



**SEA POWER
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Introduction to the Concept of Sea Power

26th-29th May





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'Sea Power': The Concept in Action



Content Covered

1. Sea Power – An Introduction
2. Sea Power – Main Theorists
3. Sea Power – What is it? Where do we see it in action?

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1. Sea Power – An Introduction

- Sea power and states – how can states get an advantage over others?
- Its meaning is inferred rather than comprehensively spelled out
- ‘Seapower’, ‘sea power’, ‘oceanic power’, ‘maritime power’
- Can mean lots of things to many



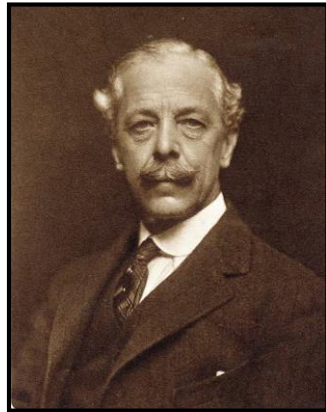
2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Prominent Theorists

“Even the most creative theories in history were not conceived in a vacuum; one way or another, they owe something to the works of others.” (Handel, 2000)



Alfred Thayer Mahan



Sir Julian Corbett



Admiral Sir Herbert
William Richmond



Admiral Sergey
Gorshkov



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Alfred Thayer Mahan

Key Ideas: Mahan is best known for his work "The Influence of Sea Power upon History" (1890). He emphasized that a nation's greatness and ability to project power depended on its command of the seas. He advocated for a concentration of powerful ships in home waters and minimized strength in distant seas

Influence: Mahan's theories influenced the naval strategies of the US, Britain, Germany, and Japan before and during World War I and World War II.

Exemplified By: The naval arms race between Great Britain & Germany, c 1870-1914



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Alfred Thayer Mahan

Core Principles:

Control of Sea Lanes: Nations that control critical sea routes can dominate world trade and war.

Decisive Naval Battles: Winning major naval battles can grant control over these sea lanes.

Large, Offensive Fleets: Advocated for large battle fleets with capital ships (like battleships) capable of engaging enemy fleets directly.

Global Maritime Presence: A navy must protect its nation's economic interests through overseas bases and colonies.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Mahan's Theories & Australia/RAN

Control of Sea Lanes:

- RAN played a crucial role in securing vital Pacific sea lanes to support Allied logistics in WWII, aligning with Mahan's belief in controlling key maritime routes.
- Collaborated with Allied navies to protect shipping routes essential for the war effort and Australia's security.

Decisive Naval Battles:

- An aspect of Mahan less comprehensively proven by subsequent events BUT see MIDWAY & CORAL SEA....



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Mahan's Theories & Australia/RAN

Large, Offensive Fleets:

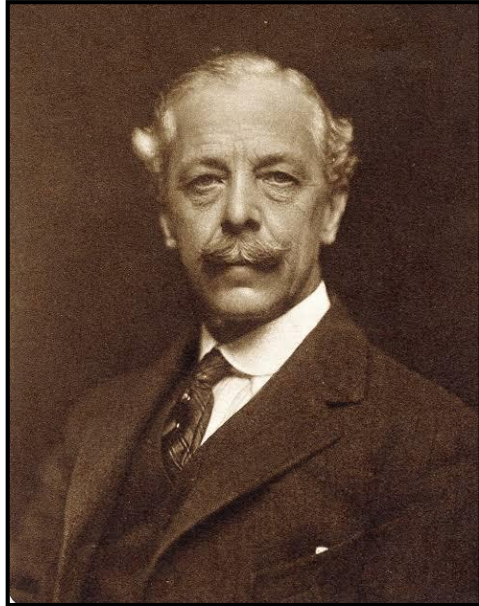
- RAN's investment in advanced destroyers, frigates, and submarines resonates with Mahan's call for powerful, offensive fleets capable of maintaining dominance over strategic waters.

Global Maritime Presence:

- Regular patrols and participation in multinational exercises (e.g., South China Sea) reflect the RAN's application of Mahan's principle of maintaining a global maritime presence to project power and protect trade.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists



Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922)

“The only positive value which the high seas have for national life is as a means of communication...it also has a negative value. For not only is it a means of communication...it is also a barrier.” (Corbett, 1911)



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Sir Julian Corbett

Key Ideas: Corbett's seminal work, "Some Principles of Maritime Strategy" (1911), highlighted the relationship between naval power and broader military strategy.

Influence: Corbett's theories have been highly influential in modern naval thought, particularly in terms of strategic flexibility.

Exemplified By: Amphibious warfare strategy & tactics, i.e., "The Gallipoli Campaign"



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Sir Julian Corbett

Core Principles Pt. 1:

Limited Use of Naval Power: Unlike Mahan, Corbett emphasized the role of the navy in supporting land operations rather than seeking decisive naval battles.

Command of the Sea: Focused on "controlling" rather than "owning" the sea. Navies could exert influence without outright destruction of the enemy fleet, emphasizing blockades and fleet-in-being strategies.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Sir Julian Corbett

Core Principles Pt. 2:

Joint Operations: Advocated for combined naval and land operations to achieve strategic goals.

Sea as a Medium: The sea is both a highway for communication and a barrier to invasion, impacting how naval power should be used.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Corbett's Theories & Australia/RAN

Limited Use of Naval Power:

- The RAN's involvement in the Vietnam War included operations like Operation Sea Dragon, where naval vessels provided gunfire support for land operations and conducted maritime interdiction to disrupt supply lines. This exemplified Corbett's view of the navy's role in supporting land forces rather than seeking decisive naval battles.

Command of the Sea:

- RAN ships participated in Operation Market Time during the Vietnam War, a joint US-Australian naval mission aimed at intercepting communist supplies moving by sea into South Vietnam. This operation reflected Corbett's idea of controlling the sea to disrupt enemy logistics without engaging in large-scale naval battles.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Corbett's Theories & Australia/RAN

Joint Operations:

- The RAN played a significant role alongside US and UN forces during the Korean War. Ships like HMAS Sydney and HMAS Bataan conducted operations that involved naval bombardments in support of ground troops.

Sea as a Medium:

- Following Cyclone Yasa, the RAN conducted Operation Fiji Assist, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The HMAS Adelaide delivered supplies and facilitated communication between the Australian government, aid agencies, and affected communities, illustrating Corbett's idea of the sea as a medium that can be exploited in support of communication.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists



Admiral Sergey Gorskov

“The essence of the sea power of the state...is how far it is possible to make the most effective use of the World Ocean...in the interests of the state as a whole”
(Gorskov, 1979)



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Admiral Sergey Gorskov

Key Ideas: Gorskov, the architect of the Soviet Navy's expansion during the Cold War, wrote "Sea Power of the State" (1979), advocating for sea power as a means to project state power globally.

Influence: His ideas reshaped Soviet naval policy, turning it into a major global maritime power to counter NATO forces.

Exemplified By: China's maritime strategy under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. Following Gorskov's principles, China has expanded its navy and focused on developing a blue-water capability to project power globally.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Admiral Sergey Gorskov

Core Principles:

Global Naval Power: Sea power should not just defend the homeland but assert influence worldwide.

Navy as a Strategic Tool: Gorskov emphasized that the navy is not just a tactical force but a strategic arm for securing the state's geopolitical objectives.

Balanced Fleet Doctrine: Advocated for a diversified navy, capable of conventional warfare, nuclear deterrence, and asymmetric warfare.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Gorskov's Theories & Australia/RAN

Global Navy Power:

- Australia's participation in multinational naval exercises like RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise) illustrates Gorskov's idea of leveraging naval power for global influence. By engaging in these exercises, Australia demonstrates its commitment to maritime security and strengthens alliances with countries like the United States and Japan, enhancing its geopolitical position in the Indo-Pacific region.

Navy as a Strategic Tool:

- The RAN's role in Operation Resolute, which involves maritime security operations, showcases how Australia uses its navy to achieve national objectives. By protecting its maritime borders and combating illegal fishing and smuggling, the RAN helps secure Australia's sovereignty and reflects Gorskov's view of the navy as essential for strategic goals.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Gorškov's Theories & Australia/RAN

Balanced Fleet Doctrine:

- The RAN's investment in submarine capabilities, such as the Collins-class submarines and the ongoing Future Submarine Program, aligns with Gorškov's balanced fleet doctrine. These submarines enhance Australia's deterrence capabilities, allowing it to engage in both conventional and asymmetric warfare while ensuring a diversified naval force equipped to address various threats.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

The Jeune École ("The Young School")

Key Ideas: A late 19th-century French naval doctrine that challenged traditional battleship-centric ideas.

Influence: Though it had limited success, the Jeune École influenced future naval warfare, particularly in the development of submarines and asymmetric naval strategies.

Exemplified By: World War I German U-Boat Campaign reflected the Jeune École's strategy by using submarines to disrupt British trade and supplies. This commerce raiding avoided large fleet battles, focusing on undermining enemy logistics.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

The Jeune École ("The Young School")

Core Principles:

Guerrilla Warfare at Sea: Advocated for the use of smaller, faster ships like torpedo boats and submarines to conduct commerce raiding and attack larger ships.

Economic Warfare: Emphasized disrupting an enemy's trade routes and economic lifelines instead of seeking to destroy its navy.

Defensive Posture: Focused on protecting the homeland with coastal defences and avoiding direct confrontation with larger fleets.



2. Sea Power – Main Theorists

Jeune École's Theories & Australia/RAN

Guerrilla Warfare at Sea:

- Australia's naval history includes the acquisition of smaller, agile vessels that enhanced such capabilities. Notable examples are the HMAS Kuru, which operated in Timor during WWII, and the Attack-class patrol boats commissioned in 1968. Vessels such as these offered greater flexibility and opportunity for asymmetric operations and rapid strikes.

Economic Warfare:

- During Operation JAYWICK, Australian operatives conducted covert attacks on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour, reflecting the Jeune Ecole's economic warfare principles. These actions aimed to disrupt Japanese supply lines, illustrating how targeted assaults can significantly impact an adversary's logistics and economic stability.



3. Sea Power – What is it?

- **Secondly**, it is a relative term (Till, 2004)
- It means many things to many people
- Some have “more” of it than others
 - **E.g.** Panama top flag state in 2020, around 16% global shipping under its flag or 235 million gross tonnes
 - **E.g.** The PLAN of China has an overall battle force of approximately 340 ships and submarines
 - **E.g.** London is the world’s number one location for marine insurance

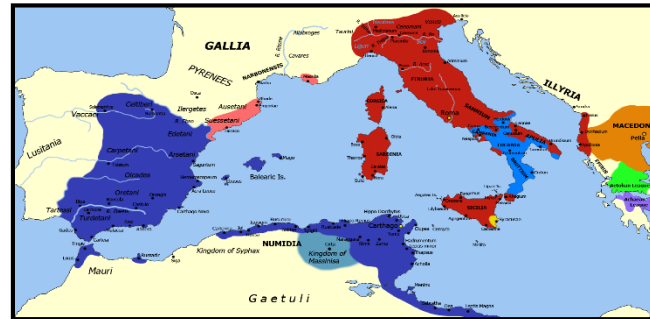


3. Sea Power – What is it?

- **Thirdly**, sea power is a choice
- There is risk in using the sea; choosing to use it entails huge investment and trade-offs over the long term if it is to produce results
- A strategic decision?
- A cultural decision?



Carthaginian Punic Ports



Carthaginian Thalassocracy - 3rd Century BCE (Empire of the Seas)



3. Sea Power – What is it?

- **Finally**, sea power is about “**time**”
- The temporal aspect of sea power doesn’t get a lot of attention
- Navies, sea-borne trade, resource extraction, manufacturing, establishment of industries, training, population growth, etc. all takes **TIME**



HMAS Australia (1911)

100 Years



HMAS Canberra LO2 (2011)



3. Sea Power – What is it?

A loop of reciprocal causation

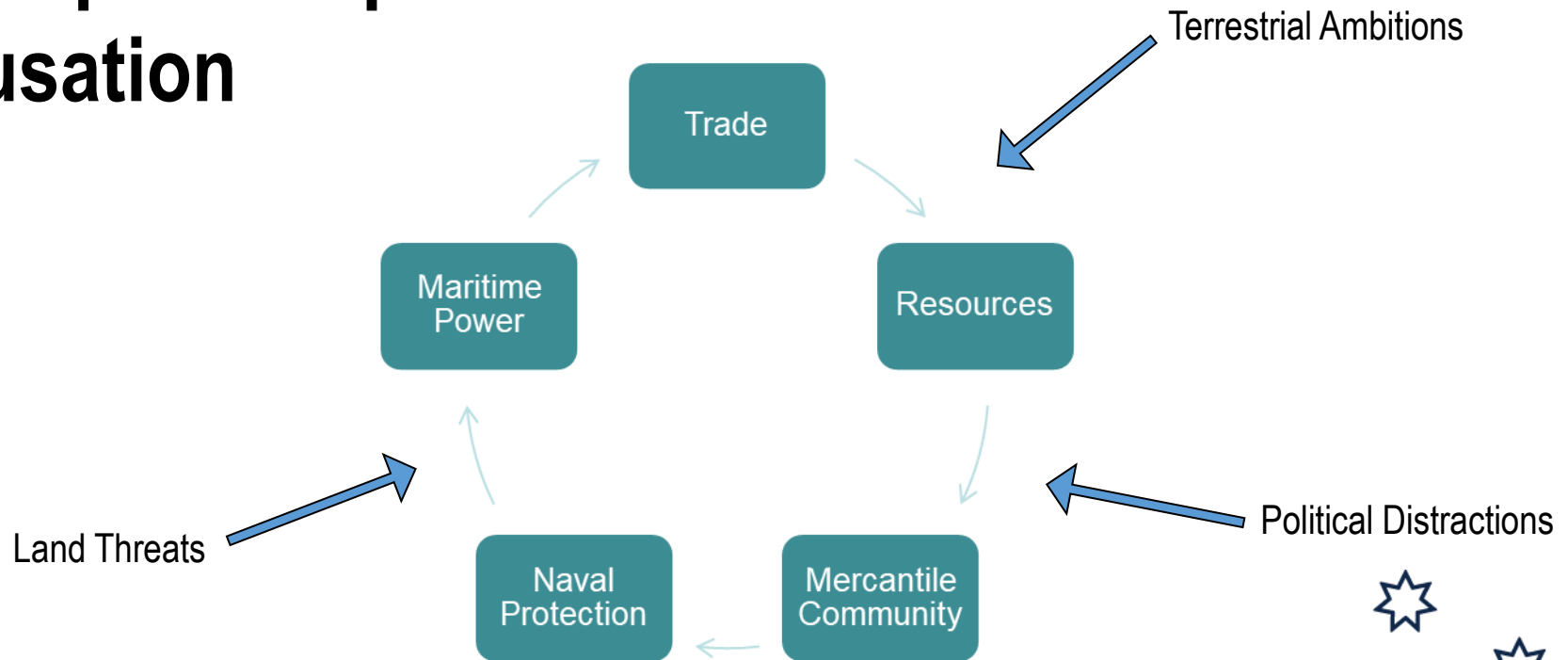


Diagram from: Till, G. (2020). Sea Power: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century. Routledge.



Sea power concepts

Sea power is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between the state and economics.

In its broadest sense, sea power is more than a purely military term – it encompasses trade, fishing, industry, and diplomacy as well.

Sea power remains a relative term: different states employ it differently.

Employing sea power is a deliberate policy choice.

Sea power is a temporal phenomenon. A given state's power waxes and wanes over time.



3. Sea Power – What is it?

Questions?



4. Sources of Sea Power

What are they?

1. **Maritime Community**
2. **Resources**
3. **Government investment**
4. **Geography and geopolitics**



4. Sources of Sea Power

Maritime Community

- Lord Haversham: “your trade is the mother and nurse of your seamen: your seamen are the life of your fleet: and your fleet is the security and protection of your trade: and both together are the wealth, strength, security and glory of Britain” (Till, 1984).
- Sea power is more than naval vessels
- Shippers, carriers, insurers, bankers, lawyers, ICT professionals, dockworkers, etc.



4. Sources of Sea Power

Resources



- Was the Battle of Trafalgar lost in the dockyards?



4. Sources of Sea Power

Government Investment

- Sea power is ultimately based on government decision making



Peter the Great



Catherine the Great



6. Short Discussion Activity

Sources of Australian Sea Power

1. **Geography:** Australia's location as an island continent surrounded by strategic maritime routes.
2. **Natural Resources:** Access to vast offshore oil, gas, and mineral reserves.
3. **Merchant Shipbuilding Industry:** Mostly small and medium sized commercial vessels - Incat Tasmania, Norman R. Wright & Sons (QLD), NQEA (QLD), Dongara Marine (WA), Austal (WA) & Harwood Marine (NSW).
4. **Alliances:** Strategic partnerships, especially with the United States and regional security frameworks like ANZUS and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.



6. Short Discussion Activity

Sources of Australian Sea Power

5. **Merchant Marine:** Commercial shipping fleet supporting both trade and military logistics.
6. **Naval Forces & Bases:** The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as the core force projecting power and protecting maritime interests.
7. **Naval Diplomacy:** Participation in regional maritime exercises and peacekeeping missions to foster alliances and partnerships.



6. Short Discussion Activity

Elements of Australian Sea Power

1. **Control of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs):** Ensuring secure trade and energy routes through key maritime choke points (e.g., the Straits of Malacca).
2. **Naval Presence and Forward Deployment:** Maintaining a presence in the Indo-Pacific to deter threats and support allies.
3. **Power Projection:** Ability to deploy naval forces across the region and beyond for defence and humanitarian missions.
4. **Ports and Harbors:** Key deep-water ports such as Sydney, Darwin, and Fremantle.
5. **Naval Shipbuilding Industry:** Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia & Australian Marine Complex at Henderson, Western Australia



6. Short Discussion Activity

Elements of Australian Sea Power

- 6. Technological Innovation:** Advanced naval technologies, including submarines, surface ships, and naval air capabilities.
- 7. Strategic Maritime Chokepoints:** Proximity to vital routes like the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, giving Australia leverage over global maritime trade.
- 8. Fleet Mobility and Logistics:** Naval replenishment and logistical capabilities to support extended deployments and operations.
- 9. Maritime Surveillance and Intelligence:** Use of maritime patrol aircraft, satellites, and reconnaissance to monitor the vast waters surrounding Australia.



HMAS Adelaide (I)



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