty was essentially involved in all of these strategic and tactical issues but often failed to ensure the swiftest and most efficient solution. It seems that in the case of the RN, conservative top leaders lacking in vision significantly impaired organizational learning. Thus, it is necessary to consider the entire collective of individuals who dominated each regime, such as Fisher's Fishpond members who continued and influenced his reforms long after he had stepped down from his positions of power. As the above historical narrative demonstrates, regime changes could significantly and rapidly alter situations related to strategic issue management. The Balfour-Jackson regime, for instance, allowed the pace of fitting capital ships with director firing equipment to drop considerably because they were unable to appreciate the urgency of the situation. The same applies to the similarly serious issue of defective armour-piercing shells. The regimes differed considerably in how they distributed organizational attention to distinct strategic and tactical issues and the designs related to them.

The following conclusions derive from the theoretical lessons learned related to organizational attention and the management of strategic issues. The first concerns the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders in pushing through the organizational adoption of a novel technological concept such as the battlecruiser. The RN needed a vehement character such as Sir John Fisher to institute the naval revolution that occurred before WWI broke out. Had it not been for him, the battlecruiser concept, and many other controversial designs, would probably not have become a reality. Fisher used all of his personal persuasive powers and a vast quantity of memos, letters and other correspondence to put forward his views. He was also a skilled and early user of the media and public relations to direct attention to his schemes.[435] He even convened several high-profile committees within the RN organization to endorse his strategic designs. All in all, it is strongly indicative of Fisher's superb persuasive powers that upon his return to the Admiralty in 1914–1915 he was immediately able to revive the organization's faltering interest in battlecruisers. In terms of Ocasio's[436] three varieties of managerial attention, Fisher's early actions mainly represented the traditional top-down perspective. He was also skilled in using expert committees and his trusted Fishpond members as agents to promote items on his reform agenda to ensure attentional engagement throughout the RN. On the other hand, Fisher's use of excessive force in advancing his designs created a strong countermovement, the Syndicate, which

[435] Cf. Nigam and Ocasio 2010.
[436] Ocasio 2011.

factionalized the organization and seriously hampered its transformation process. All in all, after the war it was assessed that over-centralization of decision making-authority and the resulting low levels of subordinate initiative were among of the most central flaws of the RN as an organization. This problem was not pertinent only to the regimes led by Fisher himself. The interwar reforms in the RN organization reflected an organizational culture that increasingly pursued improvement and learning.[437]

After the Fisher era there was no similar figurehead to push forward novel, potentially disruptive and often-disputed technological and organizational concepts. More technocratic, rationalist leaders were taking over. In Ocasio's terms, both Jellicoe and Beatty were able to deepen attentional engagement in many key concepts within the RN organization, efficiently combining top-down and bottom-up executive attention and vigilance[438]. All in all, the battlecruiser case reported in Article II of the focal study corroborates the distributed assemblage viewpoint on strategy processes put forward by Ocasio and Joseph, for example[439]. The main focus of attention here is the fluid and ever-changing battlecruiser concept, in other words the focal organizational schema or gestalt. A similar gestalt was formed in the organization around other strategic issues, such as the most efficient fire-control system for long-range naval gunnery and the best way to combat enemy submarines. By way of a general conclusion, therefore, it is a question of how evolving organizational schemas or gestalts emerge and moderate the process of adopting and improving (or abandoning) a novel technological and organizational concept.

The gestalt of the battlecruiser, for instance, started with the technical specifications of the ship and emerging ideas about its potential use as a revolutionary weapon of war for protecting commerce and mopping up enemy raiders. The more numerous and the more powerful the ships were, the better they became. Gradually, the gestalt behind the concept became increasingly complex and nuanced during the Anglo-German naval arms race, and essentially related to the different battlecruiser generations created by the participants. The dominant viewpoint was that the older generations of ships were becoming obsolete at an ever-accelerating pace. The media and strong public interest in naval matters[440] in both the UK and Germany intensified the overall attention to the battlecruiser gestalt. When the British ships were tested in combat and some of their features were found to be seriously wanting, the gestalt assumed more critical tones geared towards their perceived flaws in design and in operational use. Thus, the evolving battlecruiser gestalt could be argued to have strongly moderated the adoption and correction process of the ship type. After the Jutland catastrophe the decision was made to attach additional deck armour to existing battlecruisers to make them less vulnerable to plunging projectiles, for instance. However, nobody in the RN – not even Fisher – was in full charge of the whole adoption and correction process, and no systematic procedures were developed

437 Williamson 2019, 321–350.
438 Ocasio 2011.
439 Ocasio and Joseph 2005.
440 Morris 1984.

to test and develop it further. One could argue that the same logic applies to any key strategic issue the RN organization faced during the Fisher era. A trial-and-error -type of leadership prevailed.

The battlecruiser case is also a good illustration of how organizational attention evolves, especially in combining top-down and bottom-up attentional processes. Conceptually, it deepens understanding of how the leader's personality and Ocasio's three attentional processes[441] intertwine, and of the role played in this process by organizational gestalts related to an emerging technological concept. Thus, a main theoretical contribution of this study as a whole relates to the evolving schema or gestalt, for instance the battlecruiser concept as a technological innovation. The gestalt is to be seen as a key mediating organizational mechanism, the evolution of which should not be understood as an exclusively top-down or bottom-up (i.e. purely stimulus-based) process.[442] This process essentially involves the complex interplay of visionary leadership, vigilance, engagement and attentional selection, in which top-down and bottom-up inputs intertwine as the gestalt evolves.

7.3 Management Teams and Networks of Influence

As is obvious from the description of the careers and roles of the most important officers in it (Article III in the focal study), the Fishpond consisted of diverse personalities with different talents. Fisher intentionally surrounded himself with a cabal of suitable men he thought could be useful to him in realizing his plans. He clearly believed that his Fishpond, with the support of the informal and advisory service provided by the War College in Greenwich, would suffice to run the navy without a formal staff. Most of its prominent members, especially Prince Louis, were nevertheless opposed to this view and strongly advocated the creation of a staff organization, which happened in 1912.

As far as the careers and roles of members of the Fishpond were concerned, Fisher secured central positions and promotions for the men he trusted the most. However, he obviously did not have a grand master plan in terms of who was needed and where, using his instincts and gut feelings in deciding who to appoint to what position and who to dismiss. When he was in power, he usually got his way. On the other hand, in fact Fisher was far from the autocrat or tyrant his adversaries described him as. The dyadic and collective governance system in the upper echelons of the RN (the First Lord-First Sea Lord duo and the Board of Admiralty consisting of a number of civilian and naval professional members) ensured that no dictatorship could develop in Admiralty administration. Actually, the governance system of the upper echelons of the RN could be argued to exhibit more similarities to a governance system of some large international

441 Ocasio 2011.

442 Cf. the well-known 'simple rules' concept in strategy research, Davis, Eisenhardt and Bingham 2009; Bingham and Eisenhardt 2011; Bingham and Davis 2012.

corporations (with a CEO and/or a Chairman of the Board leading a professional Top Management Team)[443] than what is normally seen in military organizations, which are more often organized under the unitary power of one senior commander.

Fisher was ingenious in using committees and informal teams of experts to develop individual parts of his reform scheme. The analysis in Article III of the focal study concerning the role of the key members of the Fishpond gives strong evidence of their major and often decisive contributions to Fisher's reforms. They also adapted and further developed many parts of the original reform scheme, especially during the war. However, the general conclusion could also be drawn that, in reality, the Fishpond was far from a unified, committed community determined more or less blindly to put forward Fisher's designs. In fact, it could also be seen as a strawman or 'non-entity' created by Fisher's adversaries, a hostile press and even some later historians. As demonstrated in Article III, despite the fact that its members held some of the most important positions of power in the RN organization over the years, the Fishpond could hardly be considered a unified or even a dominant bloc within the RN organization. To have achieved any true dominance over key questions of strategic leadership it should have been much better organized, strategic in its designs, and numerous in members[444]. It is evident that Fisher never aimed to create any kind of 'network of illuminati' of his own within the RN organization; it is generally a saga told in hindsight by many contemporaries outside the direct personal sphere of the old admiral and his most loyal disciples. The personal disappointments of individual officers on matters such as promotion were easy to attribute to the existence of a network of devoted Fisherites favouring their own candidates. The question can also be raised whether any of Fisher's closest associates would even themselves have admitted to belonging to the ranks of a 'Fishpond'?

Three general conclusions about leadership in general could be drawn from this study of the Fishpond, which reflect issues that have changed little since the days of the Royal Navy of the Fisher era. First, top leaders are essentially team builders, able to find, motivate, develop and keep talent that best suits their organization. Fisher was at his best building a loyal coterie of bright and talented followers, especially at the height of the reforms during his first stint as First Sea Lord. Visionary leaders, a rare species especially in the setting of a military organization, inspire talent to flock to their cause. No other professional leader of the RN before Beatty was as capable of enthusing followership as Fisher was. It is also interesting that his most loyal and effective followers were approximately 10–20 years younger than he was. Followership also seems to have something to do with age difference. Followers need to be younger than the patron to remain respectful, but if they are considerably younger, the mind-sets, world views and ways of working are not necessarily compatible. The patron simply becomes too old (or at least too 'old-fashioned') to imbue followership.

443 Cf. e.g. Westphal and Fredrickson 2001.

444 The same applies even more saliently to the 'Syndicate'. It can be argued to never have existed as any sort of more organized group, and like the Fishpond, is more of an *ex post* creation of propagandists, the media and later storytellers.

Second, leading is about the coupling of the formal and the informal organization, often bypassing the bureaucracy created by the former. No leader can have absolute rule, and even the most autocratic ones need an informal network of people in key positions to back them up. Fisher's favouritism was obviously an attempt to establish such a network when the extant regulative institutions of the RN proved inept at providing the First Sea Lord with officers of a sufficiently high intellectual calibre. What is more, Fisher's leadership was essentially about manning and using the informal organization to achieve his desired organizational goals. Third, effective leadership styles vary across individuals, organizations and leader careers. Even top leaders tend to be inconsistent and may panic or become pessimistic under pressure. They should be at the right stage of their career path to effectively function in a certain leadership position. The longer the tenure in one leadership position, the more likely are the outcomes to deteriorate at some point. These aspects are easily observable in Fisher's personal leadership as he aged. His first stint as First Sea Lord was considerably more successful than his second one during the War. Thus, the effectiveness of a leader in a certain position tends to follow an inverted U-shaped curve. What is more, different leader characteristics and leadership styles tend to complement each other in achieving organizational change. Leader teams with diverse characteristics and backgrounds are needed to achieve better results. Diversity is hard to achieve in such teams, however, especially in a military organization in which top leaders have advanced through unitary training and a set career system. However, Fisher's favouritism and his very un-military (or at least unsoldierly) leadership style (Articles I and III) seem to have worked quite well in the RN organization, which was in the process of shedding its pre-modern ways of working but had not yet fully transformed into a modern machine bureaucracy[445] as many other military organizations of the era had done.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

The main aim of the focal study as a whole was to shed light on key leader personalities, their leadership styles and ways of cooperating with their subordinates and other collaborators, and thereby to understand the ways in which different First Lord-First Sea Lord regimes affected the transformation of the Fisher-era Royal Navy. The study is based on rich primary and secondary materials such as the letters written by key leaders and existing historical studies

[445] Armies were quicker and more prone to develop into large-scale machine bureaucracies than navies in the post-Napoleonic era of vastly increasing national mass armies; navies often developed a less rigid professional bureaucracy type of an organization. The RN of the Fisher era is an example of this kind of gradually byrocratizing professional organization. What is more, this professional bureaucracy answered to many rapid changes in its environment with adhocratic structural solutions. For a thorough discussion on the structuring of organizations, their design parameters, and alternative design types such as the machine or professional bureaucracy, see Mintzberg 1979, especially 314–379.

from different eras after the First World War. Consequently, a nuanced picture of the vagaries of strategic leadership in the RN organization emerged during the process. However, a number of interesting avenues for future research arise from some of the limitations of the focal study. As mentioned, this study was primarily limited to the inner workings of the RN organization. Naturally, the political connections of the First Lords and, for instance, the work of the Committee of Imperial Defence as a coordinating organ (replaced by the War Council after war broke out, and by other organs instituted later on by PM Lloyd George during the war[446]) have been taken into account to some extent.

It would nevertheless be interesting to study in more detail the relationships of the RN organization with different political and military actors before and during the war, and how they affected both the coordination of the entire war effort and the evolution of the strategies of the different organizations involved. As a starting point, it is evident that the five Cabinets in power in 1904–1919 (the Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith Liberal and Coalition governments, and the Lloyd George government) coordinated the military and naval strategies of Britain in highly different ways. It would also be worthwhile to investigate how these regimes in power at the top of the British Empire affected the evolution of military and naval strategy as a whole. As Allan Mallinson states in his recent study, the crafting of strategy is "*too important to be left for the generals*", and the military-strategic track record of the British in WWI is not a very sound one.[447] As the historian G. M. Trevelyan stated in his 1930s biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon, it was natural for the Germans

> "…to suppose, on the analogy of their own constitutional custom, that our naval and military authorities had an influence on policy which, in fact, they had not, outside their proper sphere of technical advice."[448]

The stream of biographies of key political leaders of the era has, for the most part, failed to shed much light on their roles in strategic leadership, especially at the intersection of civil and military authority. It would therefore be useful to delve more deeply into inter-service strategic collaboration between the army and the navy before, during and after WWI, and to study the interlocking effects of key leaders and their regimes on the functioning of the collaboration, over and above formal organs such as the CID and the War Council. It has often been claimed that this collaboration was insufficient and plagued by deep personal suspicions.

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446 After becoming PM in late 1916, Lloyd George increased the number of members of the War Cabinet from three to five. These were to be the PM, Bonar Law, Curzon, Milner and the Labour Leader Henderson. He also established the War Policy Committee (WPC) consisting of himself, Curzon, Milner and Smuts with Hankey as the secretary; in November 1917, the Supreme Allied War Council (SAWC) was established in Versailles, and during the German spring offensive of 1918, the X committee was formed as a small group (consisting of Lloyd George, CIGS Wilson and Milner, with Hankey again as the secretary) meeting outside the War Cabinet. These were clear attempts to take the strategic leadership of the war into civilian hands. See Crosby 2014, 215–233.

447 Mallinson 2016, xiii–xxiii. Originally, the notion that war was too important to be left to the generals stems from "*Le Tigre*" himself, see Clemenceau 1926.

448 Trevelyan 1937, 210–211.

David French gives a thorough account of the emergence of British strategy and war aims during the Asquith and Lloyd George governments.[449] Indeed, there is ample evidence of Field Marshal Kitchener's actions and relationships with the RN as Secretary of State for War after the war broke out[450], but almost none from the perspective of overall strategic leadership. Then again, a lot is known about Colonel Hankey's role as an inter-service strategy coordinator and grey eminence behind a lot of practical arrangements[451], but his overall role and position have perhaps not been discussed in a wider strategic and organizational context. Finally, other influential but less visible or well-known personages such as Lord Esher would deserve more attention as strategic actors at the intersection of civilian and military power.[452]

A Final Note

An important prerequisite for continued British naval success over centuries has been identified in the long and distinguished naval tradition of the Royal Navy, it's distinguished service culture. This naval tradition has been a source of constant pride and inspiration for the nation that created it. According to the findings from this study, too, over and above individual leaders, organizational strategies, structures and systems, this great intangible asset considerably contributed to the success of the RN in renewing itself and emerging as the victor from the turmoil of the First World War. Admiral Beatty pointedly expressed this ethos in a speech reported in the *Daily Telegraph* in March 1919: "*We are a sea race. We came into being by the sea; we exist by the sea; and if there is one thing that has exemplified that more than anything else it is that we still remain a sea race*."[453]

449 French 1986; 1995.
450 Cassar 2004; Faught 2016.
451 Roskill 1970.
452 Lees-Milne 1986.
453 *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 1919, 7.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Strategic Leadership and Organizational Transformation. A Leadership History of the British Royal Navy during the 'Fisher Era' 1904–1919 (Strateginen johtajuus ja organisaation muutos. Britannian kuninkaallisen laivaston johtajuushistoria 'Fisherin aikakaudella' 1904–1919)

Strateginen johtajuus on useimmiten määritelty ylimmän johdon kykynä auttaa organisaatiotaan oppimaan ja muuttumaan parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla ja oikeaan aikaan. Erityisen keskeistä taitava strateginen johtajuus on voimakkaan teknologisen tai muun ympäristön muutoksen aikana. Tämä tutkimus soveltaa keskeisiä johtajuusteoreettisia käsitteitä Britannian kuninkaallisen laivaston (the British Royal Navy) strategisen johtajuuden tarkastelemiseen aikajaksolla 1904–1919. Tätä ajanjaksoa on totuttu kutsumaan 'Fisherin aikakaudeksi', millä viitataan laivastoamiraali Sir John Arbuthnot Fisheriin (1841–1920). Fisher oli kymmenen vuotta ennen ensimmäisen maailmansodan puhkeamista alkaneen merkittävän teknologisen ja kulttuurisen organisaatiomuutoksen pääarkkitehti ja aloittaja. Kuninkaallinen laivasto jatkoi tätä organisaatiomuutosta sodan aikana opetellessaan taistelemaan sellaisilla uusilla teknologiasovelluksilla kuten Dreadnought-tyypin taistelulaivojen ja taisteluristeilijöiden pitkän kantaman tykit, sukellusveneet, torpedot tai merimiinat. Tätä kattavaa koko kuninkaallisen laivaston transformaatioprosessia on totuttu kutsumaan 'Sir John Fisherin laivastovallankumoukseksi'. Fisher ja hänen keskeisimmät upseerinsa käyttivät sujuvasti strategiaan liittyvää käsitteistöä hahmottaessaan ja viedessään eteenpäin tähän transformaatioon liittyviä osakysymyksiä kuten upseerien koulutusuudistusta tai merkittävimpien alustyyppien käyttövoiman vaihtamista hiilestä öljyyn. Näin nykyisen strategiatutkimuksen käsitteiden soveltaminen Fisherin laivastovallankumouksen analyysissä ei näyttäydy millään muotoa anakronistisena.

Tutkimuksen yleistavoite on antaa vastauksia siihen pääkysymykseen, miten organisaation johdossa oleva regiimi eli kulloinkin keskeisten vallassa olevien toimijoiden ydinjoukko vaikuttaa organisaationsa kykyyn oppia ja viedä läpi merkittäviä strategisia organisaatiomuutoksia? Tämän lisäksi tutkimukseen kuuluvat kolme artikkelia keskittyvät vastaamaan seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin: Mitkä johtajan henkilöön ja johtamistoimintaan liittyvät tekijät selittävät amiraali Fisherin onnistumista laivastovallankumouksensa läpiviennissä, erityisesti vahvan organisaation sisäisen muutosvastarinnan tapauksessa (artikkeli I)? Mitkä ovat ylimpien johtajien keskeiset ominaisuudet ja heidän käyttämänsä vaikutusmekanismit, kun he haluavat organisaationsa ottavan käyttöön radikaalisti uusia teknologioita ja niille perustuvia sovelluksia kuten ensimmäisen maailmansodan aikakauden taisteluristeilijä? Mitä tapahtuu, kun teknologia osoittautuu odotettua heikommin toimivaksi? (artikkeli II)? Mikä oli amiraali Fisherin keskeisimpien kannattajien joukon (jota kuvaamaan on usein negatiivisessa mielessä käytetty termiä 'Fishpond') rooli suhteessa kuninkaallisen laivaston virallisiin rakenteisiin Fisherin

organisaatiouudistuksen läpiviemisessä? Ketkä keskeiset laivastoupseerit kuuluivat siihen, ja miten heidän uransa kehittyivät Fisherin aloittamien uudistusten ympärillä? (artikkeli III)

Yleisesti tutkimus osoittaa, että strategisen johtajuuden laatu ja ylimmän johdon kyky ohjata organisaationsa suuntaa ja oppimista vaihteli voimakkaasti eri First Lord – First Sea Lord -johtajakaksikoiden ja heidän regiimiensä välillä riippumatta siitä, oliko organisaatio sodassa vai ei. Kuninkaallisen laivaston tuolloinen organisaatioarkkitehtuuri ei myöskään taannut riittävän tehokasta ja toimivaa hallintarakennetta mittavan organisaation muutoksen läpiviennille, vaan johtajien oli käytettävä avainhenkilöihin ja keskeisiin eteenpäin vietäviin erityiskysymyksiin perustuvaa epämuodollisempaa toimintamallia. Tutkimuksen johdanto-osiossa ja artikkeleissa esitetyt johtopäätökset tunnistavat kolme avainaluetta tässä toimintamallissa: avainjohtajien ominaisuudet ja johtamistyylit, organisaation huomion ohjaaminen keskeisimpiin strategisiin kysymyksiin sekä toimivien johtajatiimien ja vaikuttajaverkostojen rakentaminen. Eri regiimien kyky löytää toimivin malli näillä osa-alueilla vaihteli suuresti tarkastelujakson aikana.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

'FAVORITISM IS THE SECRET OF EFFICIENCY!' ADMIRAL SIR JOHN FISHER AS THE FIRST SEA LORD, 1904–1910

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“Favoritism is the Secret of Efficiency!” Admiral Sir John Fisher as the First Sea Lord, 1904-1910

Abstract

Favoritism in the organizational context is often regarded as dysfunctional and detrimental to organizational performance. On the other hand, it could function as a tacit-knowledge-based mechanism for making sure that the right people are in right positions in an organization, especially under conditions of rapid and forceful change. This study focuses on the leadership of the controversial Admiral Sir John ‘Jacky’ Fisher (1841-1920). Fisher, as the First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty, led the Royal Navy through a significant but disputed technological and organizational turnaround during the pre-WWI naval arms race between Britain and Germany. Fisher saw that he would achieve his aims essentially by appointing his favorites and cronies to key positions throughout the naval organization. The aim in this study is to highlight the most important facets of the phenomenon from a strategic-leadership perspective.

Key words: favoritism, cronyism, nepotism, strategic leadership, turnaround, the Royal Navy, Admiral Sir John Fisher

Favoritism, the supposedly unfair practice by a powerful person or a group of persons of giving jobs, positions and other favors to relatives or favorites, tends to be perceived as dysfunctional and detrimental to organizational performance. In general, it is argued that favoritism, and the related practices of cronyism and nepotism, in the appointing of people to routine jobs are likely to cause severe problems to the organization, hampering its performance at least in the long run (see e.g. Arasli, Baviz and Ekiz 2008; Khatri, Chang and Begley 2006).

On the other hand, some studies put forward a more positive view of what is generally termed favoritism: it allows leaders to ensure the functioning of the organization in situations in which it is impossible to accurately and objectively monitor and incentivize subordinate behavior and performance (Bellow 2003; Prendergast and Topel 1996). In particular, this might be the case of visionary leadership in forming well-functioning top-management teams. Favoritism may thus constitute a tacit-knowledge-based mechanism for ensuring that the right people occupy the right positions, especially in times of rapid and forceful change.

From an ethical and philosophical perspective (Cottingham 1986), this study adopts the more positive view of favoritism, nepotism and cronyism. The focus is on the leadership of the controversial Admiral Sir John 'Jacky' Fisher (1841-1920) during his first tenure as the First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty in 1904-1910[1]. Against the backdrop of the emerging Anglo-German naval arms race before the First World War, Admiral Fisher led the Royal Navy (RN) through a significant technological and organizational turnaround[2], sometimes termed Sir John Fisher's naval revolution (Lambert 1999; cf. Sumida 1989; for recent papers on different historiographical viewpoints to Fisher's 'revolution', see Bell 2016; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015). For instance, powerful new types of capital ships were introduced,

including the Dreadnought battleship and the battle cruiser. Despite problems in its conception and implementation, the turnaround proved decisive for the ability of the RN to efficiently wage war against the Germans in the forthcoming war, which Fisher foresaw (Bell 2016, 115).

In the face of staunch resistance by a traditionalist group of high-ranking officers (the so called 'Syndicate of Discontent') in the Senior Service, Fisher and his team were adamant to try to pull through a radical transformation of the RN before war broke out. For instance, hundreds of old, obsolete vessels were scrapped, and their crews were transferred to modern ships. Admiral Fisher saw the appointment of his favorites and cronies (i.e. the members of 'the Fishpond') to key positions throughout the naval organization as one of the most central prerequisite to be able to realize his aims in the turnaround process[3]. What is more, Sir John was also efficient in mobilizing a wide societal network to support his cause, ranging from King Edward VII to key journalists and politicians. He has been credited with coining the phrase: "*Favoritism is the secret of efficiency!*". According to Fisher's memoirs, it was a phrase that was often used by his early commander, Admiral Sir James Hope, under whom he served in the Far East as a young officer (Fisher 1920, 29). Fisher's own leadership ideology was thus essentially based on the use of favoritism to achieve his (often-contested) aims. In recent scholarship, the so-called post-revisionist historians essentially make the same argument: 'the Fisher revolution' was less about an 'out-dated single-personality-driven-approach' and more about the complex administration of the Admiralty, in which Fisher and his disciples were able to overcome resistance to several important but most-often essentially evolutionary reforms with varying degrees of success (Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015, 939).

Consequently, the objective of this study is to offer an historical analysis of Admiral Fisher's favoritism during the naval revolution of 1904-1910 that will highlight the most important facets of the phenomenon from a strategic-leadership perspective.

Favoritism from an Organizational Perspective

Several studies in the fields of organization research and the social sciences in general report the negative effects of the related phenomena *favoritism*, *cronyism* and *nepotism* on job satisfaction and job stress, claiming it as a problem for human resource management (Khatri and Chang 2003, 289-303). Many of these studies were conducted outside the Western context in cultural spheres with especially strong traditions of favoritism and nepotism. A key result is that the non-favored members of the personnel gradually started to exhibit long-term attitudinal and motivational problems (e.g. job and organizational dissatisfaction and stress, leading to absenteeism and high employee turnover), resulting in declining personal and organizational performance.

Many governmental and other organizations have historically instituted more or less strict anti-nepotism policies (e.g. the US federal government in the late 19th century), aimed at curbing the power of superiors in the subjective evaluation and promotion of their subordinates. In the most extreme cases, favoritism is considered almost equal to bribery (Loewe, Blume and Speer 2008).

On the other hand, some recent approaches to favoritism are characterized by a more positive viewpoint. For instance, Bellow (2003,11) argues for a 'new nepotism', as is evident in politics, business, and all professional life, when leaders effectively seek to promote their

merited offspring or favorites to positions of power and influence. The author further posits that because nepotism is rooted in our biological nature, it should be dealt with openly, and treated as a leadership and organizational capability that can be practiced well or grossly mismanaged.

On a philosophical level, Cottingham (1986, 357) makes the case that favoritism in human behavior is, in fact, inevitable and even desirable. Impartiality in different decision situations is deemed practically impossible, or even immoral – and against human nature. What is more, whereas impartiality and relative objectivity may be recommendable in many organizational situations, at least in the case of routine jobs and lower-level positions (not least because most employees would probably naturally expect that from their employer), what takes place in the upper echelons may be drastically different. It has been established in strategy research that CEOs tend to hand pick their top-management teams to match their personality and leadership style (Peterson, Smith, Martorana and Owens 2003; Rotemberg and Saloner 1993).

Favoritism is often defined in the literature as favoring a person not on the basis of merit but because he or she belongs to a favored group, or solely on the grounds of the personal likes and dislikes of the superior. Cronyism, in turn, is a specific form of favoritism, referring to partiality towards friends and close associates. Finally, nepotism is traditionally defined as "the bestowal of patronage by reason of relationship regardless of merit" (Simon, Clark and Tifft 1966, 344-358). In this study, however, favoritism generally refers to the favoring by superiors of certain subordinates in their appointment (and potentially compensation) decisions that are based on their personal preferences for and (often tacit) knowledge about such persons.

It is traditionally assumed in the literature on organizational psychology that organizations overcome favoritism and nepotistic impulses through the use of systematized, science-based practices (e.g. 'objective' selection and appointment or 'talent management' schemes, incentive formation and reward systems), and not so much through direct anti-nepotism measures *per se*. However, most extant studies seem to indicate – in line with most of the relevant literature in economics – that these practices seem to be rather ineffective in their every-day application in organizations (Kwon 2003). What are the potential alternatives to systematic, scientific selection? 'Random hiring' has been proposed in the literature, but it is evident that rather than hiring randomly, organizational decision makers have long relied on nepotistic approaches. What is more, nepotistic practices also may involve the transfer of human capital from one generation to the next (Jones, Stout, Harder, Levine, Levine and Sanchez 2008).

Furthermore, as Khatri and Tsang (2003) argue, cronyism and favoritism are often seen in terms of an in-group (vs. out-group) organizational bias. The authors found that if there is cronyism inside an organization, in-group members tend to exhibit high job satisfaction, low organizational commitment, a high morale but lower productivity; all these outputs measuring low among out-group members. This division was highly visible in Sir John Fisher's naval revolution, which created a resistance movement ('the Syndicate of Discontent') on the upper echelons of the RN (see e.g. McLay 2015; Freeman 2009).

The present study examines favoritism more generally, however, as a strategy employed by a leader to staff an organization as effectively and as efficiently (on a subjective level) as possible in a major turnaround situation, based on a superior's judgment (mainly tacit knowledge) of a subordinate or a group of subordinates. A further focus is placed on the use

of favorite networks in handling the demanding turnaround situation and overcoming organizational resistance. In its historical approach to how Admiral Fisher created and appropriated the Fishpond within and beyond the RN during his most important reforms in 1904-1910, this study comes close to Dieleman and Sachs' (2008) co-evolutionary analysis of how entrepreneurs (corporations) can merge into crony regimes (institutions) to fulfill their own strategic objectives.

The Research Site, the Aims and the Materials

As stated, this study concentrates on a critical sub-period of the Anglo-German naval arms race (see e.g. Seligmann, Nägler and Epkenhans 2015; Padfield, 2013) at the beginning of the 20th century. The race ended when WWI broke out in August 1914[4]. The Allied forces of Britain, France and the US eventually emerged victorious from the prolonged war in November 1918. The Royal Navy had successfully endorsed a distance blockade of the German Empire and its seaborne imports and exports throughout the war, helping to force it into submission. The German surface navy and merchant ships were practically blocked to remain in their harbors.

Having routed the German Imperial Navy in its continued and occasionally threateningly successful efforts to wage unrestricted submarine warfare against Allied shipping in 1916-1918, the RN escorted the practically intact and undefeated German surface fleet (die Hochseeflotte/the High Seas Fleet) to internment at Scapa Flow. The Germans decided to scuttle their ships there in the summer of 1919 (van der Vat 1982). On the whole, it could be argued that the large modern surface fleet of more than 20 dreadnought battleships and battle

cruisers proved to be a huge strategic misinvestment from the German point of view[5]. It did little to help the German Empire in realizing its war aims (Wolz 2013; Simsa 2012).

The success of the RN in WWI can be primarily attributed to its significant re-organization and technological progressiveness immediately before war broke out. The RN was in an arcane state at the beginning of the 20th century, and its strategy and organization had changed little since Admiral Nelson's days more than 80 years previously (Freeman 2009; Gordon 1996). Naval technology was evolving rapidly, however, making the RN increasingly obsolete as a fighting machine. A key architect behind the turnaround of the RN was Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Arbuthnot 'Jacky' Fisher, the First Baron of Kilverstone. The current study focuses on Fisher's first tenure as First Sea Lord from October 1904 until January 2010, during which the major turnaround efforts of the RN were made or initiated (Lambert 1999, 97-195). Fisher was summoned back to the Admiralty by Winston Churchill after the war broke out in 1914, but due to the unsuccessful Dardanelles campaign, he resigned in May 1915. However, many writers have described Fisher's first term as the First Sea Lord as the most important phase in the career of the Admiral (Bell 2012; Mackay 1973).

Within the British Admiralty, the First Sea Lord[6] was the admiral who directed all strategic, tactical and organizational RN matters, assisted by three subordinate Sea Lords, who were also flag officers (Grimes 2012, 7-40). Fisher had been the Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty in 1902-1904, in charge of personnel matters, and during his tenure he had already initiated a challenging reform of officer recruitment and training in the RN (the so-called Selborne scheme, see Johnson 2014). He had also served three years as the Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy, and was marked by decades of success at sea duty before embarking

on his administrative career, which included commanding the British Mediterranean Fleet (Kemp 1960, xiv-xv).

The First Sea Lord was – at least formally - subordinate to a civilian First Lord of the Admiralty, and Fisher worked with an additional number of influential people during his two tenures. Among them was the Earl of Selborne, who as the First Sea Lord in 1900-1905 originally brought Fisher in as the Second Sea Lord after having been captivated by his arguments about the need for considerable naval reforms in the navy, and had him appointed First Sea Lord in October 1904. Fisher also worked with the Earl of Cawdor (1905), Lord Tweedmouth (1905-1908, overseeing the biggest organizational and technological reforms), Reginald McKenna (1908-1911, collaborating with Fisher at the height of the British naval construction program, and whom Fisher himself appreciated the most), and finally and most famously with Winston Churchill during the war (in the office of the First Lord 1911-1915) [7] (Kemp 1960, xv-xvi).

Fisher's personal history and perplexing character are chronicled vividly in many books and biographies (e.g. Hough 1969; Mackay 1972) and in two autobiographies (Fisher 1919; 1920). He was of the middle class, born in Ceylon in 1841, and joined the Royal Navy at the age of thirteen. With his intelligence, perseverance and eye for strategy, he quickly rose through the ranks, reaching the flag officer rank of rear admiral in 1890.

> "He was immensely popular on the lower deck, and an electric inspiration to the younger officers, who applauded his unconventional outlook. It was the beginning of the 'Fishpond'" (Kemp 1960, xiv).

Fisher was talented in captivating the imaginations of people from all walks of life. He was tireless in sending letters and memos in all directions in order to advance his cause. Together with personal discussions and the appointment of relatively independent committees of

subordinates to realize special tasks, this is how he primarily mobilized his Fishpond. His communications were filled with exclamation marks, italics and humorous acknowledgements, such as “yours ‘till the Hell freezes” and “yours ‘till the charcoal sprouts” (he even claims to have coined the abbreviation O.M.G. – Oh My God, see Fisher 1920, 78). Albeit largely forgotten by the general public today, he was a visible public figure in his time, when admirals held the position of celebrities in the public eye (Morris 1995, 15-16).

The Fishpond itself was a diverse collection of senior and junior officers both on land and at sea and civil servants within the naval organization. Fisher was also talented in recruiting a great number of ‘affiliate’ members into his personal network from different social strata of the British Empire, whom he deemed useful for his undertakings. These ranged from King Edward VII (his successor King George V was not as enchanted with Fisher as his father, but had much less political influence [Rose 1983, 71-73]) to key politicians, industrialists and representatives of the media.

The focus of this article is specifically on Fisher’s use of favoritism in initiating the massive technological and organizational turnaround in the RN, which he saw as his great strategic mission. Here, strategic leadership refers in its broadest sense to the strategic vision and wisdom of the leader(s) of an organization, coupled with the opportune taking of measures to promote learning and change so as to keep up with a dynamic internal and external environment (Boal and Hooijberg 2000; Ireland and Hitt 2005). Favoritism, in this special case, to be more specific, means the leader’s ability to identify and place the right people in the right positions within the organization and its immediate network of external actors, so as to facilitate or influence the actualization of desired change. Fisher clearly did not believe in formal assessment systems (especially the ones that existed in the RN at the time), as he

strongly trusted the intuition of the leader in making the best possible selections (Fisher 1919, 244).

Fisher's well-documented personality and his leadership style lend themselves to theoretical scrutiny aimed at identifying the personal and behavioral aspects or 'facets' of exercising (positive) favoritism. Fisher naturally could not have achieved his 'revolution' alone (Marder 1956, 36-37; see also Bell 2012), and the Fishpond, briefly described in the following section, was an essential tool in the turnaround process.

However, it has to be borne in mind that Fisher was a deeply disputed character in his time, even immediately following the victorious Great War (Lambert 1999, 7-8). This has evoked a lively historiographical debate as to his goals and achievements as a leader (Bell 2016; Bell 2015; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015; Bell 2013; Cobb 2013; Bell 2012; Lambert 2012; Grimes 2012; Sumida 2000). Unlike other celebrity admirals of the era such as Sir John Jellicoe and Sir David Beatty, Fisher never fought his great battles with the enemy at sea, but rather from his office at the Admiralty. At the height of the reform process, a major dispute ('the Great Edwardian Naval Feud') arose between him and supporters of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, another powerful figure in the RN (Freeman 2009, xi-xii, McLay 2015). In addition to mismanaging the navy, Fisher "…was accused of nepotism, vengefulness, warmongering and hubris" (Morris 1995, 15).

With difficulty (and with the help of his friend and supporter King Edward VII), Fisher emerged victorious from the dispute, which had seriously divided the officers of the RN between two opposing camps. Perhaps it is the fierce opposition Fisher's leadership methods provoked in the naval organization that makes the case of favoritism presented in this paper

even more interesting. He retired from his office in January 1910, having been elevated to the peerage moments before.

As mentioned, there has been an ongoing debate among naval historians as to how central and successful Fisher was in leading the naval revolution and how much of a revolution it constituted in the first place (Bell 2016; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015). The leading authority of the so called ortohodox school of naval history, Arthur J. Marder, entitled his massive five-volume work a history of "the RN in the Fisher era 1904-1919" (Marder 1961; 1963; 1966; 1969; 1970). However, revisionist scholars later challenged Marder's conclusions on the nature of the turnaround. In particular, Fisher's effectiveness in instituting a thorough turnaround was questioned, and attention was drawn to his underlying agendas (Sumida 1989; also Sumida 2000). The 'secret' plans put under scrutiny have included, among other issues, the strategic role of the battle cruiser instead of the battleship, the use of 'flotilla defense' to defend the home isles and the 'technical-tactical synthesis' to use middle range gunnery in combat (Seligmann 2015).

What is more, the revisionist claim essentially stated that when Fisher and his disciples saw many of the hidden plans proven unsuccessful, they deliberately weeded documentary material from Admiralty archives to obscure their mere existence. It has also been suggested that significant amount of the official material was in fact originally written propagandistically to conceal Fisher's true intentions (Seligmann 2015, 968-971). Nicholas Lambert puts forward a well-known revisionist view that is centered around Fisher's personality and (often controversial or even negative) influence on the reforms undertaken in his name in the naval context of the early 20th century (Lambert 1999; Lambert 2012). Eventually, the post-revisionist or evolutionary scholars essentially strived towards a more

nuanced view between the different camps. Essentially, the naval revolution revolved around the larger-than-life figure of Fisher, but the orthodox wisdom that the RN was a deeply reactionary organization that had been (or even could have been) single-handedly reformed has not been accepted at face value. Many of the reforms were evolutionary rather than revolutionary in nature, and had been initiated before Fisher's appearance on the scene at the Admiralty. Furthermore, Fisher's possible hidden agendas underpinning his reforms are to be seen as intricately intertwined with the bureaucratic machinery of the highly divided RN of the era (Selingmann and Morgan-Owen 2015; Seligmann 2015; Bell 2015; Cobb 2013; Grimes 2012). The debate continues.

However, the particularities of the diverse historiographical viewpoints notwithstanding, the Fisher case is essentially about one man's determination to have his way in implementing his vision simply to get things done. This allows an analysis of the potential advantages of favoritism in forcing the occurrence of major changes in an organization that was exceedingly change-averse, and of the disadvantages in alienating many figures who are relegated to the 'out' group[8].

The research question addressed in the focal study is as follows: What personal and behavioral aspects or facets of Admiral Fisher's strategic leadership can be identified in his mission of reforming the Royal Navy in 1904-1910? In other words, what were Fisher's personal characteristics, and how was he able to capitalize on his 'Fishpond', especially while facing the fierce opposition to his reforms that arose from within the RN?

Finally, the Fisher case is interesting because it lends itself to meticulous scrutiny and after-the-fact theorization, having been so ardently documented by a number of notable biographers

and historians (in addition to the above-mentioned works by Marder, Sumida and Lambert, most notably, see Bacon 1929a, 1929b; Hough 1969 and Mackay 1973). What is more, there is an abundance of published and commented primary material (such as letters, documents, and memos about the personal and professional life of Sir John Fisher) that date to the period analyzed in this study (see Kemp 1960; 1964 for the official Admiralty papers, and Marder 1956 for the admiral's personal papers). Finally, Fisher's own *Memoirs and Records* were essential in forming an interpretation of how the Admiral himself saw the issues under scrutiny (Fisher 1919, 1920). The analysis of the materials followed the traditional realist perspective to historical research focused on source triangulation and criticism (Vaara and Lamberg 2016).

Admiral Fisher's Reforms

No powerful enemy had seriously challenged the Royal Navy of the 19th and early 20th centuries since the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and British men-of-war had successfully enforced *Pax Britannica* worldwide throughout the 1800s. The same period also witnessed the peaceful transformation from the age of sail and large wooden ships of the line to the age of steam-powered ironclads. With a few exceptions, the RN and the large British shipyards were leading the rapid technological developments in shipbuilding and armaments (Gordon 1996, 155-339).

At the dawn of the 20th century, the dominant strategic doctrine of the RN – as of all significant navies of the time – was the Mahanian idea of a fleet consisting mainly of large capital ships (i.e. battleships) deliberately seeking to engage the enemy fleet in a decisive battle of annihilation[9]. The strategy was named after the notable US naval historian Admiral

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), who popularized the idea in his influential book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783,* in which he analyzed the evolution and tactics of the RN in its historical context (Mahan 1988/1890). However, at the beginning of the 20th century, many observers claimed that the RN had fallen into what could be characterized as 'nostalgic lethargy'. For example, more effort was typically put into the impeccable paintwork on the vessels than to gunnery practice. Obsolete vessels were maintained in far-flung, often strategically unnecessary foreign stations. The organizational culture was rigid and authoritarian, and officers were claimed to lack initiative. The RN as an organization had, in many ways, become a prisoner of its own glorious past. (Gordon 1996, 155-192)

When Fisher became the First Sea Lord in October 1904, he immediately launched a sizable reform scheme for the RN as a whole. He and his disciples thought of the RN as a paralyzed organization unable to cope with the rapid progress in naval technology. From the very beginning his reforms encountered staunch resistance from the more conservative and conventionalist ranks of the RN. However, Fisher was adamant that his scheme be adopted as a whole:

> "…it will be obvious then that the whole of this business is a regular case of "the house that Jack built", for one thing follows on another, **they are all interlaced and interdependent**! That's why it was said to begin with:- **The Scheme! The whole Scheme!! And nothing but the Scheme!!!**" (Fisher 1920, 137).

The Scheme

Fisher's original scheme reported by many of the early scholars of reforms essentially comprised the following elements: (1) a novel distribution of the Fleet; (2) an emphasis on future types of fighting vessels (especially the new Dreadnought type of battleship, the battle cruiser, torpedo craft and the submarine); (3) the introduction of the nucleus-crew system for

ships in reserve; (4) the withdrawal and scrapping of out-of-date vessels, especially from foreign stations; (5) the overhaul of stations and new ways of defending naval ports; (6) further personnel reforms (especially in recruitment, training, promotions and pay); (7) revision of the navy's strategic and tactical doctrine (from the signals in use to the adoption of wireless telegraphy). What is more, (8) the navy dockyards were to be substantially reorganized. (Bacon 1929a, 1-28; Kemp 1960, 9-11).

First of all, Fisher wanted the RN to be ready for a potential conflict with the growing German High Seas Fleet[10]. During his first tenure as First Sea Lord, Germany started a rapid shipbuilding program that led to yet another great 'naval scare' in the UK, which was partially boosted by the scandal-seeking British press in 1909. Relatively early on, however, Fisher noted in a memo: "The only thing in the world that England has to fear is Germany and none else" (Fisher 1919, 17). Thus, to counter the German threat of landing a sizable army in the UK, Fisher wanted to concentrate all available modern ships to home waters, especially the North Sea and the Channel. For Germany as a continental power, a large high-seas fleet was essentially a 'luxury fleet' – as Churchill as the First Lord of the Admiralty termed it in his famous speech in February 1912. In contrast, as far as the British Empire was concerned, the existence of a strong navy was akin to survival in meaning. (Herwig 1980, 5)

However, there is ongoing debate between the revisionist and evolutionary scholars as to how Fisher actually intended to defend the home isles. The classical revisionist claim was that Fisher actually wanted to rely much more on 'flotilla defense', i.e. the use of inexpensive mines, submarines and destroyers, than what is presented in the orthodox accounts emphasizing the creation of what later became the Grand Fleet of dreadnought battleships (e.g. Lambert 1995). The evolutionary claim is that there actually was no clear strategy in this

respect, and Fisher's team was not able to turn the dreadnought-dominated home defense strategy significantly towards flotilla defense (Seligmann 2015). The outcome – the Grand Fleet protected by cruisers and destroyers, has thus been seen as a sort of a compromise that emerged during Churchill's term as the First Lord of the Admiralty, in which Fisher's influence was far less pronounced than argued by the revisionist scholars (Bell 2015).

Second, Fisher undeniably pushed forward new types of fighting vessels. HMS Dreadnought[11] was launched in 1906. It was a revolutionary, all-big-gun battleship with ten 12-inch guns, heavily armored, and could travel at speeds exceeding 20 knots with its Parsons steam turbine engines. The commissioning of HMS Dreadnought also brought about a mental revolution in naval warfare: all older battleships were termed 'pre-dreadnoughts' or '5-minute battleships', because they were considered technologically so inferior to the new type. Yet, no knowledge existed in terms of how the novel vessels were to be utilized in case of war, which meant that new naval tactics and technologies had to be developed, most importantly in the fire control of naval gunnery (Brooks 2005, 1-18; also Sumida 1989, 71-110). What is more, some officers criticized Fisher when HMS Dreadnought was launched on the grounds that with the advent of that one ship he had relinquished British naval pre-dreadnought supremacy. However, Fisher was convinced that Britain could out-build any rival nation – which it did. (Kemp 1960, 300-389)

In addition to the above-mentioned flotilla defense debate, some revisionist scholars have advocated the so-called 'technical-tactical synthesis' (Sumida 2005). It has been argued that a 'hidden' tactical principle of the British existed, involving - instead of long range gunnery - steaming directly towards the enemy with the goal of unleashing a devastating cannonade at middle range, before quickly turning away to avoid torpedoes. Evolutionary scholars have

questioned the mere existence of such a policy (Seligmann 2015, 978). What is more, another well-known revisionist claim is that Fisher actually wanted to focus his construction strategy on fast and lightly armored all-big gun battle cruisers that would be able to patrol the supply lines of the Empire against enemy raiders, making home defense primarily dependent on flotilla and not on battleships (Lambert 1995; Sumida 1989).

The advent of the dreadnought class of capital ships led to an unprecedented – and financially burdensome – naval arms race between Britain and Germany. Britain built 33 dreadnought battleships or battle cruisers in 1906-1914 against Germany's 24. Moreover, British dreadnought construction accelerated during the war, an additional 18 capital ships being commissioned in 1914-1918 against Germany's six. Meanwhile, both navies acquired a sizable cruiser, destroyer (WWI-era destroyers were called torpedo boats in Germany) and submarine force. (Padfield 2013; Marder 1961, 439-442) As stated, Fisher was an early proponent of the submarine and the torpedo, which meant going against the dominant Mahanian preference for large fleets of capital ships. Fisher was ahead of his time in seeing the potential vulnerability of these gigantic ships to torpedoes, mines and, later, aircraft attacks. Fisher also was an early supporter of oil as fuel to replace coal and thus to get rid of the laborious coaling of vessels. (Lambert 1999, 199-234)

Thus, the initial dreadnought battle fleet that later developed into the Grand Fleet of WWI was a compromise between the more radical and conservative views within the RN (Seligmann 2015). As stated, the fleet had a large number of capital ships but was supported and screened by a large cruiser, destroyer and submarine force. Furthermore, the public was so fixated on the idea of a large fleet of great battleships that it was impossible to abandon it

as a concept. (Lambert 1999, 38-72) The same navalist idea of building large modern surface fleets dominated the public opinion in many other nations as well.

Third, the introduction of the nucleus crew system meant that ships in the Fleet Reserve were now always manned with sufficient numbers to keep them in condition and ready for service within a short period of time. Fourth, Fisher called home and scrapped literarily hundreds of older vessels with little or no fighting value. In doing so he was both able to save a lot of money for the RN to build modern vessels and to release officers and ratings to man the new ships. Again, he was criticized for reducing the number of British warships deployed throughout the Empire, 'showing the flag'. Fifth, in a further effort to save money he planned changes in the number, location and defense of RN stations all around the Empire. (Kemp 1960, xvii-xxi)

Sixth, Fisher made further revisions in personnel practices. During his career as a captain and a fleet commander he was genuinely interested in the welfare of those on the lower deck. He initiated reforms, in pay, uniforms, meals, and disciplinary procedures, for instance. He was also keen on recruiting more able men to become navy officers from the middle and even the working classes, capitalizing more efficiently on the talent pool of the entire nation. What is more, promotions would be made increasingly on the basis of ability and merit rather than seniority or class background. A Naval War College was established in Portsmouth to make personnel training more systematic and efficient. (Bacon 1929a, 10-18)

Seventh, Fisher wanted to revamp the strategic and tactical training of officers on the higher organizational levels: captains and flag officers. In particular, he intended to emphasize the tactical handling of squadron against squadron, which required constant practice under all

conditions. He also wanted more focus to be put on efficient long-distance gunnery and the use of the torpedo. Decentralization from the Admiralty was to be effected to as broad a reach as possible. Furthermore, the navy was to drastically renew its communications, moving from the more traditional signaling with flags to wireless telegraphy, which was to be adopted everywhere. (Kemp 1960, xix) Even his opponent Beresford commended Fisher on having started these practical reforms already during times of peace (Freeman 2009, 51).

Finally, in addition to dealing with issues related to the Navy and the wellbeing and comfort of its personnel, Fisher also drastically overhauled the Navy's Dockyards. He emphasized longer-term contracts with private shipbuilders and contractors, shifting important technological and standards development increasingly towards the private sector. However, he was adamant that no corporation be granted a sustained monopoly over extensive periods of time in any major area of ship design and construction. He also emphasized that the specialization and standardization should quickly lead to considerably more rapid shipbuilding – eventually the Dreadnought was built in a year, whereas older battleships had typically taken two or three years. (Bacon 1929a, 8-9)

What is more, Fisher actually managed to save millions of pounds in the navy estimates every year during his first term as the First Sea Lord (Kemp 1960, xvi). After his retirement in 1910/1911, his successors continued the large capital ship-construction program due to pressures from the Anglo-German naval arms race (Bell 2015; 2012). This program saved the RN from attack by the growing German High Seas Fleet in WWI. British superiority in dreadnoughts was so overwhelming and grew significantly during the War that the Germans never dared to consciously attempt to openly challenge the Grand Fleet to battle: the infamous

battle of Jutland in 1916 was essentially a German mistake, the British almost catching the entire enemy fleet in a deadly trap (Bennett 1964).

The Fisher-Beresford Naval Feud and Its Outcomes

The Fisher-Beresford naval feud was essentially a personal vendetta against Fisher orchestrated by Admiral Lord Charles Beresford (1846-1919) and his supporters in the RN. Beresford, who had been one of Fisher's subordinates, vehemently opposed parts of his scheme as the commander of the newly created Channel Fleet (1907-1909)[12]. A recognized public figure and a war hero and a respected fleet commander and a long-term conservative Member of Parliament, Beresford was as proficient as Fisher in using his societal and media contacts to further his cause. He often boasted about his insubordination as a naval officer. When the only slightly more senior Fisher obtained the post of First Sea Lord, Beresford, rejected from his dream position, gradually worked out a systematic campaign to undermine his superior. According to Freeman (2009, xi), the papers of both admirals clearly show that Beresford fostered an all-consuming hatred of Fisher, waging an all-out war to have him removed. Fisher was naturally highly annoyed by the actions of his rival, but did not carry as much blame for the feud.

To hasten the story into a conclusion, once Fisher had managed to have him ousted from his command of the Channel Fleet due to insubordination, Beresford used his political and media contacts to persuade the Liberal Government launch an inquiry into Admiralty policies. Consequently, in 1909 Prime Minister H. H. Asquith set up a sub-committee of the Committee for Imperial Defence (CID) to report on the matter. The fact that Asquith agreed to set up an inquiry at the behest of his former subordinate highly offended Fisher in the first place. Beresford (and his supporters) did not do well in the committee hearings, which

eventually upheld all Admiralty policies[13]. However, as a result of Beresford's fierce anti-Fisher campaign both in public and in Parliament (which he had re-entered following the 1910 elections), the Cabinet increasingly began to see Fisher as a political liability. In practical terms he was forced into retirement at the end of 1910 – with a peerage as a farewell gift. Other men would continue to realize his scheme. He was embittered, but he thought his time would come again – as it did when war broke out in 1914 (Bacon 1929a, 29-58).

The Fishpond: Some Key Personalities

Fisher (1920) himself draws the reader's attention to the following people who made a major contribution to his success in the high posts he held in the RN. First of all, he constantly refers to the generosity and goodwill of King Edward VII. Lord Knollys, the King's private secretary, and Lord Esher, a key courtier, also played a central role in keeping the Court in favor of Fisher (Freeman 2009, ix; Ridley 2012, 408-419). The King took his views on naval policy in a relatively direct fashion from Fisher, who discussed them extensively with him and the two aforementioned courtiers (Dunley 2015). Fisher's relationship to Prime Ministers in 1904-1910 was slightly more tense: the conservative PM A. Balfour had been replaced in 1905 by the liberal H. Campbell-Bannerman, and in 1908 by another liberal, H. H. Asquith. The liberals were notoriously more critical towards the capital ship building program than the conservatives, as they wanted to see taxes used on social reforms and not on armaments. Nevertheless, with the help of the King and the navalist public opinion, Fisher was mostly able to get his way (Dunley 2015). The relatively large savings in naval estimates that Fisher was initially able to achieve, for example by scrapping literarily hundreds of obsolete vessels, were also applauded by the liberal government.

As to the Admiralty, Fisher (1919) himself states:

> "…it would have been impossible to have conducted those eight great years of ceaseless reform, culminating in the production of the most incomparable fleet that ever existed, had not the two Political Administrations, four First Lords, and every member of the several Boards of Admiralty been, as I described them in public, united, determined, and progressive" (p. 247).

The good working relationships with his First Lords (especially Reginald McKenna) and members of the Board of the Admiralty were essential to the success of his turnaround scheme.

Many officers who had formerly served under him at sea also held key administrative posts in the Admiralty and related naval institutions. They have sometimes been called Fisher's 'seven brains' (Marder 1956, 331)[14]. The most influential administrative positions were those of Director of Naval Ordnance (DNO), responsible for the acquisition of materiél, Director of Naval Construction (DNC), responsible for the design of new vessels, and Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI) (Hamilton 2011, 123, 162, 194-5, 232). Fisher wanted independent, talented men in his closest circle, and thus numerous members of the Fishpond had remarkable naval careers. For example, Fisher made Sir John Jellicoe the Director of Naval Ordnance in 1905, second-in-command of the Atlantic Fleet in August 1907, Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy in October 1908, and Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet in December 1910 (Bacon 1936)[15].

Fisher (1919) himself specifically names the following officers who worked as his Naval Assistants at the Admiralty:

> "…because they were out and away without precedent the most able men in the Navy: Admirals Sir Reginald Bacon, Sir Charles Madden, Sir Henry Oliver, Sir Horace Hood, Sir Charles de Bartolome, Captain Richmond and Captain Crease—I'll back that set of names against the world" (p. 104).

Many of these officers also worked as DNOs or DNIs during the turnaround. Some became famous. Admiral Bacon, for instance, wrote Fisher's (and later Jellicoe's) biography, and Rear Admiral Hood perished in the battle of Jutland in 1916 when the battle cruiser HMS Invincible was destroyed.

Fisher (1919) mentions Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson and Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman as distinguished sailors who helped him in gradually building up the Grand Fleet. Both Admirals, as First Sea Lords and Fisher's immediate successors in 1911-1913:

> "…altered nothing, and the glacier moved along, resistless and crushing all the obstacles in its path, and now, after the war, it has passed on; the dead corpses of the foes of the scheme are disclosed, and we'll bury them without comment" (p. 247).

Although this, strictly speaking, might not have been completely accurate, it can be argued that the great turnaround effort continued in a calmer fashion once the leaders of the opposing camps had left the scene (Bell 2012).

People bringing about great advances in naval technology, both within and outside the RN, were central figures in Fisher's personal network. They included Sir Charles Parsons, the inventor of the turbine; Admiral Sir Percy Scott, the prominent gunnery officer and inventor of the Scott director firing system; Sir Nathaniel Barnaby, the eminent Director of Naval Construction at the Admiralty; and two of his successors in the same position, Sir Philip Watts and Sir Eustace Tennyson-D'Eyncourt (Fisher 1919, 249, 255, 257-258). In terms of media notorieties, Fisher mentions William Thomas Stead of the Pall Mall Gazette as one of the greatest journalists he had ever known. On the political level, Henry Labouchere, the proprietor of Truth, and Mr. George Lambert, M.P. are also given credit for advancing Fisher's cause in public and in Parliament (Fisher 1919, 262-267). All in all, the Fishpond

was a mixed bag of people from different social strata of the Empire, 'recruited' to serve Fisher's cause in a multitude of roles.

Leadership through Favoritism: The Case of Admiral Fisher

This section comprises an analysis of the personal and behavioral facets of Admiral Fisher's use of favoritism in achieving his aims in the naval revolution. Most of the citations illustrating his own ideas are taken from *Memoirs* and *Memoirs and Records* (Fisher 1919; 1920). However, the research materials capitalized upon also include a multitude of other research materials, most importantly his professional and personal correspondences. The facets that emerged from the research materials include the following: (1) Fisher's personality and his direct communication and leadership style, (2) his ability to choose the right persons for the right positions and to work with them as a team, (3) his identification of and loyalty to his own group (primarily the Fishpond described in the previous section) and, finally, (4) his selflessness and recognition of others' merits. Some of these facets come close in many respects to Marder's (1961a, 124-132) analysis of Admiral Nelson as a leader[16]. However, the special case of favoritism addressed in this study suggests a different list of characteristics, albeit Nelson also seems to have been very efficient in his own practices of favoritism.

Fisher's Personality and His Direct Communication/Leadership Style

Immediately after being appointed to the post of First Sea Lord, Fisher began to advocate his scheme of reforming the RN with all of his personal charisma and fierce devotion to his cause. This is echoed in his statement:

> "Two qualities rule the world: **emotion** and **earnestness**. I have said elsewhere, with them you can move far more than mountains move multitudes. It's the personality of the soul of man that has this immortal influence" (Fisher 1919, 115).

Fisher's temperament and personal charm were widely acknowledged in naval circles, and he had clearly always held strong views about how things should be done. Even before the advent of the Beresford affair he had made enemies with a loose collection of officers who sought to block his advancement in the RN. He knew well that his personality and leadership style and methods caused deep worry and even hatred in the Navy. Unable (and unwilling) to change his style, he was unrelenting in his efforts to mobilize his own supporters and other sympathizers against this conservative block.

Fisher was naturally impulsive and generous in his affections, more of a radical than a conservative (he was even accused of being a socialist), and bewitched people around him with a cascading flow of ideas, anecdotes, reminiscences and schoolboy jokes. He was relatively ageless and classless, getting on well with midshipmen and young lieutenants, as well as with men from the working class. He wanted everything done immediately, dramatically, and in novel, more efficient ways. Fisher's magnetism acted very potently upon other people, in either a positive or a negative direction. (Morris 1995, 60-61, 185)

Fisher wanted his naval revolution, and was not ready to let anyone stand in his way. At times, his enemies saw his actions as those of a technocrat, solely interested in the development and application of new naval technologies such as the torpedo, the mine and the submarine (Morris 1995, 74). They claimed that he neglected strategy and history at the expense of his technological experiments. To an extent, the criticism of an overt infatuation with technology is probably accurate as he saw naval technology developing so fast that almost nothing of strategic value could be learned from the tactics of the past (he studied Nelson's leadership, however). He was a great believer in intuition and providence (and was also a devout Christian). He believed he had been brought to the RN during a period of lassitude to pull off a revolution – just in time before a new great war broke out.

Indeed, Fisher (1919) often quoted an essay he had written about Admiral Nelson's key attributes as a leader:

> "I. Self reliance (If you don't believe in yourself, nobody else will.) II. Fearlessness of Responsibility. (If you shiver on the brink you'll catch cold, and possibly not take the plunge.) III. Fertility of Resource. (If the traces break, don't give it up, get some string.) IV. Power of initiative. (Disobey orders.)" (p. 124).

He tried to live up to these principles to the greatest possible extent. With regard to the historical leaders he respected, his *Memoirs* (Fisher 1919) contain the following statement: "I have always worshipped Abraham Lincoln. I have elsewhere related how he never argued with Judge or Jury or anyone else, but always told a story" (p. 261). Fisher was also a deeply invested storyteller.

Marder (1961a, 124) – relying largely on Fisher's writings about Admiral Nelson - regarded personality as the most important leadership trait an admiral could possess. As to Nelson,

> "…He had personal magnetism, or the unique power, showmanship. He had an intuitive flair for the colourful and the dramatic in speech, gesture, and attire. …Enthusiasm is an important aspect of personal magnetism" (Marder 1961a, 129-130).

The description could equally well have been about Jacky Fisher.

Fisher was very direct in his communication style, both verbally and in his body language. Of course, this was not to everyone's' liking. Nevertheless, the people closest to him tended to appreciate his directness and ruthless truthfulness. In order to understand Fisher's leadership style it was essential to understand his ways of communication. He always sought direct, informal contact with anyone he wanted to influence (having made personal contact, he often continued to communicate with an avalanche of letters and memos). He socialized in wide

circles so as to meet and charm influential people, especially politicians or journalists he thought would be valuable supporters of his cause. On the other hand, unlike his opponent Beresford, he disliked public functions and high society. Like Beresford, however, he developed the skill of using the media efficiently to promote relations with the general public.

Not surprisingly, on the matter of the great naval feud some newspapers such as *The Times* wrote about him very sympathetically, whereas others were fiercely opposed to his ideas. Moreover, if Fisher once deemed someone useless or hostile he could bluntly refuse to have anything more to do with him or her. As in his friendships, he was intense in his animosities. Nevertheless, as the case of the great naval feud described above aptly demonstrates, he could also overcome his hatred and act strategically, lying low when the situation required it. (Freeman 2009, 50-51)

The Ability to Choose the Right Persons for Right Positions and to Work with Them as a Team

Fisher firmly believed in the right and ability of true leaders to choose the right people for the right positions at the right time. In fact, he may have considered this the most important gift of any leader:

> "…Lord Spencer[17] had the same gift of selection—it's the biggest gift that a man in such a position can have, and the life, the fate of his country may depend upon him. Only war finds out poltroons" (Fisher 1919, 244).

In a letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, dated October 25th, 1904, Fisher stated:

> "No doubt you think me horribly insistent in sticking out for certain men to fill the posts which will have so important an influence in the improvements and economies we hope to effect. My contention and belief is that it's no use whatever attempting to do anything unless we have the very best men, utterly regardless of their rank or anyone's feelings or any vested interests. …Also I personally should be an idiot and

> should only make a mess of it if I permitted myself to be associated with anyone who I knew I should not agree with or is not the best man to be got…" (Marder 1956, 45).

Fisher clearly did not believe in formal assessment systems or procedures. He thought it best for leaders to personally choose the key people they were to work with. He stated on the selection of future sea cadets, for instance:

> "Similarly, with the selection of boys for the Navy, I didn't want any examination whatsoever, except the boy and his parents being 'vetted,' and then an interview with the boy to examine his personality (his soul, in fact)" (Fisher 1919, 123).

He considered the selection and promotion practices of the RN at the beginning of the 20th century outdated and mechanistic. The higher one was in the organization, the more attention should be given to the 'spiritual' characteristics of the person to be promoted to a certain post:

> "…I just mention all this to show what I've done for Jellicoe because I knew him to be a born Commander of a Fleet ! Like poets. Fleet Admirals are born, not made! Nascitur nonfit!" (Fisher 1919, 63).

On the one hand, Fisher (1919) strongly emphasized well-functioning personal chemistry between key leaders: "The First Sea Lord and the Chief Admiral afloat have got to be Siamese twins" (p. 108). On the other hand, he did not think that people even in relatively high positions necessarily needed to be highly gifted or intellectual – they just needed to suit the post and to work well with their superiors and closest colleagues:

> "If you take a little of the best Port Wine, the best Champagne, the best Claret, and the best Hock and mix them together, the result is disastrous. So often is it with a Board of Admiralty. That's why I have suffered fools gladly" (Fisher 1919, 242).

Fisher did not regard the expansion of the Naval War Staff at the Admiralty immediately before and during WWI a generally a wise move (Fisher 1919, 111), and he has received severe criticism for this. From a headcount of a couple of dozen officers under the DNI during Fisher's first tenure as First Sea Lord, the Naval War Staff grew to several hundreds towards

the end of the war (Black 2009, 15-74)[18]. He did not appreciate the usefulness of such a large contingent of predominantly mediocre naval officers being confined to chiefly clerical tasks behind an office desk. Except for certain strategic intelligence information, he did not expect these Staff to be of much help to the RN's top leaders. The members of the Fishpond, in his view, served him as First Sea Lord far better than any formally organized and recruited Naval War Staff could.

Fisher was able to engage in effective teamwork amongst his own confidants. He generally worked through his appointed committees (e.g. the Committee of Design, which worked out the details of HMS Dreadnought) to realize his plans. If he trusted the committee members he was keen on decentralization, and would not interfere personally unless it was necessary. In overseeing committee work he was essentially interested in the speed at which his plans would be operationalized (Hamilton 2011, 215-221).

Identification with and Loyalty to his Own Group

Ensuring identification with and loyalty to his group of supporters became a focal issue in Fisher' naval revolution. Fisher was evidently proud of the fact that, despite the strong opposition, he managed to work the turnaround through with the help of his network:

> " …all were against me in 1904 I when the Navy was turned inside out —ships, officers and men. A New Heaven and a New Earth! 160 ships put to scrap heap because they could neither fight nor run away!" (Fisher 1919, 62).

Fisher was always very loyal to his supporters and friends, and early in his position as First Sea Lord he tried to win over his opponents in a cunning ways. According to Bacon (1929b), he would approach an objector and say:

> "My dear fellow, I know exactly what you think about the scheme; I know you will say so and so …now I will show you the other side. …In this way, he never allowed the doubter to state his objections, and so to commit himself; the opponent was

> therefore in the happy position of having nothing to retract, which made his acquiescence all the easier" (p. 108).

However, towards the end of his tenure, old age, opposition and success made him more inclined to override his opponents (this was even more so during his second term as First Sea Lord, which is often seen as a leadership failure). He had been fatigued from Beresford's vendetta to the extent that he was inclined to see self-interested motives in people who were merely honest doubters. He also had a tendency to be dogmatic and unreasonable. (Bacon 1929b, 110)

In general, however, he protected and defended his own men fiercely and remorselessly, as the case of the famous gunnery specialist Admiral Scott demonstrates. Fisher helped Scott to defend himself against his superior Beresford on many occasions, for example when the latter accused the former of not following his commands in squadron maneuvers (Freeman 2009, 156-159). Throughout the naval organization Fisher's protégés and informants trusted him to protect them against the conservatives should problems arise. He could sometimes be rather indiscreet, however, such as in disclosing personal letters to others and even to the media when he thought it would benefit his cause. (Bacon 1929b, 107-115)

Selflessness and the Recognition of Other People's Merits

By most accounts, Fisher never did anything for personal gain. Despite his vehement personality, his biographers generally characterize him as a rather selfless individual, especially when it came to gathering a personal fortune. Even so, he was fiercely attacked in public during the naval feud, accused of forming:

> "…syndicates and rings for my own financial advantage, using my official knowledge and power … for making myself quickly rich!". He goes on: "I had another very brilliant opportunity of becoming a millionaire in AD 1910, but declined … my finances have always been at a low ebb" (Fisher 1920, 46).

Even if it was not millions, Fisher received several offers of lucrative employment from private shipyards and armament manufacturers. At least £10,000 a year was promised to him on several occasions, but – with some sarcasm – he said he was happy with the £2,400 he received from the Admiralty (Bacon 1929b, 63-65).

From many of Fisher's comments cited throughout this paper, it seems clear that he was keen on giving credit to people who – in his opinion - deserved it. This was not just the gentlemanly style of the day: he genuinely believed that deserving and loyal people should always get credit for their just actions. This also sheds light on why he was initially so devastated by the criticism and personal attacks of the Beresfordian clique. However, he quickly learned to harden his heart against such bouts – this was not the first time he had been criticized for who he was and what he stood for. Nevertheless, he was not completely immune to flattery either, especially in his later years. He saw himself and his vision of a new Royal Navy as rising above the views and demeanors of ordinary flag officers in the service, perhaps even as a new Nelson:

> "A Sea Officer can never be an efficient clerk; his life unfits him. He can't be an orator; he's always had to hold his tongue. He can't argue; he's never been allowed. Only a few great spirits like Nelson are gifted with the splendid idiosyncrasy of insubordination but it's given to a few great souls" (Fisher 1919, 111).

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

Admiral Fisher's use of his Fishpond in bringing about a turnaround in the RN at the beginning of the 20th century is an appealing case of the power of benevolent favoritism in effecting an organizational turnaround and leveraging performance. As demonstrated above, despite fierce internal and external opposition, he managed to use his network to realize the

greatest transformation in the history of the RN in a relatively short timeframe. While he was practically ousted from his first tenure as First Sea Lord a year earlier than originally planned, his supporters continued his work. Naturally, as the evolutionary historians point out, the reforms centered less around the person of the First Sea Lord than has been suggested by the orthodox and even by the revisionist scholars, rather continuing on their own initiative within the complex organization of the RN (Bell 2016; Cobb 2013). The success of many of Fisher's reforms has also been contested. All in all, however, Admiral Fisher's network of favorites was the central group of actors that dominated the more or less severely divided Senior Service for a considerable period of time in the early 20th century[19]. Although none of the facets of favoritism identified in this study are novel in the research on (strategic) leadership *per se*, this particular combination may be.

First, it is obvious that the personal charm and charisma of the leader have a very significant impact on attracting, motivating and mobilizing a network of favorites. In this sense, the Fisher case could be seen as the traditional manifestation of charismatic leadership. Fisher was a strong, traditional leader who used very direct means of communication (discussion, speeches, and written communications to various audiences and individuals). His identification with and loyalty to his followers, and his selflessness recognition of other people's merits constituted the essential behavioral antecedents of the functioning Fishpond. However, as also demonstrated in the above analysis, the personality and communication style of a strong leader could also alienate a significant number of key actors. In this case it seems that Fisher's once imposing personal traits became less attractive even to members of the Fishpond the more bitter the aging admiral grew - especially after the infamous Fisher-Beresford feud. It this seems that every leader has a more or less defined life-cycle in the position depending on how well the once attractive and efficient personal traits continue to

mobilize supporters. What is more, different kinds of leaders are needed in different leadership situations and contexts. Fisher the enthusiast was suitable in the turnaround situation, but he trusted the ability of his immediate successor Admiral Wilson, who was a very different type of leader, to continue his reforms (eventually, 'Old Ard Art' proved to be a failure as the First Sea Lord) (Lambert 1999, 206, 242-244).

Second, the efficient use of favoritism hinges largely on the ability of the leader to choose the right people for right positions, especially when it comes to the upper echelons of an organization. The heritage of bureaucratic thinking has fostered the belief that the task of the leader is to identify existing and potential high performers in the accessible internal and external talent pool of an organization, and to assign them to the most suitable posts according to their potential and past performance. It is often claimed that structured and objective talent assessment and management systems are needed in this task (see e.g. Lewis and Heckman 2012). The perspective of favoritism challenges this normative/objective approach, at least to some extent: a considerable extent of talent management is actually based on the intuitive feelings of leaders about the suitability of people in their personal networks for certain key positions. From this perspective the objectivity of an individual appointment may well be a mere ex-post rationalization. This has hardly changed since Fisher's days. His explicit use of favoritism proved to be an efficient subjective mechanism through which to fill most of the significant RN positions with members of the Fishpond, who in his eyes constituted a very subtle hierarchy of talent. As stated, he gladly 'suffered fools' even in relatively central positions if they were useful to him. However, if his fools made wrong decisions or behaved unsatisfactorily he was quick to abandon them, despite his usual loyalty to his own men. On the other hand, he allowed the most promising and talented individuals wide degrees of freedom (i.e. room for 'insubordination'). A good example is Sir

David Beatty, whom Fisher promoted to the rank of rear admiral in 1910 by a special order in council because he had not yet served the requisite time as a captain (Lambert 2009, 344). What is more, Fisher was a firm believer in delegation and teamwork, and used different kind of committees and task forces to pull his reforms through.

Management fads may come and go, but there seem to be some more enduring phenomena in human leadership that persist, and the positive use of favoritism in situations of significant organizational change may constitute a prime example. The case reported in this study sheds some light on how leaders practice favoritism to potentially advantageous ends. An obvious limitation of the study is its focus on one individual historical case of exercising favoritism. The framework developed above should be applied in further historical studies in different situations and contexts. The individual facets or elements of the four-fold framework and their interplay over the years should also be studied in more depth. It is probable that as leaders and leadership situations change, formerly successful practices of exercising favoritism become less effective and novel ones have to be developed. What is more, as the Fisher case also aptly demonstrates, formerly successful leaders degenerate into less effective users of favoritism on account of personal inertia and an inability to change, often because past successes that have made them less willing to question their own leadership style. Thus, it is important to study the *negative* effects of favoritism as well. Finally, it would be interesting in future research to explore the question of mobilization. How do leaders mobilize their networks of favorites in practice? What makes favorites follow their leaders? When and why do they stop?

Notes

[1] Fisher stepped down from his post in January 1910, but was not put on the RN retired list until on his 70th birthday on the 25th of January, 1911; "*Admiral of the Fleet The Right Honourable Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V .O., LL.D., has been placed on*

the Retired List. Dated 25th January, 1911" (*The London Gazette*, 28460, 27 January, 1911, 695).

[2] Following key literature in strategic management (e.g. Barker and Duhaime 1997; Grinyer and Spender 1979; Schendel and Patton 1976), the term organizational turnaround is defined here as the implementation of strategic and operational actions required to save an organisation from failure, based on an understanding of the causes of organizational decline. This requires visionary leadership, organizational restructuring and the creation of a new organizational culture.

[3] Bell (2016, 126) characterizes the historical debate about the nature and successfulness of Fisher's turnaround scheme as one containing the orthodox (e.g. Marder), the revisionist (e.g. Sumida, Lambert) and post-revisionist or evolutionary (e.g. Cobb, Grimes) schools of thought. Whereas the orthodox scholars saw Fisher's scheme as an aggregation of more or less successful conventional reforms, the revisionists primarily wanted to uncover the admiral's hidden agendas vis-à-vis the stated aims of his 'revolution' (which, after all, were not entirely successful, and the Fisherites were consequently claimed to have covered their tracks by writing fraudulent memos and by weeding Admiralty papers), whereas the aim of the post-revisionists was to provide an evolutionary, more balanced view between the two camps – most of the reforms of the RN in the Fisher era were claimed to be inherently evolutionary trajectories of technological and organizational change (see also Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015; Seligmann 2015).

[4] The competition in developing novel technology and building new vessels naturally continued during the war, but it was no longer an arms race – the arms were in active use by the belligerents.

[5] British vis-á-vis German merchant marine and naval tonnage figures in 1904-1914 were as follows. In 1904, the merchant marine figure for the UK was 1 869 thousand tonnes in sail (Germany: 576 thousand tonnes) and 8 400 thousand tonnes in steam (Germany: 1 713 thousand tonnes). Consequently, in 1914, the merchant marine figure for the UK was 1 301 thousand tonnes in sail (Germany: 507 thousand tonnes) and 10 285 thousand tonnes in steam (Germany: 2 832 thousand tonnes) (Mitchell 1992, 695, 699). When it comes to naval tonnage figures in 1914, the RN comprised of 2 205 (1904: 1 367) thousand tonnes of commissioned ships, and the Imperial German Navy 1 019 (1904: 736) thousand tonnes (Ferguson 1999, 85). The naval arms race accelerated with the new German navy laws in 1908/1909. The financial figures for naval construction (in millions of pounds sterling, 1996 prices) in the beginning of Fisher's term in 1904 were 14.1 for Britain (5.1 for Germany). For the later arms race years they were the following: 1908: Britain 9.4 (Germany 9.0), 1909: 11.2 (11.5), 1910: 16.7 (12.7), 1911: 18,9 (13.1), 1912: 17.3 (12.2) 1913: 17.1 (11.2) (Stevenson 1996, 8). The figures clearly show how Germany gradually 'lost' the arms race before the outbreak of the War.

[6] Before Fisher's first tenure, the position was called the First Naval Lord.

[7] As mentioned, the Churchill-Fisher era at the Admiralty falls beyond the scope of this article.

[8] I thank one of the referees of this paper for pointing this out.

[9] An alternative being the French Jeune École, a strategic naval concept developed during the late 19th century. It advocated the use of smaller units such as torpedo boats (or later submarines) to attack a larger battleship fleet, and commerce raiders capable of disrupting the trade of the enemy (see Roksund 2007). However, this was mainly seen as a naval strategy for weaker nations. Fisher saw the future importance of the torpedo, the mine, the submarine and the destroyer, and his strategic vision combined them with a large surface fleet of modern capital ships (which he rightly thought would become obsolete in the long term) (for Fisher's ideas about flotilla defense, see Lambert 1995).

[10] Fisher originally even wanted the RN to be able to overpower its recent allies France and Russia together (see Seligmann, Nägler and Epkenhans 2015, xxv-xxvi).
[11] Thereafter, all new capital ships of a similar type were called 'Dreadnoughts', even outside the RN. When Fisher received his peerage he chose 'Fear God and Dread Nought' as his motto.
[12] Supporters of Admiral Beresford in particular criticized the deployment of the fleet in home waters, pointed to the inadequate numbers of flotilla craft, and claimed that there was a complete lack of war plans provided by the Admiralty (see McLay 2015).
[13] According to Freeman (2009, 63), Beresford was a 'man of little brain' and a hot temperament.
[14] In Fisher's own words (Marder 1956, 331): "*These are the seven brains: Jackson, F.R.S., Jellicoe, C.B., Bacon, D.S.O., Madden, M.V.O., Wilfred Henderson (who has all the signs of the Zodiac after his name!), associated with Gard, M.V.O., Chief Constructor of Portsmouth Dockyard, and who splendidly kept the Mediterranean Fleet efficient for three years, and Gracie, the best Marine Engineer in the world!*"
[15] After Fisher's retirement, Jellicoe was appointed Second-in-Command of the Home Fleet in December 1911 and, having also been appointed commander of the 2nd Battle Squadron in May 1912, he became Second Sea Lord in December 1912. At the outbreak of the Great War, on the 4th of August 1914, he was assigned command of the renamed Grand Fleet. Jellicoe was appointed First Sea Lord in November 1916, the post from which he was forced to step down in December 1917. After the war, he served as the Governor-General of New Zealand. (Bacon 1936)
[16] Marder (1961a) provides the following list of attributes of Admiral Nelson as a leader: (Marder's list reflected some of Fisher's ideas and writings about the great admiral) (1) Humanity and a sense of identification/winning confidence, (2) Thoughtfulness, (3) The leader as an external group representative, (4) Loyalty, (5) Tact, (6) Acting as an arbitrator and mediator of conflict and dissension among his officers, (7) Satisfaction of the need for recognition, (8) Selflessness, (9) The leader as exemplar, (10) Personality, (11) Professional expertise, and (12) Confidence in one's subordinates.
[17] John Spencer, 5th Earl Spencer (1835–1910).
[18] Officially established as the Admiralty War Staff in 1912, see Black (2009).
[19] Despite being an interesting question, it falls beoynd the scope of this article to explicitly follow the careers of the key members of the Fishpond during and after Fisher had left the service.

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II

LEADER PERSONALITY, MANAGERIAL ATTENTION AND DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES: THE ADOPTION OF THE BATTLECRUISER CONCEPT IN THE ROYAL NAVY, 1904–1918.

by

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Leader Personality, Managerial Attention and Disruptive Technologies: the Adoption of the Battlecruiser Concept in the Royal Navy, 1904-1918

Abstract

Managerial attention to the leader's strategic designs has been identified as a key prerequisite for success in the adoption of new technologies. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze how the battlecruiser concept as an organizational gestalt was developed, adopted and assessed in the British Royal Navy (RN) in 1904-1918 from the perspective of the top leader's personality and managerial attention. The battlecruiser was a pet project of the controversial Admiral Sir John Fisher, who instituted a thorough technological, organizational and cultural turnaround in the RN before the First World War (WWI). The battlecruiser, 'The Greyhound of the Sea', was the largest and most expensive type of capital ship in the WWI era. It was developed to hunt down enemy commerce-raiding cruisers all around the globe, and to act as a powerful scouting arm of the Grand Fleet. In action, however, it proved more vulnerable than expected. The contribution of the article is threefold. First, it explicates the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders in persuading the organizational adoption of a novel concept such as the battlecruiser. Second, it describes the process of adoption and change when the technology is gradually proving less efficient than predicted. Finally, it posits that the evolving organizational gestalts strongly moderate the process of adoption and correction.

Key words: leadership, attention-based view, organizational gestalt, battlecruiser, the Royal Navy, Admiral John Fisher

Introduction

Upper echelons theory (Hambrick and Mason 1984; Hambrick 2007) attributes key organizational outcomes to the personality and characteristics of the leaders (most often the CEO) and the constitution and functioning of the top-management team (TMT). Personal characteristics such as personality traits and leadership styles, and more contextual factors such as education and industry-specific experience are included in assessing corporate top leaders on their achievement of organizational goals (for a review, see Carpenter, Geletkanycz and Sanders 2004). Generally it would seem that in the context of leadership one has to envisage the person, the position and the environment in complex configurational interplay (Busenbark et al. 2016).

Gerstner, König, Enders and Hambrick (2013) recently examined the effects of CEO narcissism and audience engagement on the adoption of new technologies in the pharmaceutical industry. In essence, the authors found that narcissistic leaders engaged their organizations more aggressively, an outcome that was strongly moderated by how well the CEO mobilized key executives in supporting the adoption. As reported in earlier literature (Ocasio 1997; 2011; cf. Chen, Kuo-Hsien and Tsai 2007), managerial attention to the strategic designs of the CEO has been identified as a key prerequisite for success in the adoption of new technologies. In fact, Gerstner

and colleagues (2013) pose a focal question: what happens if the novel technology proves to be less satisfactory than predicted by the top leaders?

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze how the battlecruiser concept as an organizational schema or gestalt was developed, adopted and assessed in the upper echelons of the Royal Navy (RN) in 1904-1918 from the perspective of the top leader's personality and managerial attention (on the battlecruiser and related technology, see Peeks 2015; Roberts 1997; Hough 1975). The battlecruiser was a pet project of the controversial admiral Sir John Fisher, who instituted a thorough technological, organizational and cultural turnaround in the RN before the First World War (WWI) (Lambert 1999). Also known as 'The Greyhound of the Sea', the battlecruiser was the largest and most expensive type of capital ship in the WWI era. It was developed to hunt down enemy commerce-raiding cruisers all around the globe, for instance, and to act as a powerful scouting arm of the Grand Fleet. In action, however, it proved more vulnerable than expected. It has been argued that the RN was unable to develop a coherent strategic and tactical doctrine for utilizing this novel type of warship efficiently in war (Peeks 2015). However, as the study at hand will show, the top leaders and the organization of the RN managed to develop several successive battlecruiser generations, and to fix their most salient problems as they arose during the war.

The objective is thus to describe and analyze the emergence of the battlecruiser concept with a focus on managerial attention among the key actors in the upper echelons of the RN. Thus, the study builds on the attention-based view of the organization (Ocasio 1997; 2011; Joseph and Ocasio 2012; Nigam and Ocasio 2010; Vuori and Huy 2016), and extends it in developing a detailed understanding of how new innovations such as this are adopted and developed in an organization. What is more, we know little about how the organization would react, and why, if the adopted concept proved less satisfactory than expected. Insights from the literature on organizational schemas and gestalts are incorporated into the attention-based view of the organization in the following account of the adoption and correction process. What makes the battlecruiser case especially interesting is the vagueness of the concept and the related, evolving battlecruiser gestalt in the organizational collective of the RN during the period of analysis. Realizing how and why this vagueness persisted (i.e. what kind of issues in key leader personalities and the processes of attracting organizational attention to the concept) is one of the key takeaways from the historical study reported here.

The contribution of the article is threefold. First, it sheds light on the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders in persuading the organization to adopt such a novel concept as the battlecruiser. Second, it describes the process of adoption and change when the technology is gradually proving to be less efficient than predicted. Finally, it posits that the evolving organizational gestalts strongly moderate the process of adoption and correction.

Theoretical Background

It has been generally demonstrated in evolutionary strategy and organizational research (Burgelman 1991; Lewin and Volberda 1999) that CEOs and top executives

act not only as the top-down formulators of new strategies but also as role models, sounding boards and initiators of organizational change at all levels. Thus, the degree to which a new strategic vision is shared and agreed on by the key actors within the organization strongly affects the success of the desired strategic change.

Gerstner and colleagues (2013) recently demonstrated that the CEO's personality and ability to effectively shape and change managerial attention patterns is a major success factor in the adoption of a new technology. The above-mentioned study, categorized as a quantitative inquiry, focused on identifying the antecedents and consequences of the CEO's personality (and the special case of narcissism), and assessing their effect on managerial attention and the new-technology adoption. Gerstner and colleagues (2013, 281) identified a need to study instances when the new technology turns out to be a failure or is superseded by another technology. In other words, a more thorough understanding is called for of how the top leader and key executives endorse and negotiate the adoption of novel technology that eventually proves to be less effective than predicted. The theoretical proposition in this study is that the formation of a shared organizational schema or a gestalt (Joiner 1961; Mintzberg 1978; Mintzberg and Waters 1982) around the proposed disruptive technology moderates the adoption process[1]. In cases of failure after initial claims of superiority, the schema or gestalt in the organization is quickly altered, leading to a different dominant opinion.

Organizational schemas or schemata are sometimes used as a higher-order concept than gestalts, which are perceived to be closer to individual perception and observation. Analogically, the battlercruiser concept as a vehicle of war is a more abstract concept than the concrete ship. In this study, however, the terms organizational gestalts and schemata are used interchangeably. Schemata change dynamically through processes of assimilation and accommodation. However, existing schemata strongly influence how new information is encoded and processed. The psychological concept of mental models is also used widely in organizational theory. Mental models are broader than schemata, and usually refer to perceived causality between objects within the model (e.g. Porac and Thomas 1990).

Mental processes involve the cognitive actions that operate on mental representation and consist of information processing, symbol manipulation, and knowledge construction. Shared mental models often come into being in organizational contexts through metaphors as the organization develops a common language, an understanding of the task environment and a means of interpreting events. Consequently, the leader and the top-management team make extensive use of metaphors both in developing a vision or mental model of their environments (sense-making) and in articulating that vision to others (sense-giving) (Hill and Levenhagen 1995, 1057-1058). In the literature on strategy, both Eisenhardt and Sull (2001) and Bingham and Eisenhardt (2011) famously utilized the term 'simple rules', which organizations develop to capture opportunities in their environment. Thus, the evolution of an organizational gestalt or schema always involves the development of related heuristics to manage the process.

When referring to organizational gestalts, Miller (1981, 10) claims that they are strongly subject to natural selection. In the long term, only successful gestalts survive and are retained. However, Miller was generally looking for new organizational forms

that fostered innovation, and focused less on lower-level gestalts that would embody the novel forms of innovation in themselves (e.g. the battlecruiser concept and its adoption in the organization of the RN of the WWI era).

Both top-down (i.e. schema- or gestalt-driven) and bottom-up (i.e. stimulus-driven) processes shape managerial attention. Ocasio (2011) compared three varieties of managerial attention in a recent study: the attentional perspective (top-down), attentional engagement (combining top-down and bottom-up executive attention and vigilance), and attentional selection (the outcome of attentional processes). In Ocasio's view (2011, 1293-1294), the attention-based view of an organization constitutes a theoretical alternative to traditional theories of structural determinism versus strategic choice, with a particular focus on the role of attention in explaining organizational adaptation and change. In an earlier study, Ocasio and Joseph (2005) explicitly linked evolutionary perspectives on strategy and strategic choice with behavioral perspectives on organizational and strategic decision-making. They describe strategy processes as assemblages of tightly and loosely coupled networks of actors and governance procedures. Here, strategy formulation is constructed as a fluid, fragmented and often contested process with multiple foci of attention (cf. also Joseph and Ocasio 2012; Nigam and Ocasio 2010; Vuori and Huy 2016). Following the seminal work in organization theory by March, Mintzberg and Weick, Sarasvathy (2001) outlined a similar approach to new-venture creation termed effectuation theory. According to the theory, effectuation processes, in contrast to causation, take a set of means as given and focus on selecting between effects that can be created by those means (Sarasvathy 2001, 245). In other words, in novel and unstable venture-creation situations, both the goals and means of organizational action are ambiguous, changing and constructed. This approach is adopted in the following investigation into the evolution of the battlecruiser concept in the RN in 1904-1918.

Research Site, Aims and Materials

The development of the battlecruiser was of keen interest to the controversial Admiral of the Fleet Sir John 'Jacky' Fisher (1841-1920). Fisher acted as the First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty in 1904-1910, and again after the outbreak of the First World War (WWI) in 1914-1915 (see Bacon 1929a; 1929b; Hough 1969; Mackay 1973; Morris 1995). He has been chronicled as a strong and visionary leader, instituting a comprehensive strategic, organizational and technological turnaround of the RN before WWI broke out, which is often termed 'Sir John Fisher's naval revolution' (Lambert 1999; Sumida 1989).

Fisher was a controversial character, exhibiting many narcissistic features (Morris 1995). From a historiographical perspective, his genius, clear-headed articulateness, incisiveness of mind, courage, eagerness for efficiency, power of accurate prophecy, religiousness and devotion to his cause and colleagues have been emphasized as his key personal traits (e.g. Hough 1969, 27-51, 191-192; Mackay 1973, 1, 23, 515). On the other hand, his megalomania and 'foot of pride', lack of modesty, self-advertisement, ruthlessness, vindictiveness, increasing autocracy and unpredictable behavior have also been identified as personal deficiencies (Hough 1969, 56-77, 253, 343-345; Mackay 1973, 230-231, 284, 499-502). What is more, Fisher was able to build a loyal coterie of favorites and followers (i.e. the 'Fishpond') who helped him in

accomplishing the naval turnaround (Bacon 1929a; 1929b; Mackay 1973). Winston S. Churchill characterized Fisher as follows: *"Steadfast and even violent, no one who has not experienced it has any idea of the passion and eloquence of the old lion*" (Hough 1969, cover).

The RN built battlecruisers from 1906 until the end of the Great War in 1918. The dreadnought battlecruiser was a completely novel type of man-of-war, directly comparable to no earlier class of ships (Peeks 2015). However, despite his central role in its adoption, First Sea Lord Fisher was not solely responsible for developing and implementing novel technological and tactical concepts in the RN. His former subordinates at the Admiralty continued his work during his interregnum period in 1911-1914, and 1915-1918.

Organizationally, an admiral acting as First Sea Lord was subordinate to a civilian First Lord of the Admiralty, a Cabinet member and a politician. In this position Fisher famously worked with First Lord Winston S. Churchill during 1912-1915. However, with the exception of Churchill, most First Lords had little interest or expertise in questions related to naval technology and materiél *per se*. First Sea Lords centrally worked with the Admiralty Board, consisting of three additional subordinate Sea Lords, themselves flag officers, and a number of other influential members such as the Controller of the Navy (a Fifth Sea Lord was added for the first time during WWI, in 1917) (Hamilton 2011, 213-241). There was no official naval staff at the British Admiralty until 1912, largely because of Fisher's belief in being able to work perfectly well without a formal staff organization, using his Fishpond and *ad hoc* committees to support his initiatives. (Hamilton 2011; Black 2009) One of these was the Committee on Designs, which oversaw the design and construction of the first dreadnought battleships and battlecruisers in 1904-1907. After 1912, the chiefs of the Naval Staff and some other staff members were also heavily involved in developing the battlecruiser concept (Peeks 2015).

I use the *battlecruiser concept* here with reference to both the evolving technological specifications of the vessel type (especially in terms of its size, speed, armor, armament and fire-control system) as well as the strategic and tactical specifications (which Peeks 2015 calls the 'battlecruiser doctrine') of how these vessels were to be used in action in war as part of the fleet. The *battlecruiser gestalt*, in turn, is the fluid and evolving dominant representation of how the key actors in the upper echelons of the RN as an organizational collective perceived the concept. Senior fleet and battlecruiser squadron commanders assumed an increasingly central role during the war years, especially concerning issues of strategy and tactics. The key figures in this respect were Admirals Sir John Jellicoe, later Earl Jellicoe (Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, 1914-1916, and First Sea Lord, 1916-1917) and Sir David Beatty, later Earl Beatty (Commander of the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron/Fleet, 1913–1916, C-in-C of the Grand Fleet, 1916–1918, and First Sea Lord after the war).

In terms of new naval technology, Sir John Fisher is famous for his introduction of the heavily armored, Parsons turbine-engine-powered, all-big-gun battleship HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906. All modern capital ships were termed 'dreadnoughts' from then on (Hough 1975). Fisher personally preferred other types of weaponry than the cumbersome battleship. At the time, quickly evolving naval technology had made mines, torpedoes and submarines very potent weapons against large capital ships.

Fisher therefore wanted to create a considerably faster, less heavily armored but all-big-gun vessel type, originally called the 'heavy armoured cruiser' termed a battlecruiser in the RN in 1911-1912. The original main objective of this new class of vessels, which were even larger than battleships themselves, was to hunt down and destroy enemy ships (primarily fast, armored cruisers and liners converted for military duty) threatening the British Empire's shipping lanes and communications. Battlecruisers could also be used as a powerfully armed scouting arm of the main battle fleet. It was claimed that they could catch, outrange, outgun and annihilate any individual ship in existence. If faced with a stronger enemy force or a more heavily armored battleship it could use its superior speed to make its escape (Roberts 1997; Peeks 2015).

The first battlecruisers were the three ships of the *Invincible* class (HMS *Invincible*, HMS *Indomitable* and HMS *Inflexible*) launched in 1909. Thirteen full-scale dreadnought battlecruisers (in addition to 33 dreadnought battleships) were subsequently built before and during WWI until the last wartime battlecruiser HMS *Hood* was launched in 1918 (Roberts 1997). Other navies, most notably the Imperial Navies of Germany and Japan, also built a number of battlecruisers following the British example (Peeks 2015). In fact, Anglo-German rivalry over the building of ever more efficient battlecruiser generations in 1906-1916 was a significant aspect of the notorious naval arms race between the two empires (Seligmann, Nägler and Epkenhans 2015; Padfield 2013). Despite the fact that many British officers, even in the Fishpond, harbored serious doubts about the viability of the battlecruiser concept in general (the US Navy decided not to build them in the WWI era), the RN needed to develop increasingly advanced generations to combat the Germans, who had also adopted the design. British battleships could not be guaranteed to catch German battlecruisers if they tried to escape from the North Sea to harass British shipping.

The battlecruisers were able to fulfill part of their mission at war. For instance, a squadron consisting of two British battlecruisers commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee swiftly annihilated the German East Asian Squadron, which consisted of more lightly armored cruisers commanded by Vice-Admiral Maximilian Graf von Spee in the Falklands in November 1914. However, three battlecruisers were catastrophically lost in action in the battle of Jutland against the Imperial German High Seas Fleet in 1916 (Brooks 2016; Bennett 1964). During WWI, casualties were blamed primarily on faults in the design of the vessel type and the ineffectiveness of its fire-control system. There has thus been constant historiographical discussion and debate among historians and naval professionals as to the merits of the WWI-era battlecruiser concept as a whole (Peeks 2015).

One may well wonder about the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders who bring about the organizational adoption of a novel concept such as the battlecruiser. How does the process of adoption unfold and change when the technology is gradually proving less efficient than predicted? How do evolving organizational schemas or gestalts emerge and moderate this process?

This study is based on the following primary materials and on earlier studies. First, I consulted the edited papers of Admirals of the Fleet John Fisher (Marder 1956; 1959; Kemp 1960; 1964), John Jellicoe (Patterson 1966; 1968), and David Beatty (Ranft 1989; 1993; Chalmers 1951), the notes of Arthur Pollen (Sumida 1984) who was the

inventor of the controversial Pollen director firing system disqualified by the Admiralty, and edited papers related to the Anglo-German naval race in general (Seligmann et al. 2015).

Second, I studied Fisher's two autobiographies (Fisher 1919; 1920) and the biographies of the key RN officers involved in the process of designing, commissioning and operating with battlecruisers: these included the ones on Fisher (Bacon 1929a; 1929b; Hough 1969; Mackay 1973; Morris 1995), his key naval opponent Admiral Lord Charles Beresford (Freeman 2015), Jellicoe (Bacon 1936; Patterson 1969), Beatty (Roskill 1980), Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson, First Sea Lord 1910-1911 (Bradford 1923), Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman, First Sea Lord 1911-1912 (Ross 1998), Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis of Battenberg, First Sea Lord 1912-1914 (Hough 1984; Kerr 1934), Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson, First Sea Lord 1915-1916 (Murfett 1995), Admiral of the Fleet Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, First Sea Lord 1917-1918 (Wemyss 1935), Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Oliver, Chief of the Admiralty War Staff during the most of WWI, and in 1918 the Commander of the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron (James 1956), Admiral Sir Percy Scott, the inventor of the Scott director firing system essential for accurate gunnery (Padfield 1966), and central WWI fleet commanders and later Admirals of the Fleet Reginald Tyrwhitt (Patterson 1973) and Roger Keyes (Aspinall-Oglander 1951).

Moreover, despite the fact that the civilian First Lords of the Admiralty (with the exception of Churchill) seldom interfered with matters related to naval technology and tactics, I used the biographies of Reginald McKenna (Farr 2007), Winston S. Churchill (Gilbert 1991, a one-volume version of the massive eight-volume biography started in 1966 by Randolph Churchill and finished by Gilbert in 1988), Arthur Balfour (Mackay 1985), Edward Carson (Stewart 1981), and Eric Geddes (Grieves 1989), the autobiography of Lord Tweedmouth (Marjoribanks 2015), and the papers of Earl of Selborne 1895-1910 (Boyce 1990) as secondary sources, especially to highlight the relationship between First Lords and First Sea Lords.

Third, I consulted key studies on the battlecruiser concept and the related naval materiél and technology, in particular Peeks' (2015) excellent recent study on the 'cavalry of the fleet' and Roberts' (1997) thorough technological and historical overview of battlecruisers (see also Burr 2006; Burt 1993; Hough 1975). Fourth, other key sources included recent influential studies on the organization of the British Admiralty (Hamilton 2011), its culture (Gordon 1996), the emergence of the naval staff after its inception as late as in 1912 (Black 2009), its strategy and war planning (Grimes 2012), and on Admiralty plans to counter the German threat (Seligmann 2012) during the WWI era. Finally, I used Arthur J. Marder's classic five-volume study on the RN during the Fisher era of 1904-1918 as a source of historical detail (Marder 1961; 1963; 1966; 1969; 1970).

It has to be noted that a variegated historiographical debate has arisen as to the evolution of the RN during the 'Fisher era'. 'Revisionist' scholars (e.g. Sumida, Lambert) postulating various novel ideas about the key organizational and tactical developments in the era (e.g. the effectiveness of Fisher's revolution in general and his views on flotilla defense, the battlecruiser vis-à-vis the battleship) have questioned many interpretations of early 'orthodox' scholars such as Marder and Roskill. Finally, 'evolutionary' scholars have recently presented a more nuanced view. Combining key

interpretations from the two above-mentioned approaches they conceptualize most developmental trajectories in the RN as essentially evolutionary within their complex organizational contexts (Bell 2016; Seligmann 2015; Morgan-Owen 2015; Seligmann and Morgan-Owen 2015). I follow the emerging evolutionary stream of historiography in my research on the battlecruiser concept.

The Adoption and Evolution of the Battlecruiser Concept in the Royal Navy, 1904-1918

Fisher initiates the battlecruiser concept

Immediately after his appointment to the post of the First Sea Lord[2] of the British Admiralty in October 1904, Admiral Sir John Fisher initiated a considerable technological and organizational turnaround[3] in the Royal Navy (Lambert 1999; Sumida 1989). He outlined the main points of his scheme in a collection of writings dubbed *Naval Necessities* that were released soon after his installation (Peeks 2015, 47). The scheme could be described relentless. Literarily hundreds of old, obsolete men-of-war were scrapped and their personnel transferred to more modern ships. A nucleus crew system for ships in the naval reserve was introduced. The main resources of the RN were concentrated in home waters to counter the increasing German threat. Importantly, Fisher triggered a technological revolution in capital-ship design when he commissioned a new type of battleship, HMS *Dreadnought*, in 1906 (Hough 1975). As mentioned, it was an all-big-gun, turbine-powered, 20,000 ton, heavily armored battleship with a firepower equal at minimum to that of two battleships from the previous era. Consequently, older battleships were soon termed 'pre-dreadnoughts'. The commissioning of the Dreadnought started a costly naval arms race specifically between Britain and the German Empire (Seligmann et al. 2015; Padfield 2013).

However, Fisher recognized the vulnerability of even the most modern capital ships to recent advances in the development of the torpedo, the mine, and the submarine. In fact, he preferred a different type of capital ship to the dreadnought battleship that was later termed the battlecruiser. It was initially referred to as a large or all-big-gun armored cruiser in the proceedings of the Board of the Admiralty and the Committee on Designs that Fisher appointed in December 1904. He set up the committee to oversee and consider the new battleship, cruiser, destroyer, and submarine designs, and appointed several influential officers from among his closest associates (the so-called 'Fishpond') to serve on it, including John Jellicoe, Reginald Bacon and Prince Louis of Battenberg. What is more, he set up two further committees in 1905 to consider fleet auxiliaries, especially the use of armed merchant cruisers against armed German liners with the potential to threaten the shipping lanes of the British Empire. Fisher's point was that a novel type of fast, big armored cruiser was needed to protect British shipping (Seligmann 2012, 75-76). The Committee on Designs agreed on the introduction of a novel type of large capital ship, and the first vessels were laid down in February 1906 (Roberts 1997, 25). This was the *Invincible* class of battlecruisers, capable of 'mopping up' any type of enemy surface vessel around the Empire.

HMS Invincible causes an international sensation

Long anticipated in naval circles, HMS *Dreadnought*'s design came as no surprise. The Italian naval architect Vittorio Cuniberti had put forward the concept of an all-big-gun battleship in 1903. He also wrote an article about the new type in Jane's Fighting Ships (Brown 1997, 182). Nevertheless, HMS *Invincible* and her two sister ships, HMS *Indomitable* and HMS *Inflexible*, caused an international sensation when they were unveiled in 1906. Naval experts especially admired their firepower and superior speed (Peeks 2015, 44).

The first and the second generations of battlecruisers are designed and commissioned

The *Invincible* class ships, initially also called cruiser-battleships and dreadnought cruisers, were officially designated battlecruisers by the RN in 1911 (Roberts 1997, 25). The three ships were built and commissioned between February 1906 and October 1908 (Hough 1975, 242). They were as big as the *Dreadnought* (20,000 tons), armed with eight 12-inch guns, and capable of steaming at 25 knots (4 knots faster than the *Dreadnought*). However, the additional speed came at the cost of considerably lighter armor protection (Roberts 1997, 24). 'Speed is armor', declared Fisher, and claimed that the new vessels could catch any enemy vessel and flee any superior force. What is more, he wanted to defend the home isles primarily with flotilla craft (light cruisers, destroyers/torpedo boats and submarines), and to use the high-speed battlecruisers to protect the Empire's shipping lanes and communications. He thought the narrow seas around the British Isles were too dangerous for large capital ships given the rapidly advancing naval technologies used to produce weapons such as torpedoes and mines (Lambert 1995).

However, Fisher's eventual capital-ship-building program during his first tenure as the First Sea Lord 1904-1909 was a compromise, as he stated:

> "…at the present moment naval experience is not sufficiently ripe to abolish totally the building of battleships so long as other countries do not do so" (Roberts 1997, 25).

With the help of the Committee on Navy Estimates, Fisher laid out a radical vision for the development of capital ships during 1906-07. The committee, which he dominated as the only professional sailor on it, advocated a perpetual revolution in shipbuilding so that each year's capital-ship designs would double the offensive power of any vessel of the same nominal class in existence. This approach was at odds with the RN tradition of allowing other navies to experiment with new ship designs first before outbuilding them with Britain's superior shipyard capacity. The battlecruiser loomed large in Fisher's strategic designs. However, at no time did he explicitly explain what he thought its mission was, not at least to larger circles in the RN (Peeks 2015, 71-77).

A second generation of battlecruisers was built and commissioned between February 1909 and June 1913 (Hough 1975, 242). This was the *Indefatigable* class, consisting of three ships (HMS *Indefatigable*, HMAS *Australia* and HMS *New Zealand*, the latter two funded by their eponymous dominions). Compared to the first-generation vessels, these ships were essentially enlarged *Invincibles,* the only major difference being their ability to fire wing turrets across the deck. They were criticized for not showing any real improvement such as in armor protection at a time when Germany was launching its larger and better-protected first battlecruiser SMS *Von der Tann*

(Roberts 1997, 28-31). In this respect, the *Indefatigables* did not live up to Fisher's promises of perpetual revolution.

The third-generation battlecruisers or Fisher's 'Splendid Cats'

The *Indefatigables* were rapidly followed by a third generation of battlecruisers, the 'Splendid Cats' of the *Lion* class that were built and commissioned between November 1909 and September 1913 (Hough 1975, 242). They included HMS *Lion*, HMS *Princess Royal* and HMS *Queen Mary*, and were larger and somewhat faster ships than their predecessors (26,350 tons and 26 knots).

The construction of the evolving German battlecruiser clearly had an effect on the British Admiralty in that it went along with Fisher's desire for a considerable leap in speed and power (Peeks 2015, 144). HMS *Tiger*, built and commissioned between June 1912 and October 1914, was an updated Splendid Cat, the largest (28,500 tons), fastest (29 knots) and the most expensive (£2,086,458) dreadnought of her time. She was also the only battlecruiser with secondary six-inch armament intended for use against enemy torpedo craft, and her armor protection was superior to that of the *Lion* class (Hough 1975, 242-243). The *Tiger* was not yet fully operational when she was put to the test in the battle of Dogger Bank in early 1915.

Jon Sumida argued for a so-called technical-tactical synthesis, which meant that instead of trading blows at a long distance, the (secret) British tactical doctrine for battlecruiser action would be to overwhelm the enemy with a flurry of effective mid-range gunnery before they could respond. Speed and the ability to maneuver quickly would be essential components in achieving this (Sumida 1989, 160-162). Given the lack of convincing documentary evidence, however, many naval historians are not convinced of the existence of such a doctrine (Bell 2016). In general, however, it is clear that the introduction of successive battlecruiser generations caused the RN to seriously ponder alternative tactics to efficiently capitalize on the potential of the new warship type (see e.g. Morgan-Owen 2015, 490-491 on the use of the BC Squadron in the pre-war British North Sea strategy). As will be argued later, even if a good deal of thought and practice had been put into these efforts, they were not always very systematic or coordinated from an organizational point of view.

Churchill drops the construction of battle cruisers

With the help of his supporter King Edward VII, Fisher emerged victorious in the 'Great Edwardian Naval Feud' of 1909 between the Fishpond and the 'Syndicate of Discontent' led by Admirals Lord Charles Beresford and Sir Reginald Custance (Freeman 2009; 2015). Custance in particular held strong views against the building of dreadnoughts in general and battlecruisers in particular. Fisher was elevated to the Peerage as the 1st Baron Fisher of Kilverstone at the end of 1909, and retired soon after. He still continued as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defense and advisor to the First Lord (Mackay 1973). In October 1911 the young politician Winston S. Churchill replaced Reginald McKenna, Fisher's close ally and a successful First Lord (Farr 2007).

Churchill was adamant in making his mark on Admiralty strategy. He immediately replaced Fisher's successor, the timid and authoritarian Admiral of the Fleet Sir

Arthur Knyvet Wilson with Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman as the First Sea Lord (in office from the 5th of December, 1911 until the 9th of December, 1912). Wilson had made an unfavorable impression as a strategist in the Committee of Imperial Defense, for example (Bradford 1923). Bridgeman, an able administrator but a colorless personality, was not a good match for the energetic and flamboyant Churchill and was soon replaced by Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg (in the office of the First Sea Lord from the 9th of December, 1912 until the 30th of October, 1914) (Ross 1998). Prince Louis also proved a capable administrator but lacked a strategic vision and the will to contradict his superior in any way (Hough 1984). None of the above-mentioned three First Sea Lords were similarly attached to the battlecruiser concept as Fisher, and simply saw it as a necessary response to German efforts at building fast ships of a similar design.

The RN shed the last remnants of Fisher's global strategy (e.g. the idea of building a strong fleet around fast battlecruisers in the Asia-Pacific) early on in Churchill's term of office, even though Fisher and Churchill continued to correspond very actively (Peeks 2015, 192). Despite Fisher's vocal advice to the contrary, Churchill decided to stop constructing battlecruisers altogether. Instead, he ordered a new class of fast super-dreadnought oil-fired battleships, the *Queen Elizabeth* class, to be designed and constructed between October 1912 and February 1916 and comprising five 27,500 ton heavily armored battleships (HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, HMS *Warspite*, HMS *Valiant,* HMS *Barham*, and HMS *Malaya*, the last-mentioned financed by the Malayan government). These ships were armed with eight enormous 15-inch guns and had a top speed of 25 knots, which made them the fastest battleships well into the 1930s (Hough 1975, 240). Churchill evidently wanted more heavily armored, fast ships that were capable of acting as the fast wing of the main battle fleet in action.

Fisher considered the new ships too slow for battlecruiser duties, and excessively costly (Bell 2015). He still saw their main function as reconnaissance and hunting enemy raiders, secondary to their direct duties against the battlecruiser squadron of the enemy (i.e. Germany). The RN had nine battlecruisers in commission at the beginning of the war in August 1914, and the tenth (*Tiger*) was nearing completion. The main opponent, the Imperial German Navy, had four in commission (SMS *Von der Tann*, SMS *Moltke*, SMS *Goeben*, and SMS *Seydlitz*) and a fifth (SMS *Derfflinger*) nearing its commissioning (Hough 1975, 251-252). The German battlecruisers were better armored and compartmentalized, and had a more advanced fire-control system.

The Battle of Heligoland Bight

After the outbreak of the war the RN saw action in the battle of Heligoland Bight on the 28th of August 1914. The British battle plan was based on the observation that German light cruisers and destroyers had adopted a fairly regular pattern of patrols in Heligoland Bight each evening. The idea was thus to send a superior force commanded by Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt in the darkness to annihilate the German destroyers as they returned from their patrols. Submarines led by Commodore Roger Keyes would also lie in wait to ambush any larger German ships leaving the Jade Estuary to support the other ships.

The Germans were taken by surprise and overwhelmed in the ensuing battle. Despite fighting gallantly, three German light cruisers (SMS *Mainz*, SMS *Cöln*, and SMS *Ariadne*) and one torpedo boat were sunk. The German dreadnoughts at the Jade could not join the battle in the morning because the low tide prevented them from exiting the estuary. Three additional light cruisers were damaged, and a total of 712 men were killed (including the German commander, Rear Admiral Leberecht von Maass), 530 were injured, and 336 were taken prisoner. The British had only one light cruiser and three destroyers damaged, with 35 men killed and 40 wounded. However, the raid might have been a disaster for them had the additional heavy forces under Beatty not been sent to reinforce the raiders. (Goldrick 2015, 111-138; Marder 1963, 50-54) In fact, Beatty's battlecruisers saved the day for the RN. The battle was publically hailed as a great victory in Britain (Osborne, 2006: ix, 78), even if the German ships proved difficult to sink despite being heavily damaged, and the German gunnery and seamanship were excellent. Despite not being very active in the battle, Beatty and his battlecruisers were publically hailed as heroes. The squadron started to assume an aura of heroism, a battle-hardened band of brothers.

The Battle of the Falkland Islands

After a humiliating defeat in the battle of Coronel between the squadrons of Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock and the German East Asian Squadron commanded by Vice-Admiral Maximilian Graf von Spee off the coast of Chile at the beginning of November 1914, the British quickly assembled a new naval force under Vice-Admiral Sir Fredrick Doveton Sturdee (a prominent member of the Syndicate of Discontent whom Fisher detested). Meanwhile, Fisher had returned to the Admiralty for his second term as the First Sea Lord after Prince Louis was forced to step down on the 30th of October 1914, not least because of his German birth (Hough 1984, 307). As the Chief of the Admiralty War Staff, Sturdee had made the unfortunate decision to send Cradock's inferior squadron against von Spee. Upon his return, Fisher immediately removed him from that post and sent him to 'clean up his mess' in the South Atlantic (Hough 1969, 327).

Sturdee's squadron consisted of the first-generation battlecruisers HMS *Invincible* and HMS *Inflexible*, four armored cruisers, and two light cruisers. The plan was to hunt down and destroy von Spee's force. The battlecruisers would fulfill one of their original missions – to find and annihilate enemy cruisers threatening the sea lanes of the British Empire. Fisher sent a third battlecruiser, HMS *Princess Royal,* to the West Indies in case von Spee attempted to enter the Atlantic through the Panama Canal.

While Sturdee was steaming towards the South Atlantic, von Spee sailed round the Horn, and on the 8th of December 1914 he attempted to raid the British supply base at Stanley in the Falkland Islands. This time luck was not on his side. Sturdee had arrived in the port only one day before and Von Spee was taken by surprise:

> "…about 8 o'clock on December 8 his leading ship (the *Gneisenau*) was in sight of the main harbour of the Falklands. A few minutes later a terrible apparition broke upon German eyes. Rising from behind the promontory, sharply visible in the clear air, were a pair of tripod masts. One glance was enough. They meant certain death. (Only dreadnoughts had tripods)" (Churchill 1923, 474)

There was maximum visibility and the sea was placid. The advance cruisers of the German squadron were detected early on from Stanley harbor. Had von Spee caught the British squadron by surprise there and attacked immediately he might have had a fighting chance. All the German vessels except two were hunted down and sunk during the ensuing battle. Coronel was avenged: the RN sank two armored cruisers and two light cruisers, and captured and scuttled two transporters. A total of 1,871 Germans (including von Spee) were killed and 215 were captured. On the British side only 10 people were killed and 19 wounded, and no ships were lost – despite the fact that accurate German gunnery made several hits on many British vessels. (Marder 1963, 118-129)

The battle of the Falklands practically put to an end to the raiding on the high seas by the regular warships of the German Imperial Navy. Sturdee was hailed as a great victor upon his return to the British Isles. (Spencer-Cooper 2011)

The Battle of Dogger Bank

The battle of Dogger Bank was fought on the 24th of January 1915. The prompt appearance of the British forces during an earlier German raid led the German battlecruiser squadron commander Vice-Admiral Hipper to suspect that British fishing boats were providing intelligence on German fleet movements, and he decided to attack them on Dogger Bank in the middle of the North Sea. The German force consisted of the 1st Scouting Group of the High Seas Fleet augmented with four light cruisers of the 2nd Scouting Group and two flotillas of 18 torpedo boats.

Through Room 40 Intelligence activity at the Admiralty, which had access to the German naval code-books captured by the Russians in August 1914, the British had learned of the planned sortie a day earlier. Again, they dispatched a considerable force to trap Hipper. Beatty sailed from Rosyth with a force of five battlecruisers and four light cruisers reinforced with three additional cruisers and 35 destroyers from the Harwich Force. He headed south, encountering Hipper's screen at Dogger Bank at 0705, with unusually good visibility. Taken by surprise, the weaker and slower German force immediately turned back and headed for their well defended home port.

During a chase that lasted several hours, the British forces slowly caught up with the Germans, who were slowed down by the lower top speed of the obsolete cruiser SMS *Blücher*, and finally engaged them in a long-range gunnery duel. The British disabled the *Blücher*, the rear German ship, but the Germans also inflicted heavy damage on Beatty's flagship HMS *Lion* and put it out of action. In return, SMS *Seydlitz*, Hipper's flagship, was also heavily damaged and almost exploded due to a direct hit on one of its main turrets. Because of a severe signaling error made by Beatty, the remaining British ships led by his second in command, Rear Admiral Sir Gordon Moore on HMS *New Zealand*, broke off the pursuit to finish off the hapless *Blücher*. To the aggressive Beatty's great disappointment, the rest of the German force managed to escape. (Marder 1963, 156-175)

Unlike the Britons, the Germans took the lessons of the battle of Dogger Bank to heart. The battle highlighted their dangerous ammunition-handling procedures (there were similar flaws in the British ships, but practically no action was taken). Although the Germans realized that the repeated appearance of the Royal Navy at dawn could

not have been mere coincidence, they did not suspect that their wireless codes had been compromised.

The battle of Dogger Bank was not particularly consequential in itself. Despite the fact that Fisher and Beatty regarded it as a disappointing failure, it gave British morale a great boost. It also clearly showed the tactical challenges of two battlecruiser squadrons engaging with each other. Being able to maintain a high speed, the quality of communications between the ships, and accurate gunnery were the essential success factors. There were considerable shortcomings in all three areas on the British side. It was also evident that the armor protection of the battlecruisers and their ammunition-handling procedures were seriously flawed, a problem that was to cost them dearly in the Battle of Jutland.

Fisher's 'Rhadamanthus' project: the fourth and fifth generations of battlecruisers

Upon his return to the Admiralty Fisher immediately began planning the construction of a new class of battlecruisers, the working name of which was '*Rhadamanthus*' (Peeks 2015, 262). The following quotation from his correspondence explains the situation:

> "90. Fisher to Jellicoe (Add. MSS. 49006, ff. 91-2) Admiralty, Whitehall, December 23rd, 1914. …I am now alone here fighting the battle for more battle cruisers. I wish, when you have leisure, you would write me a casual sort of letter which I can show to the Cabinet (not as if you were responding to my request; not an official memorandum) that the supposed existing superiority that we have in fast battleships that we now have is FALLACIOUS! More especially in quoting Queen Elizabeths as they do. None of our existing ships have the necessary FUTURE speed! The new German Lützow battle cruiser, with possibly 14-inch guns, or even 16-inch, will have certainly over 28 knots speed! We must have 32 knots speed to give us a margin for being long out of dock, and to give the necessary excess of speed to CATCH a 28-knot ship! …SPEED is EVERYTHING… If I don't get these 3 battle cruisers of 32 knots speed, I shall have to leave the Admiralty on January 25 next." (Patterson 1966, 115)

Fisher wanted more heavily armed (even 16-inch guns), very fast and lightly armored battlecruisers. These ships would be swiftly and cheaply built and would not last for decades, but they would be capable of immediate action. His plans eventually materialized in two new battlecruiser classes: the *Renown* class and the *Courageous* class. The two 26,500-ton, 32-knot *Renown*-class ships (HMS *Renown* and HMS *Repulse*), constructed between January and September in 1915, were the fastest capital ships in the world at the time. They carried six 15-inch guns, and had an original belt armor of only four inches (later increased to nine inches). The *Courageous* class battlecruisers (HMS *Courageous* and HMS *Glorious*) were built between May 1915 and January 1917. They were the smallest dreadnoughts (sometimes called large light cruisers or light battlecruisers), with a displacement of 18,600 tons and a top speed of 33 knots, and carried four 15-inch guns. Both were later converted into aircraft carriers, as was their sister ship HMS *Furious* (originally designed with two 18-inch guns as the main armament). (Hough 1975, 243) The last three vessels, sometimes called '*Lord Fisher's Oddities*', were badly suited for war (Harkins 2015). As Peeks (2015) notes:

> "Fisher, however, despite his correspondence with and personal affection for Beatty and especially Jellicoe, was entirely at odds with the prevailing thinking in Scapa Flow and

> Rosyth. The result was the construction of five ships that took none of the supposed lessons of the war to heart." (p. 272)

Fisher harbored wild strategic dreams, such as sending a large naval force, protected by the new and fast but shallow-draft battlecruisers, to the Baltic to land an army (British or Russian) on the coast of Pomerania (Marder 1963, 191-198). Nothing came of them.

All in all, Fisher was able to convince the Board of the Admiralty to build his oddities. When he resigned in May 1915, on account of the unsuccessful naval campaign in the Dardanelles, there was nobody at the Admiralty who shared his obsession with building battlecruisers. Churchill also had to resign shortly afterwards due to the Dardanelles fiasco. The problems with battlecruiser design and the lack of a strategic and tactical doctrine for their effective use in combat were also becoming clear. The novel First Lord–First Sea Lord duo, Arthur Balfour and Admiral Henry B. Jackson (in office until November 1916), took a highly phlegmatic approach to administration and leadership at the Admiralty (Peeks 2015, 292). From the top down, they did nothing to clarify the RN's battlecruiser doctrine before the vessels were put to a serious test in battle.

The Battle of Jutland

The infamous battle of Jutland was fought at the turn of May and June in 1916. To give a concise account, in the largest naval engagement of the war (151 British ships against 99 German vessels), the battlecruiser fleet commanded by Beatty was able to lure the entire German High Seas Fleet into the arms of Jellicoe's Grand Fleet. However, the cautious Jellicoe did not want to expose his numerically superior fleet to enemy torpedoes and mines in direct pursuit when the German Commander-in-Chief Vice-Admiral Reinhard Scheer twice decided to use his well-rehearsed tactic of quickly turning away from the approaching British force. (Brooks 2016)

The outcome of the battle was tactically indecisive, the British losing fourteen and the Germans eleven ships. However, due to the sinking of three British battlecruisers (HMS *Indefatigable*, HMS *Queen Mary* as well as HMS *Invincible*) and three older large armored cruisers, the British casualties were considerably higher: 6,094 officers and ratings lost vis-à-vis 2,551 among the Germans. The Germans were also forced to scuttle their newest and most powerful battlecruiser SMS *Lützow* during the battle. The outcome of the battle did little to change the strategic outlook of the RN in terms of controlling the North Sea and endorsing a distance blockade of Germany. Although the Germans claimed victory, an American war correspondent put it as follows: "The prisoner has assaulted his jailer, but he is still in jail." (Marder 1966, 37-195)

As far as the battlecruisers were concerned, the battle of Jutland proved controversial. The fighting was heroic but there were heavy losses. In the midst of it, Beatty reportedly uttered his famous words to his Flag Captain Ernle Chatfield of HMS *Lion*: "*There must be something wrong with our bloody ships today, and our bloody system*" (Lambert 1998, 29; Chalmers 1951, 262)[4]. The *Lion* was also almost lost at Jutland, and Rear Admiral Sir Horace Hood perished on his flagship HMS *Invincible* when it was destroyed by heavy German fire.

In the aftermath of the battle, the Admiralty found several reasons for the appalling loss of so many battlecruisers. Much of the blame was attributed to insufficient armor protection, and additional belt and deck armor was soon installed on most of the remaining ships. Later historiography highlighted the dangerous ammunition and cordite-handling procedures onboard as key explanations for the losses. It has also been claimed that inefficient British gunnery combined with the wrong tactical decision to use the vulnerable battlecruisers as a fast wing of the entire fleet significantly contributed to the loss of so many vessels. Finally, Beatty's leadership has been described as unnecessarily aggressive and even reckless. Indeed, he used his fast ships as the 'cavalry of the fleet', luring the Germans into the potentially deadly embrace of the entire Grand Fleet. After the battle there was a long-lasting controversy between supporters of the cautious Jellicoe on the one hand and of the aggressive Beatty on the other (Roskill 1980, 322-349).

The second Battle of Heligoland Bight

After the Imperial German Navy's successful raid on a Scandinavian convoy on the 17th of October 1917, Commander-in-Chief Beatty ordered the Grand Fleet to retaliate. A strong force of cruisers under Vice Admiral Trevylyan Napier set sail on the 17th of November to attack German minesweepers in Heligoland Bight. Room 40 Intelligence at the British Admiralty had again revealed the intentions of the Germans in advance. The German minesweepers were escorted by a group of cruisers and torpedo boats under Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter.

The clash resulted in an inconclusive battle between the British and German forces in which the light battlecruisers HMS *Courageous* and HMS *Glorious* and the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* played a major role. The British withdrew when two German supporting battleships joined the battle. A German minesweeper was sunk, a German light cruiser was damaged by a direct hit from the *Repulse*, and a German direct hit killed all the personnel on the bridge of the RN light cruiser HMS *Calypso*. (Harkins 2015, 45-52) A high-ranking naval officer present at the battle wrote directly to Lord Fisher on the 12th of December 1917:

> "In the late action of the Heligoland Bight the only heavy ships which could get up with the enemy were the "Repulse", "Courageous", and "Glorious" (the "Renown" and "Furious" were elsewhere). They very nearly brought off an important coup! …It is a pleasure for me, therefore, to be able to let you know that they have fully justified your anticipation of their success." (Harkins 2015, 53)

The 'Mighty Hood': the last battlecruiser

The last of the British battlecruisers, HMS *Hood* was built between May 1916 (in fact, she was laid down on the 31st of May when the Battle of Jutland commenced) and March 1920. She displaced 41,200 tons, had eight 15-inch guns as her main armament, and was capable of steaming at 31 knots. For more than two decades she was the largest warship in the world, showing the White Ensign all around the Empire (Hough 1975, 244).

Both Jellicoe and Beatty had strongly advocated the construction of new, more powerful battlecruisers (instead of the planned Admiral class battleships) in 1915. Jellicoe in particular was convinced of the superiority of new German battlecruisers

(the Germans only managed to build SMS *Hindenburg* instead of the class of five vessels that had been laid down). Only the *Hood* was built for the RN, instead of four additional battlecruisers (Roberts 1997, 55-62). She was not finished in time to be used in WWI, but was famously annihilated by the modern German battleship *Bismarck* in WWII in the battle of the Denmark Strait on the 24th of May, 1941 (Winklareth 2012; Taylor 2008). Vice Admiral Sir Lancelot Holland, the commander of the British force, joined Rear Admiral Horace Hood among the RN admirals killed in battlecruiser action[5]. Again, despite considerable rebuilds and extra armor added between the two world wars, the loss of the *Hood* was attributed primarily to insufficient armor protection. The RN saga of Fisher's Greyhounds of the Seas came to an end in the RN with the sinking of the *Hood* and the destruction of the *Repulse* by Japanese aircraft in December 1941[6].

Leaders, organizational attention, and the moderating effect of organizational gestalts

Fisher, Jellicoe, Churchill, and Beatty as Leaders and Proponents of the Battlecruiser Concept

As must now be evident to the reader, Fisher was the originator and the most vehement proponent of the battlecruiser concept. He wanted this powerful class of ships to protect the sea lanes of the Empire from German armored cruisers and armed merchantmen, and later from the more and more powerful German battlecruisers that had been built in accordance with the British model. It gradually became clear to the key officers of the RN that German battlecruisers were in many ways superior to their British counterparts in design and operational use. To some extent, Fisher wanted to use battlecruisers as a reconnaissance force in the Grand Fleet, although he did not emphasize the need to use them as a fast wing of the Grand Fleet in the battle line. As Peeks (2015) points out, his greatest shortcoming was perhaps that he failed to develop and communicate a consistent battlecruiser doctrine for the RN.

According to Ross (2010, 198), Fisher was typically over-confident in his convictions. He thought explaining himself beyond his Fishpond as unwise and unnecessary. This did not serve him well in promoting his designs. His controversial character inspired his supporters but enraged his opponents, most famously admirals of the 'Syndicate of Discontent' such as Beresford and Custance (Freeman 2015). In the long run, Fisher's demeanor caused a lot of officers to abandon the battlecruiser, despite its merits. The concept was too novel, many officers who favored the heavily armored battleship had serious misgivings about the light armor protection, and Fisher's vehement endorsement even annoyed many like-minded officers.

John Jellicoe was perhaps the second-most-important figure in the development of the battlecruiser concept in general. He was an original member of the Committee on Designs, serving from 1904 until 1905, and as one of Fisher's 'seven brains' was the Director of Naval Ordnance in 1905-1907, Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy in 1908-1914, C-in-C, Grand Fleet in 1914-1916, and finally the First Sea Lord in 1916-1917. He was a calm and rational man, very different from Fisher as a character. However, his subordinates admired and respected him immensely for his likeability

and humbleness. (Bacon 1936; Patterson 1969) He originally thought that the battlecruiser would be extremely useful and, after the Germans started building their own versions, a necessary class of ships. Unlike Fisher, he was thoroughly informed about the technological details, and even before the war broke out he was deeply concerned about the perceived tactical inferiority of British battlecruisers vis-á-vis their German counterparts (Patterson 1966, 39-40).

Winston S. Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty during Fisher's interregnum period and his second term as the First Sea Lord in 1912-1915, gradually became opposed to building battlecruisers. Fisher's successors, First Sea Lords Wilson and Bridgeman, had continued and even stepped up their construction in 1910-1912. The main reasons for opposing the concept in the Senior Service remained the same: their insufficient armor protection and the ambiguous tactical concept of the role of this class of ships in battle. Thus, Churchill ended up merging the battleship and battlecruiser concepts in his *Queen Elizabeth* class of fast super-dreadnoughts.

Finally, Sir David Beatty, the battlecruiser commander and later Commander-in-Chief, took an active role in developing the concept. He was deeply aware of the defects of the different generations of battlecruisers, but was nevertheless adamant about using them aggressively against the enemy line in the battle of Dogger Bank and at Jutland, for example. ‚Both battles were severe disappointments to him (Marder 1966, 239), having been unable to annihilate his main opponent Vice-Admiral Hipper's German Battlecruiser Squadron. Thus, Beatty essentially saw the role of the battlecruisers as acting against their opposite German numbers and preventing them from exiting the North Sea.

He spent considerable energy in discussing the battlecruiser concept and its strengths and weaknesses with his superiors and his subordinates, and he was especially interested in how the public and the navy regarded his leadership:

> *"(iii) Beatty to Jellicoe (Add. MSS. 49008, f. 116)*
> *Lion,*
> *20th June 1916.*
>
> *I wired you this morning asking for my expurgated despatch to be published as a supplement to yours. I fear greatly that quotation will never make clear the movements etc. of my little lot. They can always be twisted and turned.*
> *I have already had unpleasant experiences in this matter. Vide after 24th Jan. [the battle of the Dogger Bank] when the Admiralty stated that at — p.m. I broke off the action, this purporting to be a quotation from my report, which was of course absolutely not in accordance with the facts in my report. This caused considerable adverse criticism in one instance. I was stigmatised as [a] rotter of the worst description and ought to have been shot with the shade of Byng standing by as a witness. I am not particularly sensitive to criticism but it cannot be good for the Service to be always put down as a bloody fool while still commanding a unit of the Fleet."* (Ranft 1993, 288-289)

The evolution of organizational attention to the battlecruiser concept

There are sufficient related communications in the study material to form a rich overall picture of how the battlecruiser concept was generally perceived in the RN. To put it simply, the new vessel type was always approached with caution within the Senior Service despite Fisher's early claims of superiority (Roberts 1997, 114).

Without a proper naval staff before 1912, and with the First Lords/First Sea Lords running one-man shows at the top, the RN was ill-equipped to develop a well-functioning battlecruiser doctrine, not to mention its effective communication to key admirals afloat, for example. With accumulating experience of their use in battle, a number of ad hoc improvements were made both to materials and tactics in subsequent generations. The perceived urgency of refining the concept is evident in the following excerpts:

> "Jellicoe to Beatty 18.11.15
>
> I am afraid you must have been very disappointed at Lion and Tiger's battle practice results. I can't understand how a control officer of experience could have made such a shocking blunder as that made by Lion's control officer. It's elementary. I fear the rapidity ideas was carried to excess in one case (Queen Mary I think). Also the RF [rangefinder] operators were bad. It is most difficult for you to give them proper practice I know and I wish I could see a cure. I suggest your coming north or sending one or two BCF squadrons north for our next exercise cruise which I propose to carry out as soon as the moon is less brilliant, in about 10 days. Will that suit you? I think it would be useful to have the battle-cruisers with us for some PZ's1 and will get out a programme. The locality must depend on the known position of German ships at the time of course.... I am only too sorry you can get so little sea work, but while the Germans sit so tight one cannot do anything..." (Patterson 1966, 188)
>
> "Jellicoe to Jackson 6.6.16.
>
> The fight itself was mismanaged...The battle-cruiser is aventuresome ship, and our battle-cruisers are under a venturesome commander—more power to him. But those responsible seem to have forgotten that the Germans can see where we are blind, otherwise they could never have so disposed their forces as to leave the cruisers to withstand the attack of the entire German fleet alone." (Patterson 1966, 273)

Patterson (1966) summarized the key lessons the RN learned before and after the battle of Jutland as follows:

> "Some British inferiorities in matters of materiel were or had formerly been realised by Jellicoe, though perhaps not fully—shells, armour protection, especially of the battle-cruisers, and ship-construction in general, as shown throughout the war by the fact that whereas British ships frequently blew up, German ships had to be battered to pieces before they sank. Others remained for the battle itself to demonstrate at our expense—the danger of ships being destroyed by a flash to the magazine via the ammunition hoist, the advantage the German stereoscopic rangefinder tended to give in the vital matter of getting on target first (though the British system of director control was better for holding the target), the German superiority in the use of smoke-screens, and at night star-shells (of which the British had none), searchlights and rapid recognition signals." (p. 212)

Thus, in an evolutionary fashion, the RN became increasingly aware of the following key technological and organizational problems with the battlecruiser: (1) inefficient fire control, (2) insufficient armor protection, (3) insufficient speed in older ships, and (4) dangerous ammunition and cordite-handling procedures. These four issues were the major topics the RN as an organization deliberated when addressing the emergent problems with the battlecruiser concept as a whole.

Pollen complained about dreadnought's fire control in spring 1916, immediately before the Battle of Jutland:

> "The Orion is the only ship so far fitted with the Pollen Clock, and it is said that all the battle cruisers are to have it, as well as the Scott Director. The director complements the clock. While one finds the spot at which to aim, the other centres the fire of all the guns on that object. There seems to be a widespread feeling here that as soon as these appliances are in more general use the conditions of battle practice should be made more exacting, so as to ascertain exactly what extension of gunnery possibilities the Pollen system throws open." (Sumida 1984, 349)

However, when the battle started not much had been done to make battlecruiser gunnery more effective in terms of improved fire control, despite the fact that the gunnery of this class of ships had been found wanting since the first battle of Heligoland Bight. After the Falklands victory, for instance, Fisher was dismayed to learn that Sturdee's battlecruisers had needed to fire 1,174 rounds, or almost 75 percent of their ammunition to annihilate the enemy (Marder 1963,126).

However, as Brooks (2016; 2005) has shown, the Pollen system was not as superior to the Dreyer system as implied in earlier historians' studies, especially in the foggy North Sea conditions. The key problem with the firing of British battlecruisers was that, being based at Rosyth rather than at Scapa Flow, by the time of Jutland they had not had enough real-life target practice. That is primarily why their fire control was less efficient than that of British battleships. Because of the conditions at Jutland, the equipment was less of an issue than the capability of the gun crews. (Brooks 2016, 497-505; 2005, 284-287, 292-298)

With regard to armor protection, every successive battlecruiser generation had more armor until '*Sir John Fisher's Oddities*' built after 1915. This was largely because corresponding German battlecruiser generations tended to be more heavily armored than their British counterparts because they were designed to operate mainly in the North Sea. Extra belt and deck armor and better protection for the gun turrets were also added to many of the ships (e.g. the *Lion* and the *Tiger*) during the war, largely based on the fact that, after Jutland, the vulnerability of the battlecruisers was attributed to insufficient armor protection instead of lacking anti-flash measures. (Roberts 1997, 99-111)

Fisher's credo, "speed is armor" had proven only partially sound during the war. For battlecruisers to use their superior speed effectively against slower enemies, the long-range gunnery needed to be much more accurate than it was in practice. Range finding was also difficult in combat situations, and it was hard to estimate whether or not the ship was within the enemy's efficient range. Older and slower models also became decreasingly useful as part of the Battlecruiser Squadron/Fleet because they could not keep up with the newer RN and enemy units. The breakout of German battlecruisers into the Atlantic to harass merchant and later US troop convoys was the ultimate nightmare of Beatty and other battlecruiser commanders (Peeks 2015, 195). RN battleships and older battlecruisers were not able to outrun fast, new German vessels such as SMS *Seydlitz* and SMS *Lützow*. Only the newer British ships such as the *Lion* and the *Tiger* were up to the task. Notably, the Germans had never seriously considered this kind of daring operation.

The problems with careless ammunition and propellant handling, and with insufficient anti-flash procedures in gun turrets were not realized in the RN even though such

practices almost caused the loss of the *Lion* at Dogger Bank and on another occasion at Jutland. A high rate of fire was emphasized at the expense of safety. The Germans nearly lost the *Seydlitz* at Dogger Bank for similar reasons, but immediately changed their dangerous procedures. Beatty's post-Jutland investigations revealed this error, albeit most of the blame for defects in battlecruisers was put on faulty design. As Peeks (2015) put it:

> "Immediately after the battle, Beatty appointed a series of committees to examine the battle and its lessons. The "Committee on Construction of Battle Cruisers," chaired by Pakenham, concluded by mid-June that "British battle cruisers, whether in service or about to be commissioned, are unequal to the duties assigned to them," on account of their thin armor. Even taking into account that this body was invested in placing blame on battlecruiser design (rather than their ammunition-handling practices), the committee's judgment here is hard to rebut." (p. 304)

Finally, as mentioned above on several occasions, the gravest problem was perhaps the fact that the RN lacked a sound strategic doctrine for the use of battlecruisers in combat (Peeks 2015). For instance, Sturdee deliberately aimed at keeping his thin-skinned ships beyond the range of the guns of the enemy in the Battle of the Falkland Islands, in line with Fisher's original argument that the ship would use its superior all-big-gun armament to annihilate its enemy from a safe distance.

However, at both Dogger Bank and Jutland Beatty faced a potentially technologically superior enemy with potentially more efficient fire control, and failed to keep his ships at a distance. The RN almost lost the *Lion* at Dogger Bank, and the Imperial Navy lost the obsolete cruiser SMS *Blücher* in the gunnery duel between the two squadrons. The RN lost three battlecruisers at Jutland against one (SMS *Lützow*) that the Germans scuttled themselves. In addition, Beatty failed to appreciate the problems with the ammunition handling as a root cause of his ships' failures. On a more general level, the strategic misconceptions relate to the fact that there was no general agreement within the RN as to whether a battlecruiser was essentially a vessel to hunt down enemy ships threatening British commerce, a fast and powerful scout ship, or a fast addition or wing to the battle line of the Grand Fleet.

Jellicoe's battle orders from spring 1916 stated (Patterson 1966):

> "The primary function of battle-cruisers is the destruction of the battle-cruisers of the enemy. …If the enemy has no battle-cruisers present, or after his battle-cruisers have been destroyed, the function of our vessels of this class is to act as a fast division of the Battle Fleet and to attack the van of the enemy if it is possible to attain a sufficiently commanding position." (p. 251)

The most dangerous situation for this thinly armored vessel type would naturally be its last-mentioned role of a fast wing, for which it was never originally intended. However, and also in accordance with Jellicoe's battle orders cited above, both Beatty and Hood used their battlecruisers for this purpose at Jutland – with disastrous consequences.

The moderating effect of organizational gestalts

As the battlecruiser concept evolved within the RN, two levels of organizational configuration interacted to produce the class of vessels that eventually comprised 13 ships plus the three light battlecruisers of the Courageous class. The first was the

organizational structure (the positions of the First Sea Lord and the Board of the Admiralty, for example) and key leaders fulfilling their different official and unofficial roles. As mentioned, the British Admiralty was frequently run as a sort of one-man show, especially under powerful figures such as Fisher and Churchill, and given the absence of a well-functioning naval staff before 1912 (Black 2009). Second, and more importantly with regard to battlecruisers, there was the level on which the key actors perceived the concept as an amalgamation of technical, strategic and tactical issues pertinent to the design and use of the class of ships in combat.

Most of the discussions in the Committee on Designs and at the Board of the Admiralty naturally revolved around issues related to naval technology (e.g. the propulsion system, armaments, and armor) and their application in different generations of battlecruisers. Leaders such as Jellicoe who were also technological experts could easily dominate these discussions (after all, Fisher was not an expert in the newest naval technologies). However, strategic conceptions concerning the use of the battlecruiser were surprisingly vague. In practice, it was only Fisher and later Jellicoe and Beatty who tried to put forward such higher-level considerations. The problem with Fisher was that he was very vague and secretive in his formulations. Conversely, Jellicoe favored extremely detailed battle orders, and was prepared to account for every possible contingency. The problem here lay in the fact that there was very little strategic and tactical experience of the use of battlecruisers in combat, and it was impossible to draft such detailed instructions *ex ante*. Finally, Beatty had the most hands-on perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of his ships. His habit of giving individual commanders and captains a considerable degree of tactical freedom specifically suited the 'cavalry of the fleet'. However, this contrasted sharply with the traditional authoritarian culture of the RN, in which subordinate commanders had to follow their instructions to the letter. The RN of the WWI era paid a heavy price for this in suppressing individual commanders' initiative in combat (Gordon 1996).

One could argue that the central organizational schema or gestalt dominating key officers' thinking about battlecruisers related to the Anglo-German naval arms race, and *the comparison* between British and German ships. Once the Germans started building their own dreadnought battlecruisers the RN was locked into this sub-race to out-build and outclass the enemy. As mentioned, neither the older battlecruisers nor any battleship could match the speed of the newest battlecruisers, and each party was forced to build ever more powerful classes of ships to counter the threat from the other. HMS *Hood*, the last battlecruiser, was twice the size and three times the cost of the first one, HMS *Invincible*. The entire '*I*' class was already practically obsolete in comparison to the most modern enemy battlecruisers when war broke out. However, the *Invincibles* did well in their more traditional role that Fisher had envisaged – hunting down armored enemy cruisers globally.

The British realized after the war that their assessment of the German battlecruiser construction program during it was considerably exaggerated. Jellicoe in particular was almost frenetic in arguing for the strengthening of the British force, quite correctly perceiving the German ships to be significantly superior to the British vessels in terms of endurance and fighting ability (Roberts 1997, 40; see also Dodson 2016). Considerable organizational attention was devoted to making constant comparisons between different generations of battlecruisers in the two countries. The

same applied to the Imperial German Navy, which suffered from what could be described as an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the RN. However, these comparisons were not service-wide or systematic in the RN (Peeks 2015). Organizational attention to new vessel designs did not rely on specifically designed procedures as it did in the US Navy, which involved officers studying in the Naval Academy in its assessment and communication processes, for example (Peeks 2015, 169-170). The RN way was more individual and leader-centered, haphazard and unsystematic. However, one could still argue that, in the end, it was rather effective in developing a functioning battlecruiser concept to be used in combat during war. Once problems were detected – with some notable exceptions such as the procedures for handling cordite and ammunition - organizational attention was heavily channeled and directed to relevant issues in gradually bringing about improvements. However, throughout the entire period under analysis the RN organization lacked a formal governance structure that facilitated this (cf. Joseph and Ocasio 2012).

Conclusions

All in all, the battlecruiser proved far less disruptive technologically than Fisher and some of his disciples originally claimed. The general historiographical interpretation has been that the WWI-era battlecruisers proved faulty in design and in combat. This was also the impression of most contemporary officers of the RN. However, as I hope the above discussion has shown, this was not such a clear-cut case in reality. There were some successes (as in the Falklands) and some dismal failures (such as Jutland) in their tactical use in WWI. Both outcomes could be attributed to the different roles played by this new class of ships, from mopping up enemy cruisers to acting as a fast wing of the Grand Fleet. As the ships became more powerful throughout successive generations and as the war progressed, caution gave way to aggression. After Jutland and the loss of three battlecruisers, however, even the aggressive and impulsive Commander Beatty toned his ambitions down. As C-in-C later on he acted almost as cautiously as the calculative Jellicoe (Roskill 1980). Lessons had evidently been learned the hard way.

As Fisher had envisaged, after the war the battlecruiser gradually merged with the battleship as the top speed in the new models gradually increased towards 30 knots. The last of the British battleships, the 44,500-ton HMS *Vanguard* commissioned in 1946, was capable of steaming at 30 knots (Hough 1975, 241). Thus, the rationale for building more battlecruisers vanished as technology developed in the 1920s and 1930s[7]. One could argue that the British battleships of the WWII era were essentially heavily armored battlecruisers. Moreover, the dreadnought capital ship in general became increasingly vulnerable as submarines, torpedoes, mines and naval aviation developed. Fisher had also foreseen this evolution, and the dreadnought became extinct as a fighting machine during and after WWII (although the USS *Missouri* and the USS *Wisconsin* still operated and were in combat for the last time in the First Gulf War of 1991). The aircraft carrier quickly replaced it as the primary class of capital ships.

In sum, the following observations could be made about the theoretical lessons learned from the above discussion. The first research question concerned the key personal characteristics and effectuation mechanisms of top leaders in persuading the

organizational adoption of a novel technological concept such as the battlecruiser. As I have shown, the RN needed a vehement character such as Sir John Fisher to institute the naval revolution that occurred before WWI broke out. Had it not been for him, the battlecruiser concept would probably not have become a reality. Considering it his favorite technological brainchild, Fisher practically shoved the battlecruiser down the throat of the more or less reluctant RN. He used all of his persuasive powers and a vast quantity of memos, letters and other correspondence to put forward his views. He was also a skilled and early user of the media and public relations to direct attention to his designs (cf. Nigam and Ocasio 2010). What is more, he instituted several high-profile committees within the organization of the RN to endorse, the building of battlecruisers, among other things. However, despite all the energy he put into advertising the concept within the RN and in the media, he failed to develop and communicate a sound doctrine for their use in practice. Later on, as the performance of this class of ships in combat proved less satisfactory than expected, criticism quickly mounted as many high-ranking officers began to doubt their prospects in general. All in all, it is strongly indicative of Fisher's superb persuasive powers that upon his return to the Admiralty in 1914-1915 he was immediately able to revive the organization's faltering interest in battlecruisers and to order the *Renown*s and '*Sir John Fisher's Oddities*' at the beginning of 1915. In terms of Ocasio's (2011) three varieties of managerial attention, Fisher's early actions mainly represented the traditional top-down perspective. He was also skilled in using expert committees and his trusted Fishpond members as agents to promote his battlecruiser concept to achieve attentional engagement throughout the organization of the RN. His actions and the reactions within the RN could also be seen as a very clear case of how organizational effectuation works in practice (Sarasvathy 2001). Novel technological concepts are put forward, negotiated and re-negotiated in a fluid process of adoption and opposition within the organization. Even if Fisher had originally wanted to completely replace the battleship with the battlecruiser as the predominant type of capital ship, he was clearly not able to convince the RN to abandon the prevailing dominant concept.

What is more, Jellicoe and Beatty oversaw the rapid evolution of the battlecruiser concept with generation after generation of faster and more powerful ships being built in the naval arms race between the British and the German Empires. For them it was no longer primarily a matter of whether the ships were needed in the first place, or even how they would be employed most efficiently in battle. As the Germans were (supposedly) stepping up battlecruiser construction, the British had to do the same. Both admirals were successful in convincing the RN organization of the need always to maintain its numerical superiority over the German High Seas Fleet. Thus, it was no longer the case of a visionary leader or genius (see Hough 1969, 277) putting forward a novel, potentially disruptive technological and organizational concept. More technocratic, rationalistic leaders were taking over as the battlecruiser was developing and maturing[8]. In Ocasio's (2011) terms, Jellicoe and Beatty were able to deepen attentional engagement in the concept within the RN, efficiently combining top-down and bottom-up executive attention and vigilance.

The second research question concerned the process of adoption and how it unfolds and changes when the technology is gradually proving to be less efficient than predicted. This relates directly to attentional selection within an organization, in other words to the outcome dimension of attentional processes (Ocasio 2011). As

mentioned, voices that were critical of the battlecruiser concept emerged immediately after the launch of the first dreadnoughts (Ross 2010) and during the fierce Beresford-Fisher feud (Freeman 2015). Later on this led to a 'hot stove effect' (Denrell and March 2003) within the RN organization, meaning that it essentially declined to learn from ongoing experimentation and the selection of best solutions. Once the cat has sat on the hot stove, it refuses to sit on a stove that is cold. Thus, the organization starts acting conservatively and refuses to take any risks, even if that would have been the sensible path to follow (Denrell and March 2003). Churchill's decision to invest in the construction of fast battleships instead of building new battlecruisers just before WWII could be seen as an indication of the hot stove effect. This became more visible later on during the war as it became evident that the Germans were unable to realize their once-ambitious battlecruiser construction program. Resources were diverted to building other types of vessels, especially smaller craft and submarines. However, the battlecruiser concept proved resilient: the RN still built the *Renown*s, the '*Oddities*' and the '*Mighty Hood*' during the war. What is more, considerable attention and resources were devoted to fixing the major problems identified in the design of the existing ships. All in all, the battlecruiser case reported in this study corroborates the distributed assemblage viewpoint on strategy processes put forward by Ocasio and Joseph (2005). The central focus of attention was the fluid and ever-changing concept, in other words the focal organizational schema or gestalt.

My final question concerned how evolving organizational schemas or gestalts emerge and moderate the process of adopting and improving on a novel technological and organizational concept. This is probably where the major contribution of my study lies. In essence, as Linschoten (1959) put it:

> "… A gestalt is a completed unit of human experience. It is a unique aesthetic formulation of a whole; it will to some degree involve contact, awareness, attention, and figure formation out of the ground of my experience; it arises out of emergent needs and is mobilized by aggressive energy." (p. 289)

The gestalt of the battlecruiser started with the technical specifications of the ship and emerging ideas about its potential use as a revolutionary weapon of war for protecting commerce and mopping up enemy raiders. This was well in line with the more or less prevailing materialist school of thought of the time. The more numerous and the more powerful the ships were, the better. Gradually, the gestalt behind the concept became increasingly complex and nuanced during the Anglo-German naval arms race, and essentially related to the different battlecruiser generations created by the participants. The dominant viewpoint was that the older generations of ships were becoming obsolete at an ever-accelerating pace. The media and strong public interest in naval matters in both the UK and Germany intensified the overall attention to the battlecruiser gestalt. When the British ships were tested in combat and some of their features were found seriously wanting, the gestalt assumed more critical tones geared towards their perceived flaws in design and in operational use. Thus, the evolving battlecruiser gestalt could be argued to have strongly moderated the adoption and correction process of the ship type. After the Jutland catastrophe the decision was made to attach additional armor plate to existing battlecruisers to make them less vulnerable, for instance. However, nobody – not even Fisher – was in full charge of the whole adoption and correction process in the RN, and no systematic procedures were developed to test and develop it further.

A key point is that the visionary but somewhat disorganized Fisher as the creator and a strong advocate of the battlecruiser concept gradually yielded ground to more rational and operationally capable leaders (Jellicoe and Beatty in particular) as the battlecruiser gestalt evolved generation after generation of vessels that were built and used in action during the war. The case is a good illustration of how organizational attention evolves, especially in combining top-down and bottom-up attentional processes. Conceptually, it deepens understanding of how the leader's personality and the three attentional processes (Ocasio 2011) intertwine, and of the role played by organizational gestalts related to an emerging technological concept in this process. Thus, the main theoretical contribution of the study is the emphasis on the evolving schema or gestalt, in this case the battlecruiser concept as a technological innovation. The gestalt is to be seen as a key mediating organizational mechanism, the evolution of which is not to be understood as an exclusively top-down (contrary to what Ocasio 2011, 1288-1289 suggests with reference to research on managerial mental models or schemas) or bottom-up (i.e. purely stimulus-based) process. As the case study demonstrates, this process essentially involves the complex interplay of visionary leadership, vigilance, engagement, and attentional selection, in which top-down and bottom-up inputs intertwine as the gestalt evolves.

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[1] Based on experimental Gestalt psychology (e.g. Linschoten 1959), organizational schemas or gestalts have been studied since the 1960s and 1970s. The multiple realities that human beings construct can only be understood as gestalts in a holistic sense (Hirschman 1986, 238). A gestalt or a schema is usually defined as an abstract representation of a direct perceptual experience, a flexible and evolving structure arranged in a network of interlinking 'nodes' or constituents (Wertheimer 1923; Brunswik and Kamiya 1953). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a gestalt as *"…a structure, configuration, or pattern of physical, biological, or psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by summation of its parts"* (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gestalt).

[2] The position was previously called the post of the First Naval Lord.

[3] In line with the key literature on strategic management (see e.g. Barker and Duhaime 1997), the term organizational turnaround is defined here as the implementation of the strategic and operational actions required to save an organization from failure, based on an understanding of the causes of organizational decline. This requires visionary leadership, organizational restructuring and the creation of a new organizational culture.

[4] Out of courtesy to Beatty, Chalmers omitted the word 'bloody' from his original account.

[5] The *Hood* had been launched in August 1918 by the widow of Rear Admiral Sir Horace Hood, a descendant of Admiral Samuel Hood, the namesake of the warship (Taylor 2008, 15-19).

[6] HMS *Renown* survived both World Wars and was scrapped in 1948 (Burt 1993, 242).

[7] However, the US Navy built two reconnaissance battlecruisers of the lightly armored 'Fisher design' for use in WWII.

[8] Even the flamboyant and impulsive Beatty seemed to adopt a more cool and rational approach in his later career as C-in-C of the Grand Fleet and First Sea Lord (Roskill 1980).

III

OFFICERS IN THE 'FISHPOND' AND THEIR ROLES IN THE ROYAL NAVY OF THE FISHER ERA 1904–1919

by

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OFFICERS IN THE 'FISHPOND' AND THEIR ROLES IN THE ROYAL NAVY OF THE FISHER ERA 1904–1919

Abstract

Admiral Sir John Fisher was the leading figure behind the considerable reforms that took place in the Royal Navy before and during the First World War. Britain was engaged in a costly naval arms race with Imperial Germany during the Fisher era of 1904–1919. The controversial admiral surrounded himself with a network of followers who were tangential to the success and continuation of many of his reforms. This network has been termed the 'Fishpond'. It is often seen as a valuable resource for Fisher, enabling him to realize his organizational reforms. On the other hand, derogatory perspectives also prevail, as a 'Syndicate of Discontent' was formed to oppose Fisher's designs. This article examines the role of the Fishpond in relation to the official institutions of the RN. Who were the most influential officers in the Fishpond and how did their careers evolve under Fisher's patronage? What were their roles in carrying out Fisher's reforms? Finally, how effective was the Fishpond in general as a 'tool' in the reform process of the RN, especially in the face of the fierce internal opposition to it?

Keywords

Naval history, Sir John Fisher, Fishpond, strategic leadership, the Royal Navy

INTRODUCTION

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher of Kilverstone, (1841–1920) was the leading figure behind the considerable technological and organizational reforms that took place in the Royal Navy (RN) before and during the First World War (WWI)[1]. Britain was engaged in a costly naval arms race with Imperial Germany during the Fisher era of 1904–1919[2]. The reforms he initiated have often been termed Sir John Fisher's naval revolution[3], and a vivid

1 In his seminal work, Marder termed the entire period of 1904–1919 'the Fisher Era', see e.g. Arthur J. Marder, *The Road to War, 1904–1914. From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904–1919*, Vol 1. (Oxford, 1961). Sumida goes even further and states that the period that began in 1889 with the 'two-power standard' and ended in 1918 could, with ample justification, be called the age of Fisher. Jon Sumida, 'British Naval Administration and Policy in the Age of Fisher', *The Journal of Military History*, 54, No.1 (1990), 1–26.

2 In terms of naval tonnage, in 1914 when WWI broke out, the RN comprised 2,205 thousand tonnes of commissioned ships, and the Imperial German Navy 1,019 thousand tonnes, Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York, 1999), 85; see also David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe 1904–1914* (Oxford, 1996), 8. The annual construction figures clearly show how Germany gradually lost the naval arms race before the outbreak of the Great War.

3 Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia, 1999); Jon Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889–1914* (Boston, 1989).

historiographical debate has ensued as to the strategic emphasis, effectiveness and the role of Fisher himself in instituting the process of significant organizational change within the RN [4] . Historiographical debates notwithstanding, Fisher served from 1886 to 1903 as Director of Naval Ordnance, Third Sea Lord and Controller, and Second Sea Lord, and as the Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet. In these positions, he could observe and occasionally compensate for the shortcomings in the materiel, education and manning of the fleet. More importantly, when he took over as First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty in October 1904 he was free to devise a much more ambitious and holistic scheme of reforms[5]. During his first tenure as First Sea Lord in 1904–1910 he realized several major administrative and technological reforms. For instance, he introduced the Dreadnought model of powerful all-big-gun capital ships that made earlier capital-ship designs practically obsolete. He had a short second stint as First Sea Lord during the War in 1914–1915 when, among other things, he succeeded in re-commencing the construction of battlecruisers, his favourite design of capital ship[6].

However, as a leader Lord Fisher was a deeply controversial figure. Headstrong and visionary, occasionally petty and vindictive, he invoked both admiration and hatred among the officers of the RN. On the one hand, he was very effective in gathering a loyal network of followers from all walks of life in the British Empire to support his designs. This network extended within and beyond the ranks of the RN, and ranged from King Edward VII to some key politicians, courtiers and influential journalists. Fisher effectively used publicity and the media to advance his cause. More importantly, his network comprised some of the most talented officers of the RN who were essential to the success and continuation of many of his reforms. This coterie of more-or-less loyal followers has often been termed the 'Fishpond'.

Nevertheless, a 'Syndicate of Discontent' formed around the disillusioned admirals Lord Charles Beresford and Reginald Custance during Fisher's first period as First Sea Lord, fuelled by his ruthless ways of working. A 'Great Edwardian Naval Feud' ensued, seriously dividing the RN into two opposing camps.[7] In 1909, Beresford succeeded in convincing Prime Minister H.H. Asquith that a formal inquiry would be needed to investigate some key Admiralty policies[8]. Fisher emerged victorious from the inquiry, but he was

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4 See e.g., Christopher M. Bell, 'Contested Waters: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era', *War in History*, 23, No.1 (2016), 115–26; Christopher M. Bell, 'Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution Reconsidered. Winston Churchill at the Admiralty, 1911–1914, *War in History*, 18, No. 3 (2011), 333–56.

5 Sumida, *British Naval Administration and Policy*, 3.

6 Jon Sumida, 'British Capital Ship Design and Fire Control in the Dreadnought Era: Sir John Fisher, Arthur Hungerford Pollen, and the Battle Cruiser', *The Journal of Modern History*, 51, No. 2 (1979), 205–30.

7 Richard Freeman, *The Great Edwardian Naval Feud: Beresford's Vendetta Against 'Jackie' Fisher* (London, 2009); Geoffrey Penn, *Infighting Admirals. Fisher's Feud with Beresford and the Reactionaries* (Barnsley, 2000).

8 Keith McLay, 'Swimming in the 'Fishpond' or Solidarity with the 'Beresfordian Syndicate': An Analysis of the Inquiry by the Subcommittee of Imperial Defence into Naval Policy, 1909', *International Journal of Naval History,* 12, No. 1 (2015).

practically forced to step down in January 1910. He continued in an advisory capacity and as a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence until his second period as First Sea Lord in 1914. After his unseemly resignation in May 1915 primarily due to the failed Dardanelles campaign, his influence swiftly declined. However, he continued to serve as the chairman of the Government's Board of Invention and Research (B.I.R.). Other men, most significantly the members of his Fishpond, continued and modified many of his reforms.

The Fishpond is mentioned in a large number of memoirs, biographies and historical studies[9]. It is perceived as a valuable resource that enabled Fisher to realize his organizational reforms, although derogatory appraisals are also prevalent. Fisher was often accused of favouritism and nepotism, and it has been argued that membership of or at least affiliation with the Fishpond was a prerequisite for an officer's career success during the Fisher era. Although this might not have been entirely accurate, it has been pointed out that members of the Fishpond constituted a more talented batch of officers than those excluded from it. Fisher clearly wanted to handpick resourceful individuals to work on his reforms. However, the division between the progressives he embodied and the conservatives led by Beresford was by no means as clear-cut as presented in a lot of historiography[10]. Many young pro-Fisher officers, such as Herbert Richmond, later became critical of the old admiral seeing, for instance, his preoccupation with materiel as an obstacle to true reform[11].

The aim in this article is to provide answers to the following research questions. What was the Fishpond in relation to the official structures and institutions of the RN? Who were the key and most influential officers in the Fishpond? How did their careers evolve in terms of carrying out Fisher's central reforms? All in all, how effective was the Fishpond as a 'tool' in the process of reforming the RN, especially in the face of the fierce internal opposition to many of Fisher's major reforms?

The article is based on the following groups of primary and secondary materials. The first group comprises unpublished and published primary materials. Thus, the unpublished[12] and published professional and personal papers of admiral Fisher[13], the papers of Admirals of the Fleet John

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9 For instance, Stewart Ross, *Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman* (Cambridge, 1998), 76, 121; Jan Morris, *Fisher's Face: or, Getting to Know the Admiral* (London, 1995), 15; Richard Hough, *Louis & Victoria. The Family History of the Mountbattens* (London, 1984), 193.

10 Nor was the division between the materialists (e.g. Fisher, Jellicoe) and the historicists (e.g. Custance, Richmond).

11 Barry D. Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, 1871–1946* (Waterloo, 1982), 3.

12 Most essentially, including the Fisher papers in the Churchill Archives at the University of Cambridge (FISR 1–16).

13 For the professional papers, see Paul K. Kemp, editor, *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher. Volumes I and II* (London, 1964); for the personal papers, see Arthur J. Marder, editor, *Fear God and Dread Nought. The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Volume I, The Making of an Admiral, 1854–1904* (London, 1952); Arthur J. Marder, editor, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone. Volume II: Years of Power, 1904–1914* (London, 1956); Arthur J. Marder, editor, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet*

Jellicoe[14] and David Beatty[15], both of whom acted as Commanders-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet and as First Sea Lords during the War or immediately thereafter, were consulted. What is more, the edited papers of Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and of the War Cabinet[16], Hankey's unpublished papers in the Churchill Archives at the University of Cambridge[17], the unpublished papers of Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis of Battenberg, First Sea Lord 1912–1914[18], and Winston S. Churchill's papers on naval matters in the Churchill Archives at the University of Cambridge were consulted[19].

The second group of materials includes Fisher's memoirs and biographies,[20] and the extant memoirs and/or biographies of the key RN officers involved either in the Fishpond or in the upper echelons of the RN in general. Among the most important of these are the memoirs and biographies of Jellicoe[21], Beatty[22], Fisher's greatest adversary Lord Charles Beresford[23], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson (First Sea Lord, 1910–1911)[24], Admiral Sir Francis

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Lord *Fisher of Kilverstone. Volume III: Restoration, Abdication, and Last Years, 1914–1920* (London, 1959).

14 Alfred Temple Patterson, editor, The Jellicoe Papers. Volumes 1 and 2. Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe of Scapa (London, 1968).

15 Brian M. Ranft, editor, *The Beatty Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Èarl Beatty. Volume I. 1902–1918* (Aldershot, 1989), Brian M. Ranft, editor, *The Beatty Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Èarl Beatty: Volume II: 1916–1927* (Aldershot, 1993).

16 Stephen W. Roskill, editor, *Hankey: Man Of Secrets. Volume I (1877–1918)* (London, 1970).

17 Especially Hankey's letters to Fisher, HNKY 5/2.

18 Mountbatten Papers: Personal and naval papers of Prince Louis of Battenberg, first Marquis of Milford Haven (MB1/T), University of Southampton, Britain.

19 CHAR 13/1–72.

20 John A. Fisher, *Memories and Records by the Admiral of the Fleet Fisher. Volume One: Memoirs (London, 1919); Volume Two: Records* (New York, 1920); Reginald H. Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone: Admiral of the Fleet. Volumes One and Two* (Garden City, 1929); Richard Hough, *First Sea Lord. An Authorised Biography of Admiral Lord Fisher* (London, 1969); Ruddock F. Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone* (Oxford, 1973); Morris, *Fisher's Face*.

21 Admiral Viscount Jellicoe, *The Grand Fleet 1914–1916: Its Creation, Development and Work* (New York, 1919); Admiral Sir R. H. S. Bacon, *The Life of John Rushworth Earl Jellicoe* (London, 1936); Alfred Temple Patterson, *Jellicoe. A Biography* (London, 1969); Donald M. Schurman, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe (1916–1917), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, 101–112, ed. by Malcolm Murfett (London, 1995).

22 Stephen Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty. The Last Naval Hero: An Intimate Biography* (London, 1980); Brian M. Ranft, Admiral David Earl Beatty (1919–1927), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, ed. by Malcolm Murfett, 127–140 (London, 1995); Charles Beatty, *Our Admiral: Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty, 1871–1936* (London, 1980).

23 Richard Freeman, *Admiral Insubordinate: The Life and Times of Lord Beresford* (London, 2015); Charles Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford* (London, 1914).

24 Edward Eden Bradford, *Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson* (London, 1923); Nicholas A. Lambert, Admiral Sir Arthur Knyvett-Wilson, V.C. (1910–1911), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, 34–53, ed. by Malcolm Murfett (London, 1995).

Bridgeman (First Sea Lord, 1911–1912)[25], Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis of Battenberg (First Sea Lord, 1912–1914)[26], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson (First Sea Lord, 1915–1916)[27], Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Oliver (Chief of Staff during the most of WWI)[28] and Admiral Sir Percy Scott, the inventor of the Scott director firing system[29]. The biography of Admiral Herbert Richmond,[30] as well as the autobiography of Admiral Reginald Bacon were also consulted[31].

The third group comprises the key sources used to shed light on the organization and leadership of the RN during the Fisher era. It included studies on key admirals at the upper echelons of the RN organization[32], the organization of the British Admiralty [33] and its initiative-suppressing culture [34], on the emergence of the naval staff after its belated inception in 1912 due to vehement opposition from First Sea Lords Fisher and Wilson [35], its strategy and war planning[36], and on Admiralty plans to counter the German threat[37].

THE ADMIRALTY ORGANIZATION, FISHER'S REFORMS AND THE FISHPOND

In what follows, the central institutions of the British Admiralty are described in terms of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning in any given social setting[38]. The formal organization of the RN and its rules, culture and norms, and the central beliefs related to the use of favouritism in the upper echelons of the organization are briefly discussed in line with the central tenets

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25 Ross, *Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman*; Nicholas A. Lambert, Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman-Bridgeman (1911–1912), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, 55–74, ed. by Malcolm Murfett (London, 1995).

26 Mark Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg: Admiral of the Fleet* (London, 1934); Hough, *Louis & Victoria*; John B. Hattendorf, Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg (1912–1914), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, 75–90, ed. by Malcolm Murfett (London, 1995).

27 Malcolm Murfett, Admiral Sir Henry Bradwardine Jackson (1915–1916), in *The First Sea Lords. From Fisher to Mountbatten*, 91–100, ed. by Malcolm Murfett (London, 1995).

28 Admiral Sir William James, *A Great Seaman: The Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry F. Oliver, G.C.B, K.C.M.G., M.V.O., L.L.D.* (London, 1956).

29 Peter Padfield, *Aim Straight. A Biography of Admiral Sir Percy Scott* (London, 1966); Percy Scott, *Fifty Years in the Royal Navy* (London, 1919).

30 Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar*.

31 Reginald Bacon, *From 1900 Onward* (London, 1940).

32 Tony Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet 1734–1995* (London, 2002), 126.

33 C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty. British Naval Policy-Making, 1805–1927* (Cambridge, 2011).

34 Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game. Jutland and British Naval Command* (London, 1996).

35 Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (London, 2009).

36 Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887–1918* (London 2012).

37 Matthew S. Seligmann, The Royal Navy and the German Threat 1901–1914. Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade in a War Against Germany (Oxford, 2015).

38 W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests and Identities* (London, 2014), 55–8.

of institutional theory[39]. The aim is to shed light on the context within which Fisher's reforms took place and where he applied his own version of favouritism.

The British Admiralty was governed by the Board of Admiralty during the Fisher era of 1904–1919. The Board consisted of three political members (First Lord, Civil Lord, and Financial Secretary) and various professional members (the Sea Lords, the Permanent Secretary and some civilian professionals). After 1912, a Naval War Staff was formed under the leadership of the First Sea Lord and a separate Chief-of-Staff. It was renamed Naval Staff in 1917, and the First Sea Lord also assumed the role of the COS. Many supplementary committees (such as Fisher's original Committee on Designs 1904–1907) supported the work of the formal institutions.[40]

Within the British Admiralty, the First Sea Lord was the admiral who directed all strategic, tactical and organizational RN matters, assisted by three (later four) subordinate Sea Lords[41]. The civilian First Lord was primarily a political figurehead who rarely interfered in professional matters: Winston S. Churchill, who served in 1911–1915, was an exception in this respect. The Second Sea Lord was responsible for the manning and training of the fleet, the Third Sea Lord and Controller for the provision of materiel, including ships and their armament, and the Fourth Sea Lord for supplies and transport (the Fifth Sea Lord was later responsible for the Naval Air Arm).[42] As I will demonstrate below, most officers in the Fishpond centrally worked as Sea Lords at some point during their careers.

The positions of the Director of Naval Construction, the Engineer-in-Chief, the Director of Naval Ordnance, the Director of Dockyards and of Stores, and the Inspector of Dockyard Expense Accounts, which were under the governance of the Department of the Controller, were also central figures in the strategic leadership of the RN. The DNCs and DNOs were of tantamount importance to Fisher and his reforms. He worked with two eminent civilian DNCs: Sir Philip Watts (1902–1912, designing HMS *Dreadnought* and the *Queen Elizabeth* class of fast battleships, for example) and Sir Eustace Tennyson d'Eyncourt (1912–1924, designing the Renown class of battlecruisers and HMS *Hood*, for example)[43]. Fisher thanks both men heartily in his Memories[44]. The Director of Naval Ordnance was another position very closely related to the duties of the Director of Naval Construction, responsible for everything related to guns, gun-mountings, magazines, torpedo apparatus, electrical fittings for guns and other electrical fittings[45]. As I will show, many officers in the Fishpond

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39 See John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony', *American Journal of Sociology*, (1977) 83, No. 2, 340–63; Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review*, (1983), 48, No. 2, 147–60.

40 Reginald H. S. Bacon (editor), *Britain's Glorious Navy* (London, 1943), 49–54.

41 Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy*, 7–40.

42 Bacon, ed., *Britain's Glorious Navy*, 50.

43 Eustace Tennyson D'Eyncourt, *A Shipbuilder's Yarn: The Record of a Naval Constructor* (London, 1948).

44 Fisher, *Memories*, 257–58.

45 Bacon, *From 1900 Onward*, 161.

essentially worked as DNOs and assistant DNOs in bringing about some of Fisher's most important technological reforms and innovations.

In sum, Fisher's post-1904 reform scheme entailed the scrapping of more than 150 obsolete men-of-war around the Empire, the creation of a Reserve Fleet with nucleus crews, the redistribution and concentration of RN fleets to home waters to counter the increasing German threat, and the introduction of many novel technologies into naval warfare, most significantly the *Dreadnought* battleship and the battlecruiser. Contrary to common assumptions, Fisher was, in fact, critical of battleships, and emphasized the importance of the torpedo and the submarine.[46] Although many of his reforms proved controversial, and some appeared to have failed miserably, there is a consensus among historians that, in general, Fisher and his team was able to turn around the RN from its languid state before war broke out.

Robert L. Davison provides an analysis of the profound change in the officer corps of the RN during the period of 1880–1919[47]. Most significantly, the rapidly developing naval technology and military professionalization created a need for fundamental change in the recruitment and education of officers in general, and engineer-officers in particular. The social and economic upheavals in Britain also meant that more officers were drawn from outside of the nobility and the upper classes. The leadership of the navy became a matter for public debate both in the media and in Parliament. All in all, there was an increasing emphasis on capability over social position and personal contacts in achieving promotion and success. This change was not easy, however, and the RN of the pre-Fisher era seemingly lacked the institutions and impartial procedures to ensure the promotion of the ablest individuals.[48] What is more, the traditional culture of the RN emphasized the following of orders to the letter, and thus strongly suppressed subordinates' own judgment and initiative.[49] Fisher wanted to profoundly change the prevailing organizational culture of the RN, and especially the way in which officers were promoted to key positions.

Thus, the often-derided Fishpond essentially provided Fisher with the means to realize many of his hotly debated reforms. However, he still advanced the careers of its members by means of favouritism, not unlike the common practice in the 19th century, the difference being that those who were promoted were young, bright and personally loyal to their patron rather that men with family and social connections[50]. Extant historical analyses have shown how civil servants, including RN officers, moved from the traditional patronage culture towards increased bureaucratization and professionalization in mid-19th

46 Patterson, *Jellicoe*, 37–8; for a more detailed analysis, see Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone,* 1–28; Kemp (Editor), *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher. Volume I*, 9–11.

47 Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command. The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880–1919* (Farnham, 2011).

48 Davison, *The Challenges of Command*, 1–24, 247–55.

49 Gordon, *The Rules of the Game*, 315–39.

50 Davison, *The Challenges of Command*, 10, 15–6.

century Britain[51]. However, at the beginning of the 20th century the RN was still largely dominated by highly subjective officer-promotion methods that were heavily reliant on the opinion of superiors, especially in the case of candidates for the upper echelons of the organization. A positive perspective on favouritism is adopted in this article: it allows leaders to ensure the functioning of the organization in situations in which it is impossible to accurately and objectively monitor and incentivize subordinate behaviour and performance[52]. This may apply, in particular, to the formation of well-functioning top-management teams for the visionary leadership of organizations. Favouritism may be a tacit-knowledge-based mechanism for ensuring that the right people occupy the right positions, especially in times of rapid and forceful change.[53]

In general, Fisher was distrustful of the staff organization that was proposed for the RN at the beginning of the 20th century, a General Staff for the Army having been created in 1904[54]. Although making some supporting gestures, he thought that a formal staff organization would constitute an intelligence hazard at the time of naval information leaks. What is more, he wanted to surround himself with trusted people he could choose himself, rather than relying on the establishment of a formal staff bureaucracy in the Prussian style. What he wanted was essentially a loosely-knit 'brains trust' instead of a formalized staff as the 'brain of an army'[55]. The informal system that worked well for him for some time, however, quickly broke down under his successor, the autocratic and unapproachable Admiral Wilson. Consequently, a Naval War Staff was created in 1912 to formalize the analysis and planning at the Admiralty.[56] Many Fishpond members contributed to the establishment and institutionalization of the staff organization, which were far from straightforward tasks.

The Fishpond comprised a wide-ranging collection of senior and junior officers both on land and at sea, including civil servants within the naval organization. Fisher also had a talent for recruiting 'affiliate' members into his

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51 Nicholas A. M. Rodger, 'Patronage and Competence' in Martine Acerra, Jose Merino and Jean Meyer, eds, *Les Marines De Guerres Européenes XVII–XIIIe Siecles* (Paris, 1985), 237–48; Christopher Dandeker, 'Patronage and Bureaucratic Control: The Case of the Naval Officer in English Society, 1780–1850', *British Journal of Sociology*, 29, No. 3 (1978), 300–20; Edward Hughes, 'Civil Service Reform, 1853–5', *Public Administration*, 32, No. 1 (1954), 17–51.

52 Adam Bellow, *In Praise of Nepotism. A History of Family Enterprise from King David to George W. Bush* (New York, 2003); Canice Prendergast and Robert H. Topel, 'Favoritism in Organizations', *The Journal of Political Economy*, 104, No. 5 (1996), 958–78.

53 On the philosophical level, John Cottingham makes the case that favoritism in human behaviour is, in fact, inevitable and even desirable. Impartiality in different decision situations is deemed practically impossible, or even immoral – and against human nature, John Cottingham, 'Partiality, Favouritism and Morality', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 36, No. 144 (1986), 357.

54 John Gooch, *The Plans of War. The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900–1916* (London, 1974).

55 The was much discussion about the merits of the German-style general staff organization in Britain during the decade before the First World War. For instance, Spenser Wilkinson published his book *The Brain of an Army. A Popular Account of the German General Staff* (London, 1913).

56 Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War*, 54–5.

personal network, who would be useful for his undertakings. As mentioned, these ranged from King Edward VII to key politicians, industrialists and representatives of the media. The focus in this article, however, is on the role of the relatively few high-ranking Fishpond officers in the upper echelons of the RN. All of them except for Bacon and Scott advanced to the highest naval rank of the Admiral of the Fleet[57].

THE FISHPOND: KEY PERSONAGES, CAREERS AND ROLES

The following members of the Fishpond were the key affiliates Fisher primarily worked with before and during his first stint as First Sea Lord in 1904–1910[58]. Many of them also held important positions at the Admiralty or afloat during the War and after it. They were, on average, 17 years younger than Fisher (Scott 12 years and Bacon 22 years). In what follows, the officers are portrayed in terms of their careers and major achievements, especially in the light of Fisher's key reforms, focusing also on personality, leadership style and their relationship with Fisher.

Prince Louis of Battenberg

Perhaps the most influential Fishpond member before the War broke out, and an early and loyal follower of Fisher was Admiral of the Fleet Prince Louis Alexander of Battenberg (after 1917, 1st Marquess Mountbatten of Milford Haven, 1854–1921). A German prince of royal blood, albeit always also a British subject due to his close family relations with the British royal family, Louis entered the RN at the age of fourteen in 1868. He quickly proved a resourceful and reliable officer with excellent social skills and connections, not least due to his high birth. Prince Louis was promoted to the rank of Captain at the relatively young age of 37 in 1891.[59] In addition to captaining several men-of-war in diverse stations around the Empire, he acted as a liaison officer between the army and the navy, and as joint secretary of an organ that was later to develop into the Committee of Imperial Defence. He was appointed Assistant Director of the Naval Intelligence Division in 1899. What is more, he acted as an aide-de-camp to three monarchs: Victoria (his grandmother), Edward VII and George V.[60]

Prince Louis became more deeply acquainted with Fisher when he was acting as the captain of the battleship HMS *Implacable* in the Mediterranean Fleet, of which Fisher was the Commander-in-Chief. Fisher immediately

57 Corresponding to the rank of Field Marshal in the army.

58 Marder lists Scott, Jellicoe, Bacon, Madden, Oliver, Richmond and Jackson as Fisher's key assistants or 'Fisher's jackals', as the opponents characterized them. See Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow. The Road to War 1904–1914*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1961), 84. What is more, Fisher himself lists his former assistants Bacon, Madden, Oliver, Hood, de Bartolomé, Richmond and Crease "*…as the most able men in the Navy*", Fisher, *Memories*, 104.

59 Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg*, 166.

60 Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg*, xiv; 138.

recognized the wide-ranging abilities of the noble prince, which ranged from technical know-how to tactical and literary skills.[61] Prince Louis was appointed Director of Naval Intelligence in 1902, and was promoted to Rear Admiral in July 1904, shortly before Fisher rose to power as the First Sea Lord in October. In his biography of Louis of Battenberg, Richard Hough argues that the prince essentially acted behind the scenes, using his connections in high society to get the controversial Fisher appointed as First Sea Lord in 1904[62]. Fisher had previously made many enemies within the RN: as Second Sea Lord, for example, he instituted the controversial Selborne(-Fisher) scheme, a novel concept for officer recruitment and training[63].

Prince Louis was given the command of the Second Cruiser Squadron in 1905, and in 1907 he took over as acting Vice Admiral and Second-in-Command of the Mediterranean Fleet. He was promoted to Vice Admiral and appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet in 1908. The size of the Fleet was considerably diminished following Fisher's efforts to concentrate the most powerful ships in the North Sea to counter the increasing threat from the German Imperial Navy. [64] Louis returned to the Admiralty as Second Sea Lord in December 2011, in charge of creating an Admiralty War Staff, which Fisher and Wilson had refused to do. He was promoted to Full Admiral in July 1912, and further appointed to succeed Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman[65] as First Sea Lord in December 1912.[66] The young and dynamic First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston S. Churchill, endorsed Prince Louis' appointment thinking that he would be less dogmatic than Fisher but more dynamic than either of his immediate predecessors Bridgeman and Wilson. What is more, with the malleable prince at the professional helm of the Senior Service, Churchill became the *de facto* strategist at the top of the Admiralty. First Lords thus far had rarely interfered in professional questions concerning ordnance and materiél, for example. Churchill, however, going against Fisher's advice, decided in 1912 to drop battlecruiser construction altogether in favour of the fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class[67]. On many occasions, however, the diplomatic Battenberg was able to moderate the relationship between the First Lord and flag officers on the Admiralty Board. The latter were often exasperated by Churchill's impulsive interferences in professional matters.[68]

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61 In a letter to Arnold White in August 1902, Fisher described Prince Louis as "*…my best Captain in the Mediterranean Fleet*", and in a letter to Arthur J. Balfour in January 1904, Fisher dubbed Mountbatten "*…out and away the best man inside Admiralty building*", Marder (ed.), *Fear God and Dread Nought*, Vol. I, 262, 293, see also 326.

62 Hough, *Louis & Victoria*, 194–8.

63 Oliver Johnson, 'Class Warfare and the Selborne Scheme: The Royal Navy's Battle over Technology and Social Hierarchy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 100, No. 4 (2014), 422–33.

64 Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg,* 214–21.

65 Despite being a close associate of Fisher's, Bridgeman was not a member of the Fish-pond.

66 Hough, *Louis and Victoria*, 244–256; Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg*, 238.

67 Christopher M. Bell, 'The Myth of a Naval Revolution by Proxy: Lord Fisher's Influence on Winston Churchill's Naval Policy, 1911–1914', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38, No.7 (2015), 1024–44.

68 Hattendorf, *Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg*, 79–80.

On the other hand, the organization of the war staff continued to possess serious structural flaws that were not modified until 1917. The key leaders at the top pondered the workings of the new naval war staff immediately before the war, but no structural changes were yet made. They thought it was up to the individuals in leading roles to continuously develop better ways of working. A burning problem was that the Chief of Staff had no direct authority as he was not a Board member. What is more, the formal structure of the staff was over-centralized as everything had to pass through the COS, and many new staff officers were deemed unfit for their duties due to insufficient education in staff work. A Royal Navy Staff course at the War College was instituted in 1912 but proved slow to make progress in staff officer training.[69]

According to Andrew Lambert, towards the end of his stint as First Sea Lord the apathetic and increasingly physically ill Prince Louis proved to be a disaster, especially in conjunction with the young and energetic but inexperienced Churchill.

The Germans clearly did not anticipate that Britain would follow its entente partners France and Russia into a continental war, even if the neutrality of Belgium were violated by the German Army. In line with his earlier intentions, and not least because of the strong anti-German sentiment among the British public and press, Churchill decided to discharge Prince Louis and to recall Fisher as First Sea Lord in late October 1914[70]. Prince Louis felt immensely relieved following his dismissal. Before stepping down, he and the old Beresfordian and Admiralty Chief-of-Staff Vice Admiral Doveton Sturdee had made the fateful decision to send Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock's obsolete cruisers to fight against the superior German East Asian Squadron commanded by Vice Admiral Maximilian Graf von Spee. This resulted in a humiliating British defeat at Coronel near the Chilean coast on the 1st of November, 1914.[71] Prince Louis held no official position during the rest of the war, and in December 1918, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, another old anti-Fisher officer, strongly suggested he should retire, which he did on the 1st of January, 1919. Just a few weeks before his death in September 1921, he was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet on the Retired List.[72]

Arthur Marder describes Prince Louis as:

> "…a first-rate, all-round seaman, a born leader, an efficient, even brilliant tactician and strategist (he was not defeated in manouvres until 1912)".[73]

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69 MB1/T26 Naval papers (231–40), 1913: 235.

70 Hough, *Victoria & Louis*, 307.

71 Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. II*, 101–117. However, Prince Louis had originally suggested sending battlecruisers to catch von Spee. This is what Fisher did immediately after taking over at the Admiralty after Battenberg's resignation. Hough, *Victoria & Louis*, 312.

72 Hough, *Victoria & Louis*, 300–49.

73 Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. I*, 406–97. See also Marder (ed.) *Fear God and Dread Nought*, Vol. II, 398.

However, as an administrator at the Admiralty he proved at least slightly less effective than as a seaman. The problems during his last months as First Sea Lord at the beginning of the War (the *Goeben* incident, the sinking of the three old *Créssy* class cruisers and the increasing submarine menace, as well as the crushing defeat at Coronel) easily overshadow his earlier successes such as building and organizing the entire Grand Fleet. In Fisher's view, Prince Louis seemed occasionally to be so much under Churchill's influence that he described the First Sea Lord as "*Winston's facile dupe*", which of course was a gross exaggeration[74]. Although a Fisher loyalist, he demonstrated the ability to adapt his views in accordance with changing situations. He also detested the harsh way in which Fisher endorsed his views and suppressed criticism. As Prince Louis put it in a letter to a fellow officer as early as in 1905:

> "…I do cordially agree with all you say, especially the fever which has seized hold of J.F. … also the senseless way in which he insults and alienates our senior men."[75]

Throughout the years, Mountbatten's relationship with Fisher always remained relatively harmonious and mutually respectful. However, despite sincerity about professional matters, a certain formal tone and distance, absent e.g. from Fisher's correspondence with his onetime First Lord and close friend Reginald McKenna, always persisted in their correspondence[76]. Fisher was the master and Prince Louis the apprentice.

Sir John Jellicoe

Admiral of the Fleet John Rushworth Jellicoe, 1st Earl Jellicoe of Scapa (1859–1935) was Fisher's self-evident favourite to command the Grand Fleet in the event of war[77]. Jellicoe joined the RN in 1872 and fought as a young officer in the Anglo-Egyptian War of 1882. Promoted to Captain in January 1897, he immediately became a member of the Ordnance Committee of the Admiralty. During the Boxer Rebellion in China, he was seriously wounded in the Battle of Beicang on the 5th of August 1900. As a recognized ordnance specialist, Captain Jellicoe became Naval Assistant to the Third Naval Lord and Controller in 1902.[78]

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74 Richard Hough, *The First Sea Lord. An Authorized Biography of Admiral Lord Fisher* (London, 1969), 322–3.

75 Hough, *The First Sea Lord*, 212.

76 A good example is Mountbatten's letter to Fisher on the 3rd of August 1909, in which the former proposes, among other issues, the abolishment of the title of the C-in-C of the Atlantic Fleet and suggests Fisher to merely appoint a Vice Admiral Commanding Atlantic Division of the Home Fleet, FISR 1/8, 404/64, see also e.g. FISR 1/9, 443/23, FISR 1/6, 336/20.

77 *"…I just mention all this to show what I've done for Jellicoe because I knew him to be a born Commander of a Fleet! Like poets. Fleet Admirals are born, not made! Nascitur nonfit!"*; Fisher, *Memoirs*, 63; in a letter to Winston Churchill on the 30th of July 1913 Fisher strongly praised Jellicoe's qualities as a potential wartime admiralissimo: "*…the sacred fire of originality burns in him.*", CHAR 13/21/69; see also Fisher's letter to Reginald McKenna in December 1911, in which he predicts a war with Germany in September 1914 and Jellicoe as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet ("*So I sleep quiet in my bed!*"), Marder (ed.) *Fear God and Dread Nought, Vol. II*, 419.

78 Bacon, *The Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe*, 109.

Fisher made Sir John Jellicoe, one of his famous 'seven brains'[79], the Director of Naval Ordnance in 1905, Second-in-Command of the Atlantic Fleet in August 1907, Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy in October 1908, and Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet in December 1910. In fact, Jellicoe succeeded Prince Louis in many of these key appointments.

After Fisher's retirement in January 1910, Jellicoe was appointed Second-in-Command of the Home Fleet in December 1911 and, having also been appointed Commander of the 2nd Battle Squadron in May 1912, became Second Sea Lord in December 1912. He was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1907 and to Vice Admiral in 1911, consequently[80].

At the outbreak of the Great War, as Fisher had originally planned, Jellicoe was immediately assigned to the command of the renamed Grand Fleet, replacing the aging Admiral George Callaghan. In the same process, he was promoted to Full Admiral on the 4th of August 1914.[81] He commanded the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, where his cautionary actions and failure to annihilate the German High Seas Fleet were later seriously criticized by the pro-Beatty faction. On the other hand, as Churchill's famous adage goes, Jellicoe was after all "*the only man who could lose the war in one afternoon*", and he obviously did not want to jeopardize the material supremacy of the RN with daring moves in any battle. What is more, he deployed his vast fleet in an exemplary manner at the height of the battle and crossed his German opponent Vice-Admiral Reinhard Scheer's T twice.[82] Jellicoe was appointed First Sea Lord in November 1916 but was forced to step down from the post already in December 1917, partly because he refused to dismiss his fellow Fishpond member Bacon from the command of the Dover Patrol.[83] Jellicoe was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet in April 1919. After the War, he served as the Governor-General of New Zealand.[84]

Sir John Jellicoe's character is often described as calm, rational and unassuming. He was seemingly highly appreciated by his officers and on the lower deck. On the other hand, he was unable to delegate and often buried himself in work that could have been readily taken care of by his staff. According to Arthur Marder, Jellicoe possessed all the 'three aces' of an excellent admiral: a gift for leadership, a fertile imagination and a creative brain, as well as an eagerness to make full use of the ideas of his junior staff. Nevertheless, he may have been somewhat wanting in the 'fourth ace', an offensive spirit.[85] What is more, he was a product of the traditional RN culture that downplayed

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79 Fisher's own words in a letter to Earl of Selborne were: "*These are the seven brains: Jackson, F.R.S., Jellicoe, C.B., Bacon, D.S.O., Madden, M.V.O., Wilfred Henderson (who has all the signs of the Zodiac after his name!), associated with Gard, M.V.O., Chief Constructor of Portsmouth Dockyard, and who splendidly kept the Mediterranean Fleet efficient for three years, and Gracie, the best Marine Engineer in the world*!", Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought, Vol. I,* 331.

80 Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet*, 130.

81 Bacon, *The Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe*, 124–224.

82 Patterson, *Jellicoe*, 118–24.

83 Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet*, 131.

84 Bacon, *The Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe*, 374–484.

85 Marder, Arthur J. *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904–1919. The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland 1914–1916. Vol. II* (Oxford, 1963), 8–11.

subordinates' initiatives. Unlike Fisher, he preferred to craft very detailed strategies and battle orders. The modest and sensible Jellicoe worked extremely well with the rule-flaunting and impulsive Fisher, who was normally not interested in technological details among other intricacies. For instance, as a key member of the Committee on Designs in 1904–1907, he took a leading role in the development of the new Dreadnought battleships and battlecruisers. After a tiresome stint as the C-in-C of the Grand Fleet he was not entirely successful during his term as First Sea Lord. He became increasingly prone to pessimism, and could have done more, such as an earlier introduction of the convoy system that eventually countered the German submarine menace in 1917.[86]

All in all, Jellicoe was one of the most talented and influential officers in the Fishpond, a personality who could, when necessary, present even Fisher with cold facts and effective counterarguments. This is clearly evident from their abundant correspondence, in which both gentlemen most frankly discussed presently topical naval themes[87]. Fisher appreciated this greatly. During the war, however, their relationship started to deteriorate as Fisher was prone to offer his strong (mostly unsolicited) views on a plethora of naval and other subjects to Jellicoe. For instance, when Fisher in January 1917 offered the newly-appointed First Sea Lord Jellicoe his services as Third Sea Lord and Controller, he felt wounded by the prompt negative reply from his old friend and former subordinate[88]. Donald M. Schurman states about Jellicoe that:

> "…In many ways he was remarkable and successful, and certainly he has been the most generally undervalued of the entente leaders during World War."[89].

Sir Henry Jackson

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Bradwardine Jackson (1855–1929) was a member of Fisher's seven brains and thus a key officer in the 'original' Fishpond. He joined the RN in 1868 and served as a young officer in the Anglo-Zulu war in 1879. A specialist in wireless communications, he became Assistant Director of Naval Ordnance in 1902, Captain of the battleship HMS *Duncan* in 1903, and Captain of the torpedo-school ship HMS *Vernon* in 1904.[90]

Fisher had Jackson appointed to the post of the Third Sea Lord and Controller in 1905. Jackson was promoted to Rear Admiral in October 1906. Following a cruiser command in the Mediterranean in 1908–1911 he was promoted to Vice Admiral on his appointment as Director of the Royal Naval War College, which Fisher had established in 1907 to substitute the absent Naval War Staff (albeit a War Course College had existed since 1900). Having been appointed Chief of the new Admiralty War Staff in 1913, Jackson became a Full Admiral in February 1914.

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86 Patterson, *Jellicoe*, 154–209.
87 See e.g. FISR 1/21, 1135/22; FISR 1/22, 1226/115.
88 Hough, *First Sea Lord*, 353–4; also Davison, *The Challenges of Command*, 239–40.
89 Schurman, *Admiral Sir John Jellicoe*, 110.
90 Tony Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet 1734–1995* (London, 2002), 126.

To the surprise of a great many observers, Jackson was appointed Fisher's successor as the First Sea Lord after the latter's spectacular resignation in May 1915. Although he worked well with the new First Lord, former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who had replaced Winston Churchill at approximately the same time, most historians tend to characterize the Balfour-Jackson administration at the Admiralty as lethargic and void of initiative. Most importantly, the rate at which capital ships were fitted with director firing slowed down, and the completion dates of the great number of ships that Fisher had ordered were pushed into the future.[91] Jackson was replaced by Jellicoe as First Sea Lord in December 1916. He acted as the President of the Royal Naval College during the rest of the war and was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet in July 1919.[92]

Jackson was profoundly professional (an 'electrician & engineer'[93]) but in terms of personality he has been characterized as colourless and lacking in imagination. As Arthur Marder points out, he was lacking in all the 'three aces' of an admiral: leadership capability, a fertile imagination (except perhaps in technical matters), and the ability to use the brains of juniors[94]. Early on, Fisher succeeded in capitalizing on Jackson's technical skills, especially in developing inter-ship communications for Empire-wide duty. As the second COS of the Admiralty War Staff, Jackson also played a central role in gradually building up a functioning staff organization in the RN. Despite the fact that Fisher did not hold Jackson in high regard as an administrator, the relationship between the two admirals was uncomplicated until Jackson surprisingly became Fisher's successor as First Sea Lord. Fisher vehemently criticised the Jackson-Balfour administration for a serious lack of initiative and imagination[95].

Sir Reginald Bacon

Admiral Sir Reginald Hugh Spencer Bacon (1863–1947) was an officer especially noted for his technical and literary abilities. With Prince Louis and Jellicoe, Bacon was probably among the men who were closest to Fisher in the entire Fishpond, and he wrote the biographies of both Fisher and Jellicoe after the War. Among Fisher's original 'seven brains', he had a significant effect on various reforms in the RN, especially on matters to do with materiél and ordnance.

Bacon entered the RN in 1877 and specialized in torpedo craft. He met Fisher while serving as a Commander in Fisher's Mediterranean Fleet in 1899. C-in-C Fisher was impressed by the technical abilities of the young officer. Following Bacon's promotion to Captain in 1900, Fisher strongly influenced his appointment to the novel post of Inspecting Captain of Submarines (ICS). In that

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91 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 237–241; Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War*, 131–69.

92 Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet*, 127.

93 As Herbert Richmond characterized him, see Hamilton, *The Making of Modern Admiralty*, 239.

94 Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. II, 298–299.

95 See e.g. Fisher's lengthy letter to Prime Minister Asquith in March 1916, Marder (ed.) *Fear God and Dread Nought, Vol. III*, 324–331.

capacity he was to have a significant influence on the development of the submarine branch of the RN, in accordance with Fisher's emerging views that the Home Isles should be defended mainly with light vessels and that fast and powerful battlecruisers should be built to patrol the Empire's lanes of communication on the high seas[96]. Bacon was appointed the first captain of Fisher's revolutionary all-big-gun battleship HMS *Dreadnought* in June 1906, and in 1907 he was appointed to the central position of the Director of Naval Ordnance to succeed Jellicoe. He was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1909. However, following the fall of Fisher in late 1909 he decided to retire, and took up the well-paid position of managing director at the private Coventry Ordnance Works. On the outbreak of the war he returned to active service and in 1915 was appointed to the command of the Dover Patrol. He was promoted to Vice Admiral in July 1915. After a controversy over his management of the Dover Barrage against German submarines, the newly appointed First Sea Lord Rosslyn Wemyss had him ousted, and Roger Keyes replaced him in January 1918[97]. Again, a Fishpond member was dismissed by the anti-Fisher Wemyss. Bacon was promoted to Full Admiral in September 1918[98].

As a personality, Bacon has been described as brilliant but arrogant, slow to acknowledge his mistakes, and an authoritarian leader who did not get along well with his men. What is more, unlike his patron Fisher who was keen on delegating authority where he saw talent, he was more of a centralizer, and later in his career he developed an excessively risk-avoiding attitude.[99]

In his often-avant-garde views of how naval warfare should develop in the future given the rapid development in the use of torpedoes, mines and the submarine, especially against large capital ships, Bacon offered considerable professional support to Fisher, who was no longer an expert in technological details. He remained personally loyal to the old admiral throughout his career, which is evidenced in the polite tone of the 1929 Fisher biography he authored.[100] However, outside the realm of technology and ordnance, he had a limited effect on the reorganization of the RN in general. This may have been due to the limitations of his personality and leadership skills, especially his inability to mobilize and motivate his followers.

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96 Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904–1909', *Journal of Military History*, 59, No. 4 (1995), 639–49. However, some evolutionary historians have contested the view that such a strategy ever existed at the Admiralty except perhaps in Fisher's vivid imagination, see Bell, 'Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution Reconsidered', 333–56.

97 Arthur J. Marder, *1917: Year of Crisis. From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904–1919, Vol 4.* (Oxford, 1969), 347.

98 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Royal_Navy_admirals_(1707–current)

99 Michael Dash, *British Submarine Policy 1853–1918* (London, 1990), 158.

100 Bacon also refers to Fisher in an extremely positive fashion in his autobiography, despite acknowledging some faults in the old admiral's character. He writes that with his foresight and administrative ability, Fisher efficiently 'saved the nation with his brain'. Bacon, *From 1900 Onward*, 323.

Sir Percy Scott

Admiral Sir Percy Moreton Scott, 1st Baronet (1853–1924) was an inventor and a pioneer in naval gunnery, best known for his director firing system. He joined the RN in 1866 and, like Fisher, was present at the 1882 British naval bombardment of Egyptian forts at Alexandria. He witnessed the inaccuracy of the British gunners and started devising his own plans to improve gunnery practices in the RN. He started this work at HMS *Excellent*, the gunnery school, captained by Fisher. Fisher always believed strongly in Scott's innovative capabilities.[101] Promoted to Captain in 1893, Scott served on the Navy's Ordnance Committee until 1896 when he was given his first sea command, HMS *Scylla*, a cruiser in the Mediterranean Fleet. He was now free to implement his ideas on improved gunnery, scoring an unprecedented success during the 1897 gunnery trials. He took part in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the then Second Sea Lord Fisher had him appointed Captain of HMS *Excellent* in 1903. Scott developed his gunnery theories further, reaching the flag rank in 1905. Fisher tailored him the position of Inspector of Target Practice, which he held in 1905–1907. [102]

In 1907 Scott took command of the 1st Cruiser squadron of the Channel Fleet under the command of Lord Charles Beresford. Not an easy subordinate, he famously quarrelled with Beresford on two occasions. No doubt these incidents were also linked to the ongoing Fisher-Beresford feud, and the latter wanted to discipline Scott, a prominent Fishpond member. Fisher came to his rescue, and Scott was never court-martialled.[103] After a sea command and promotion to Vice Admiral in 1908, Scott returned in 1909 to develop his promising director firing system. He notes in his autobiography that there was significant Admiralty opposition to his new system, which promised remarkably improved target-practice results.[104] Resistance to change and new technology are probably the main reasons why a large number of RN officers resisted Scott's innovations (as they also did in the case of Pollen's superior fire-control equipment). Scott attributed the resistance to 'professional jealousy'. He was promoted to Full Admiral and created a baronet upon his retirement in 1913.[105]

Only eight Dreadnoughts had been fitted with Scott's director firing system at the outbreak of war[106]. Meanwhile, Scott returned from retirement to work on improving fire control and countering the German submarine menace. Like Fisher, he was convinced that the era of the battleship would soon be over due to the increasing threat from ever-more advanced submarines, mines and aerial attacks.[107]

As a person, Scott was extremely outspoken and often hard to work with. According to Peter Padfield:

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101 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 51–71.
102 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 134–43.
103 Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. I, 97–100.
104 Scott, *Fifty Years*, 248.
105 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 220.
106 Scott, *Fifty Years*, 253–62.
107 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 201, 223–6.

> "But if Scott acted like a bone stuck halfway down the throat of anyone senior to him, he was very much on the side of the subordinates who measured up to his standards – and they for him."[108].

Fisher and his key disciples Prince Louis and Jellicoe appreciated Scott's talents very much, and realized the importance of his director firing system for the gunnery of the RN. However, Fisher fully realized that Scott was not the easiest person to work with and a lot of problems originated from the gunnery expert's ways of dealing with superiors[109]. In the end, the road to improved fire control generally proved long and winding. Peter Padfield goes as far as stating:

> "… the three great men of this pre-war navy, Fisher, Scott, Jellicoe, who lifted the Service bodily between them to unequalled heights of material and technical efficiency and training. Others helped, many vitally, but these were the three men."[110].

Sir Charles Madden

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Charles Edward Madden, 1st Baronet (1862–1935) was also a member of Fisher's original seven brains. His marriage to the sister of Jellicoe's wife further strengthened his connections to the inner circle of the Fishpond. Having joined the RN in 1875, he was involved in the Anglo-Egyptian war in 1882. A torpedo officer by training, he was promoted to Captain in 1901 and posted to the Mediterranean Fleet, where he became acquainted with Fisher. He joined Fisher's Committee on Designs in 1904 and was appointed Naval Assistant to Third Sea Lord Henry Jackson in February 1905. Madden went back to sea in 1907 as the second Captain of HMS *Dreadnought* and Chief of Staff to Sir Francis Bridgeman, C-in-C of the Home Fleet. In December 1908, he was appointed Private Naval Secretary to Reginald McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty and Fisher's closest ally. Upon Fisher's resignation in January 1910 he was given the post of Fourth Sea Lord, responsible for RN supplies. Promoted to Rear Admiral in 1911, he was given Home Fleet and cruiser-squadron commands until war broke out. When Jellicoe was appointed C-in-C of the Grand Fleet he asked that his brother-in-law be appointed as his Chief of Staff. He was posted to the Grand Fleet in August 1914 and promoted to acting Vice Admiral in 1915. For his services at the Battle of Jutland he was promoted to Vice Admiral in June 1916 and was further promoted to Second-in-Command of the entire Grand Fleet in December 1916. He became a Full Admiral in February 1919, and Admiral of the Fleet in 1924.[111]

Madden was a gentlemanly leader, and an esteemed professional who worked well with Fisher and the key members of the inner circle of the Fishpond. Arthur Marder describes him as:

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108 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 125.

109 For instance, in a letter to First Lord McKenna, Fisher laments about Scott that "*…it's a pity he's such a cad – that he has done wonders for the Navy can't be gain-sayed –",* MCKN 3/4.

110 Padfield, *Aim Straight*, 142–3.

111 Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet*, 164.

"…a simple, reserved, very sound and knowledgeable officer, pre-eminent as a tactician, and somewhat lacking only in imagination"[112].

As a slightly younger member, he was initially overshadowed by his brother-in-law Jellicoe, as well as the by Admirals Prince Louis and Henry Jackson. Unlike Bacon, however, and with his excellent social and leadership skills, Madden later advanced to key positions in the upper echelons of the RN (he was First Sea Lord in 1927–1930, for instance). Madden's correspondence with Fisher is rather formal, strict to the point and extremely polite in tone, suggesting less personal familiarity[113].

Sir Henry Oliver

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Francis Oliver (1865–1965) was a Royal Navy officer and a Chief of Staff during the Great War. He joined the navy in 1877 and was originally trained as a navigating officer. He became the first captain of the new navigation school HMS *Mercury* in 1903 and was appointed Naval Assistant to First Sea Lord Fisher in 1908. He also served Fisher's successors in that capacity until 1912. Promoted to Rear Admiral in 1913, he became Director of the Intelligence Division at the Admiralty. After the outbreak of the war he was appointed Naval Secretary to First Lord Churchill, and Chief of the Admiralty War Staff in November 1914. When Jellicoe was appointed First Sea Lord and also assumed the position of COS in December 1916, Oliver became Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. Oliver's his role in directing the Battle of Jutland from the Admiralty has been debated. He served as Commander of the 1st Battlecruiser Squadron in the Grand Fleet during the last year of the war. Promoted to Vice Admiral in 1919, he became Commander of the 2nd Battle Squadron, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet and, finally, Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Fleet. Consequently, he became Second Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Personnel. He was promoted to Full Admiral in 1923, and to Admiral of the Fleet in 1928. He retired in 1933.[114]

Among Fisher's key assistants, Oliver was '*a hard worker and full of common sense*'[115]. As COS and DCNS he was a ruthless centralizer, unable to delegate and prone to micromanagement. In this, he greatly resembled Jellicoe.[116] With his deep knowledge following his long tenure directing the staff, Oliver tended not to trust his subordinates' opinions. All in all, Oliver's biographer William James refers to Oliver as probably one of the greatest architects of the new navy, even surpassing Fisher[117]. As COS and DCNS he built up the organization and working practices of the expanding naval staff during the War. However, C.I. Hamilton argues that both Oliver and Jellicoe had a severely distorted view of

112 Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. II*, 12.
113 For instance, FISR 1/10, 511/25.
114 Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet*, 202–3.
115 Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol. I*, 408.
116 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 255–6.
117 William M. James, *A Great Seaman: The Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry F. Oliver, G.C.B, K.C.M.G., M.V.O., L.L.D.,* (London, 1956), 186.

staff duties, regarding them mainly as clerical and administrative in nature[118]. This is exactly why Fisher was so opposed to the building of a large bureaucratic staff in the first place: what he wanted was a loosely coupled body that would be able to focus more strongly on the creation of a strategic vision and its efficient implementation. A new and more decentralized organizational and staff structure was implemented once both Jellicoe and Oliver had left the Admiralty.[119]

Already before Oliver became Fisher's all-important Naval Assistant, he "…*knew Fisher very well*"[120]. He knew Fisher's fierce temperament combined with the radical reform scheme would cause a lot of trouble in the predominantly traditionalist naval organization. During Fisher's second stint as First Sea Lord, Oliver as the newly-appointed COS often acted as a mediator between Churchill and Fisher, who were clashing over a number of issues already before the Dardanelles campaign[121]. All in all, in his more senior years, Oliver was never as close to Fisher as many of the other former assistants, which is evident e.g. in the scarcity of personal correspondence between the two men.

CONCLUSION

As is obvious from the above description of the careers and roles of the most important high-ranking officers in the Fishpond, it consisted of a loose network of diverse personalities with different talents. The mere existence of a unified Fishpond systematically machinated by Fisher can be strongly questioned in the light of historical evidence. For the most part, the Fishpond was a derisive concept used by Fisher's opponents in the public campaign against his person and his organizational designs. However, it is true that Fisher intentionally surrounded himself with a cabal of suitable men he thought could be useful to him in realizing his ambitious plans. Fisher clearly believed that these key individuals, with the support of the informal advisory service provided by the War College at Greenwich, would suffice to run the navy without a formal staff. Most of the prominent Fishpond members, especially Prince Louis, were nevertheless opposed to this view and strongly advocated the creation of a staff organization, which happened in 1912.[122] Gradually, the more and more professional staff organization took over and formalized many strategic functions that the informal network of Fisherites had performed earlier.

As far as the careers and roles of the members of the Fishpond were concerned, Fisher obviously secured central positions and promotions for the men he trusted the most. However, he did not have a grand master plan in terms of who was needed, where and why: He was merely using his instincts and gut

118 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 256.
119 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, 261.
120 James, *A Great Seaman*, 113.
121 James, *A Great Seaman*, 148–9.
122 Mackay, *Fisher of Kilverstone*, 256–7.

feelings in deciding whom to appoint to what position and whom to sack. When he was in power, he usually got his way. Even when out of power, he bombarded his associates (especially Churchill and Jellicoe) with copious plans how to fill the most important top positions of the RN on land and at sea. He was also ingenious in using committees and informal teams of experts to develop individual parts of his reform scheme. In this respect, especially as a military leader, he was ahead of his time as a delegator and de-centralizer. The above analysis of the role of the key members of the Fishpond gives strong evidence of their major and often decisive contributions to Fisher's reforms in the RN organization. They also adapted and further developed – and sometimes abandoned – many parts of the original reform scheme, especially during the War. In many ways, the key officers originally hand-picked by Fisher evolved over and above (and sometimes below) the roles that their patron had envisaged for them.

It is no surprise that as Radical Jack aged, reluctantly gravitated away from the centre of power in the RN and saw many of his original plans come to nothing, he uttered many bitter words about his former disciples, especially Jellicoe. After his resignation in 1915, he often wrote about his desire to return to the Admiralty, even to positions more minor than the one of the First Sea Lord. Many Fisherites also noted a gradual decline in his mental and physical capabilities. Admiral Bacon wrote in his autobiography, for instance, that the great tragedy of Fisher's life was that he did not die in December 1914 after Coronel had been avenged at the Falklands. Had he done so he would have retained a reputation second only to that of Nelson.[123]

Fisher could be very burdensome to people at the higher echelons of the RN, especially during the last years of the War. As the chairman of the Board of Invention and Research, he used certain organs of the Press to comment vehemently on the alleged incompetence in conducting the naval war, trying to further his aim of being recalled to the Admiralty. Jackson (then First Sea Lord), for instance, had told Hamilton (Second Sea Lord) in March 1916 that he could only attend to the war in the intervals between answering Fisher's questions. As his former favourite, Jellicoe received most of the literary bombardment from the old admiral.[124]

Three general conclusions about leadership in general can be drawn from this study of the Fishpond, which reflect issues that have changed little since the days of the Royal Navy of the Fisher era. First, top leaders are essentially team builders, able to find, motivate, develop and keep talent that they think best suits their organization. Fisher was at his best building a loyal coterie of bright and talented followers, especially at the height of the reforms during his first stint as First Sea Lord. Visionary leaders, a rare species especially in the setting of a military organization, inspire talent to flock to their cause. No other First Sea Lord (except perhaps for Beatty later on) was as capable of enthusing followership as Fisher was. It is also interesting that Fisher's most loyal and effective followers were approximately 10–20 years younger than he was (junior officers had always

123 Bacon, *From 1900 Onward*, 329.
124 Roskill, *Earl Beatty*, 140–1.

been fond of Fisher's unconventional approach, and he liked to directly hear their opinions about necessary improvements in a great number of matters). Followership thus seems to have something to do with age difference. Followers may need to be younger than the patron to remain respectful, but if they are considerably younger, the mind-sets, world views and ways of working are not necessarily compatible any longer. The patron simply becomes too old to imbue followership.

Second, leading is about the coupling of the formal and the informal organization, often bypassing the bureaucracy created by the former. Even in a military organization, no leader can have 'absolute rule', and even the most autocratic leaders need an informal network of people in key positions to back them up. Fisher's favouritism was obviously an attempt to establish such a network when the extant regulative institutions of the RN proved inept at providing the First Sea Lord with officers of sufficiently high intellectual calibre. Fisher's leadership was essentially about using the informal organization to achieve his desired organizational goals.

Third, effective leadership styles vary across individuals, organizations and along leader careers. Even the mightiest leaders may occasionally be inconsistent and may panic or become pessimistic under pressure. They should be at the right stage of their career path to effectively function in a certain leadership position. The longer the tenure in one leadership position, the more likely are the outcomes to deteriorate at some point. These aspects are easily observable in Fisher's own leadership as he aged. His first stint as First Sea Lord was considerably more successful than his second one during the War. Similar developments can be detected in the careers of his Fishpond members, too. At least Prince Louis, Jellicoe and Bacon served in positions to which they were no longer necessarily the best options. Prince Louis' tenure as First Sea Lord lasted perhaps too long, Jellicoe should never have accepted that position at the first place and Dover Patrol proved to be too demanding a command for the increasingly cautious Bacon. Thus, the effectiveness of a leader in a certain position tends to follow an inverted U-shaped curve. What is more, different leader characteristics and leadership styles tend to complement each other in organizational change. The careers of all admirals described above are a good illustration of this. Fisher's visionary broad brush often needed Jellicoe's calm rationality and Scott's deep expertise.