

THE IMPACT OF PRESTIGE ON THE NAVAL STRATEGIES OF THE GREAT POWERS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Danny Zahreddine¹
Jorel Musa de Noronha Lemes²

ABSTRACT

In this present article, it is sought to comprehend the factors that molded the naval strategies of the maritime powers in the period between 1906 and 1945, to identify the nuances of prestige policies and their possible non-desirable impacts on the relations between a state and its counterparts. The selected methodology was a case study. For analysis, we selected the main naval powers across the first half of the twentieth century and we verified the development of their naval strategies and the progress of their naval building programs through bibliographical research on books and academic articles. We observed that the main reason behind the importance of the battleships, which was the foundation of many of the naval strategies of the great powers until 1942, was the explicit belief in their material warlike qualities, as this type of vessel was used with the sole purpose of fighting and engaging in decisive battles, and not due to factors such as prestige and dissuasion. Finally, through an analysis of the cases that took place before the First World War, we concluded that the search for prestige can produce an incentive for a policy of containment by the other States rather than resulting in the dissuasion of its counterparts by another state, as desired in the investigated cases.

Keywords: Battleships. Prestige. Dissuasion. Naval Strategy. Maritime Powers. First World War. Second World War.

¹ Ph.D. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC-MG), Minas Gerais (MG), Brazil. E-mail: danny@pucminas.br / Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7400-0300>

² Master's student. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PPGRI- PUC-MG), Minas Gerais (MG), Brazil. E-mail: jorelemes@hotmail.com / Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3820-3420>

INTRODUCTION

This article will analyze the impact of the importance of the prestige aspect on the naval strategies of the powers and, ultimately, on their foreign policies and war efforts during the two world wars and the years leading up to them. The interest in prestige is as present in international politics in the second decade of the 21st century, as at the beginning of the 20th century and at other times in history. From Thucydides to Morgenthau, prestige was seen as an important factor in analyzes of the International System, while this concept is continually involved in the actions of decision-makers, such as in the Chinese insertion in the South China Sea (HAYTON, 2012) and support Russian to the government of Bashar al-Assad during the civil war in Syria (BAGDONAS, 2012).

In general, prestige is understood as highly linked to power, deterrence, and reputation (MORGENTHAU, 2001), although each of these terms is distinct between themselves. That being said, because they are different concepts and have characteristics and instruments that do not necessarily converge at any given moment, it is necessary to understand the nuances of the demand for prestige by a State and its possible impacts, especially the undesirable impacts, in the power of that respective State and its relations with other international actors.

The concept of prestige has several definitions, some broader than the others. The present article will be based on the definitions raised by Hans Morgenthau and Thomas Schelling, primarily due to the proximity that their outlines have to the object of this article, the use of naval battleships, and their analyzes of the relationship of prestige with power and deterrence. The nuances and possible results of the search for prestige by a State will be treated by this article from the methodology of the study of similar cases, with the naval strategies between 1906 to 1945 of the maritime powers being investigated, seeking to analyze, in a first moment, if there was the instrumentalization of naval battleships in prestigious policies, and, in a second moment, what were the effects, in the short to long term, of such policies in the relations of the countries in question with the other States. To identify how the instrumentalization of naval battleships occurred, it will be investigated the naval strategies and shipbuilding plans of the main powers, while a survey will be made of diplomatic relations between States, as well as the progress of naval campaigns in the two world wars, to allow an understanding of the

results of such prestigious policies in the power of States and the relations between them.

The time frame of this article, that ranges from 1906 to 1945, was made by the fact that the main object of analysis of this work, the modern naval battleships, appeared in 1906 with the commissioning of the HMS Dreadnought by the United Kingdom, while the last battleship built was the HMS Vanguard, launched in November 1944. Furthermore, after the Second World War, battleships quickly fell into disuse, and in the second decade of the 21st century, no vessel of this class is in service (STURTON, 1996). Hence, the chosen cases, since they have already completed a whole cycle, allow the long-term analysis of the impacts of the demand for prestige and all its nuances.

We test the hypothesis that, before the two world wars, the construction of naval battleships was primarily sought in support of prestigious policies made by the main powers, thus having a large percentage of divergence between the purely strategic and tactical needs of these respective countries, and plans for the construction and instrumentalization of their ships.

The article consists of three sections. The first section addresses the theoretical foundations that serve as a basis for the analysis of the concepts of prestige and deterrence, concepts developed here through the contributions of Hans Morgenthau (2001) and Thomas Schelling (1977). Besides, it is presented how these concepts relate to naval fleets and maritime power. In the second section, the case studies will be analyzed from the review of specialized literature, seeking to observe the shipbuilding plans of the powers throughout the period under investigation, their naval strategies until the First World War, technological innovations and the continuation of their naval strategies in the interwar period, and the consequences of the preparations of the powers for their successes and failures during the naval conflict in World War II. The third section raises the observations regarding the nuances of prestige and deterrence policies in general, from the analysis of the instrumentalization of battleships observed in the case studies made in the previous section.

PRESTIGE, DISSUASION AND THE NAVAL SCOPE

The search for prestige in the International System is a policy still present in the 21st century. Bagdonas (2012) demonstrated that Russian

political support for the government of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war had been made primarily for reasons of prestige and reputation, with this country seeking to position itself as one of the indispensable poles of a multipolar system formed from shared norms and values, aiming to prevent the legitimization of regime change by external actors (BAGDONAS, 2012). In turn, for O'Neill, the demand for possession of nuclear weapons since the end of World War II was largely explained by the desire to achieve international prestige (O'NILL, 2006).

The Chinese insertion in the South China Sea is also linked to the search for prestige: Hayton places the desire for prestige as one of the factors behind the apparent aggressiveness that China demonstrates with its neighbors in this region. (HAYTON, 2012); and Mukherjee analyzes the strong convergence between the demand for maritime power and national prestige in this country (MUKHERJEE, 2018). In addition, the increasing assertiveness of Chinese leaders on territorial issues is seen as part of a policy that seeks to increase the perception of China's authority, legitimacy, and prestige (KIM, 2015). It is essential to understand the instrumentalization of military armaments in favor of prestigious policies and their possible impacts on relations between States. For the analysis of the prestige policies in the case studies practiced in this article, we present below the theoretical basis related to prestige, deterrence, and power.

For Morgenthau (2001), prestige is a central point for the understanding of international politics, and a search for prestige, called prestige policy, is generally used to elevate a state's position or, at least, maintain its status quo. This search is the attempt to form an image made to be seen by other nations and to impress them with its power, whether this is a bluff or not. This occurs from diplomacy between states, such as diplomatic ceremonies, as well as from demonstrations of military forces since military force is the most obvious measure of a state's power (MORGENTHAU, 2001).

Naval fleets are the major forms in which the demonstration of military strength can occur: they take the country's flag to foreign ports, and based on the size of the vessels, the technological advances present in them and their firepower, an image of power is created. Such a factor can be used as a deterrent or preparation for war. The country's prestige is expected to be sufficient to prevent other nations from going to war, but if that fails, mobilizing the armed forces before the start of war would put the country in a more militarily advantageous position. Consequently, military

mobilization is itself an instrument of prestige policy, as it demonstrates the country's power and, above all, the intention to use it in pursuit of political objectives. Prestige is thus the reputation for power, the view that other countries have of the power of a nation, and how they believe or not whether this country would exercise this power (MORGENTHAU, 2001).

The main function of prestige policy is to influence the assessments of power made by other States, to interfere with their perceptions, and regardless of the objectives of a nation's foreign policy, its prestige is always an important or even decisive factor in determining the success of this foreign policy. In short, the prestige policy is an essential element of foreign policies, creating the possibility of abstaining from the use of force, since the reputation of the state's power may be sufficient to deter all its opponents, as the reputation for restrained use of power can generate a tendency to avoid confrontation and maintain the balance of power. Furthermore, the prestige of a nation is the sum of all its failures and successes, qualities and aspirations, and not only the actions that are strictly closer to the time frame in which it is analyzed (MORGENTHAU, 2001).

The other focal point of this article is deterrence, the power to frighten an opponent, notably in a passive way. Thomas Schelling (1977) delved into this aspect in his book *Arms and Influence*, and his peculiar look, connecting bargain, deterrence, and the courage to maintain a firm position, is important to analyze the naval strategies of the chosen period.

According to the author, bargaining can occur in different ways, and the bargaining power that interests us is the power to attack what is precious to the opponent. This power is not of light use, but it occurs frequently in international politics. Therefore, the military potential is used to influence other parties, either with the direct method and without the use of diplomacy, by entering into a confrontation and forcing their interests on the defeated party, or by the method of diplomacy and bargaining. This is done through the expectations regarding what this military force can impose on the other, and their results in the mind of the other, and not by the actual imposition (SCHELLING, 1977).

The power to attack is successful when its use is not necessary, unlike the brute force. The violence that is expected, from a threat, that can cause a state to give in. For that, an important requirement is knowledge about what the target considers as important and valuable, and it is also necessary for the opponent to recognize which courses of action it can take

that will either lead to a violent response or not. Consequently, intentions must be projected onto others, and they must be used to persuade them to cooperate. Exhibits in this way have their role, by either exhibit of military force, or by clear demonstrations of what the State considers to be of their interest (SCHELLING, 1977).

A country's reputation for action relates to its image and what other states think of its strength and credibility. This image is forged from the positions that the country takes at different times in its history, but itself, and this country's reputation for action, does not have an absolute value: its preservation may be worthwhile in exchange for some risks and costs, but it does not mean that it is an absolute assumption that all States will defend it in all conflict situations and impasses that it participates. A State should seek to link its reputation with the interests that it considers to be important, because in this way the others will have a clear knowledge of their commitment to this respective position, and thus they will tend not to risk a test of the commitment of the country in question (SCHELLING, 1977).

According to Thomas Schelling, this image would be one of the few things that are worth fighting for. A war for a small territory may not be worth it, but if one analyzes the interdependence of this specific commitment with all others that the respective State has, maintaining a firm position may be desirable, even if it results in a confrontation. The threat of war is a highly important factor in international politics. In this sense, the conflict is not limited to a fight of opposing forces, since ideas such as a duel of nerves and risk-taking are noticed, in addition to the reputation for action. The military strategy thus merges with the art of coercion. Intimidation, with the intention of deterring, is an instrument that should not be ignored at the international level, and Schelling concludes that military strategy has become the diplomacy of violence (SCHELLING, 1977).

In the next section, the cases will be detailed to later be analyzed due to the concepts of prestige and deterrence based on this.

THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF BATTLESHIPS FROM 1906 TO 1945

THE SHIPBUILDING PLANS BETWEEN 1906 AND 1942

Between 1906 and 1942, shipbuilding plans, in general, were centered on the large naval battleships, a type of vessel that appeared in 1906 with the British battleship H.M.S Dreadnought. This class of ship replaced previous battleships and made them obsolete due to their superiority in terms of firepower, speed, armor, maintenance, and fire control. The immediate result of the emergence of these ships was the naval arms race that preceded the First World War and which worsened relations between the naval powers, especially between the United Kingdom and Germany. These two countries arrived in 1914 with 29 and 17 naval battleships, respectively, a number that would increase during the conflict that would occur (MASSIE, 1992). In the meantime, several other countries sought to obtain battleships, following the example of the United States, Japan, and Italy, as well as Brazil, Chile, and Argentina - these three countries entered a South American arms race that began at the time that Brazil bought a battleship from the United Kingdom (STURTON, 1996).

The shipbuilding plans of the European powers that were involved in the First World War were fixed in the countries' attempt to simply have more battleships than their rivals, while strategically this class of ship was considered the only decisive class in a maritime conflict. Given the context of this period in relation to other classes, it is not surprising that the battleship was prioritized as the core of shipbuilding plans since the aircraft carrier had not been invented, submarines were not very reliable and untested innovation, and destroyers largely lacked navigability on the high seas, while the aerial threat to naval vessels was not a variable to be taken into account during the First World War, let alone in the years leading up to this conflict (MASSIE, 1992).

After the First World War, an effort was made by the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom to prevent new arms races from taking place. Consequently, the naval treaties marked the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, which limited the construction of certain classes of warships and their sizes, especially battleships (JORDAN, 2011).

However, with the worsening of Italy and Germany's relations with France and the United Kingdom (CHESNEAU, 1997), along with

the Japanese desire for non-interference in their naval plans (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012), the naval treaties ended in 1936, and from this moment on, among all the powers, new plans for building warships appeared, as countries prepared for conflict in the near future. Again, the heart of the shipbuilding plans that emerged in the peace period after 1936 was the battleships. Plan Z, the name given to the German navy's expansion program, called for eight battleships and five battlecruisers, which were battleships that replaced thick armor with higher speed, in addition to four aircraft carriers, eight heavy cruisers and several other ships small. In turn, the initial American plan was for a surgical increase in the fleet from the construction of four battleships, three aircraft carriers, and other ships, however, in 1940 the plan rose to be a 70% increase in the size of the American fleet, with the construction prioritizing battleships and cruisers (CHESNEAU, 1997).

From 1935 onwards, Italy began the construction of four battleships and modernized four of the ships of this same class that remained from the first world war. France began building six battleships, while nine battleships and six aircraft carriers began to be built by the United Kingdom. In turn, Japan, despite having a notable aircraft carrier force in this period, also focused its efforts on the construction of the four Yamato-class battleships (CHESNEAU, 1997).

An important aspect to be noted is that the situation of exclusive trust for naval battleships was in a different context in the 1930s, compared to the beginning of the 20th century. The submarine had proven its effectiveness in the naval conflict between 1914 and 1918, when Germany sought to block the arrival of merchant ships to the United Kingdom, causing serious damage to that country's logistics and the war effort. In addition, destroyers, fast cruisers, and light cruisers were drastically improved during the treaty years, while aircraft carriers had been introduced and were increasingly gaining importance (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012). However, when the shadow of the war approached in the late 1930s, the focus on building battleships was also seen, with naval spending from the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and Germany being overwhelmingly toward building battleships. Twenty-three vessels of this class were commissioned from 1936 onwards, in addition to several others that had their construction started, but were later canceled (STURTON, 1996). It should be noted that this did not result in the construction of a greater number of battleships than other vessels: the cost of a German battleship,

for example, was estimated at around 200 times the cost of a submarine in this country, while the crew of one of these battleships was about 2000 men, compared to a crew of 25 to 57 men on a German submarine (GRONER, 1990). Furthermore, something that limited the number of battleships built after 1936, compared to the quantity produced from 1906 to 1918, was their size, in terms of displaced tons: most battleships in World War I displaced about 25,000 tons, while the average displacement of those produced after 1936 is around 40,000 tons (BREYER, 1973). Therefore, despite the smaller number of battleships being built after 1936, compared to the period from 1906 to 1918, and even though countries invest in other vessels, such as destroyers and submarines, the main naval investment, similarly to the previous period of the First World War, was the one directed at battleships.

NAVAL STRATEGIES OF POWERS BEFORE THE FIRST WAR

For the German Empire before 1914, the pursuit of a strong navy, through battleships, was linked to an attempt to show the world an image of independence and self-determination as opposed to the United Kingdom. Kaiser Wilhelm explicitly states that agreeing to decrease the production of battleships between his country and the United Kingdom would be a damage to Germany's image and prestige, that is, it would be to affirm Germany's acceptance of the United Kingdom's hegemony and its privileged position. Furthermore, Admiral Tirpitz's analysis was that, in the event of a conflict, a substantial loss of battleships by the United Kingdom, even if Germany lost the same amount, would have serious consequences in terms of prestige for the United Kingdom, which could cause a dismantling of the empire. However, Tirpitz's analysis must be viewed critically, since its aim was simply to obtain more investments in the German navy. In any case, on the part of the German Empire, the analysis was that the Royal Navy and the supremacy achieved by it was the most important factor for the United Kingdom, and they worked to make the German navy a threat to the British navy, to dissuade the United Kingdom from interfering in German foreign policy (MASSIE, 1992).

On the other hand, for UK decision-makers, there was an assumption that the Royal Navy should be the largest and best quality navy for several reasons. First, and most importantly, due to the matter of security: the British Empire depended on the supremacy of the Royal Navy, and indeed that empire was expanding through the successes of the British

navy in the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, the British army at this time was the smallest in comparison to other powers, having only six professional divisions, while Germany and France had more than one hundred divisions. This difference was due to conscription, something that was a tradition in continental Europe, but not in the United Kingdom. Therefore, from the military point of view, the strength of the British navy was the most important arm for this country, and that is why German shipbuilding was considered an existential threat, causing the United Kingdom to also try to end its diplomatic problems with France and Russia, to form a coalition against what they considered to be the imperialist pretensions coming from Berlin. However, the question of prestige had also been raised by the British as another factor that encouraged the construction of naval battleships: the loss of naval supremacy would be seen as damage to British prestige (MASSIE, 1992), and Edward Gray, secretary of foreign affairs, affirmed that the financial questions were discarded, because “any English man will spend up to his last penny to preserve British supremacy in the seas” (GRAY apud MASSIE, 1992, p. 797).

In its turn, in the first decade of the twentieth century, France witnessed a moment of decline in its fleet, as it was considered that the Entente with the British was enough to provide maritime security for French interests. As a result, investments in the Navy were minimal, and France was only the eleventh nation to begin construction or to order a battleship (SONDHAUS, 2001). In 1912 France sought to build a fleet strong enough to face the combined fleets of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and sought to secure a battle fleet concentrated on battleships. The prioritization of this class occurred due to a study of the Russo-Japanese war that took place in 1905: the battleship embodied all the lessons of this naval conflict and was seen as the vessel with decision-making power in battle (WATSON, 2016).

In other cases of battleship construction in the pre-World War I period, such as in Italy, the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Turkish-Ottoman Empire, the constant among them was the attempt to obtain battleships so as not to allow others obtained naval superiority, and these vessels were prioritized due to their warlike capacity (STURTON, 1996). Because of this, Italy built its battleships to keep ahead of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the number of these vessels, five of its seven battleships being explicitly commissioned for this reason. The attitude on the part of the government in Vienna was similar, building

battleships to not allow Italians to have supremacy in the Adriatic Sea (SONDHAUS, 2001).

For Japan in the second decade of the 20th century, the first and only line of defense for an island nation was a maritime defense, since the only way to invade the country was through amphibious landings. From this context, in which security was a priority, this country invested heavily in its naval fleet (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

Thus, even before the First World War, a goal of maintaining the Japanese navy having a force of at least 70 percent of the American fleet was established within the Japanese government. This goal was maintained for the next three decades until the conflict with the United States began in late 1941. Behind this objective was a tactical and strategic analysis that, having 70% of the American force, in the event of a confrontation, the possibility of Japanese victory was great, since this country would have its fleet concentrated, while the Americans would need to divide their navy between the Atlantic and Pacific, which would allow the Japanese to defeat the two forces separately, with local numerical superiority. Another reason behind this ratio between the two fleets was that, due to the lower industrial capacity, Japan would not be able to match the number of vessels in the United States, and so they agreed to seek an easier goal to be completed (O'HARA, 2014).

With this objective in mind, Japanese decision-makers focused on a fundamental consideration that shaped this country's strategy until 1941: considering the assumption that the Japanese fleet, in the event of a confrontation with the Americans or British, would have a smaller number of commissioned ships, this country should then build vessels of superior quality, to equalize with the greater quantity of its opponents. For them, the quality was in the firepower, superior range and armor of the ships, three attributions personified in the battleships Dreadnought (STILLE, 2014).

Ships of other classes would have a secondary task of eroding American numerical superiority with smaller scale attacks during the movement of the American fleet to the west in the Pacific. Thus began the ideology of large ships and large cannons in Japanese naval strategic thinking, based on this analysis of the decisive attributes of a vessel to overcome the opponent by being outnumbered. Thus, the American naval expansion under Theodore Roosevelt's government encouraged the Japanese naval expansion, due to the Asian country's objective of obtaining

70% of the American force, and the battleship was seen as the vessel that would allow victory in the event of a war (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

Stull during the pre-World War I period, in Brazil, there was no firm coordination between shipbuilding plans and Brazilian foreign policy, despite the fact that the reorganization of the navy was seen as instrumental to the strategies of Baron of Rio Branco, for instance by approaching the United States and achieving regional hegemony. The navy, with a high degree of autonomy in determining its composition, observed the need to acquire the most modern ships available, since Brazil could not continuously update its naval fleet (ALSINA JR., 2014). Brazil was the third state to have a battleship under construction, ordered from the United Kingdom, behind only the United Kingdom itself and the United States of America. Thus, before Germany, France, Russia, and other great powers, Brazil was already with Dreadnoughts battleships being built for its navy (BREYER, 1973).

The responses from Chile and Argentina, however, were linked primarily to the matter of the balance of power in South America. Both countries observed that these Dreadnought battleships ordered by Brazil made their respective navies obsolete and that in case of a conflict only one of the new Brazilian vessels would already be able to destroy the entire fleet of these countries (MARTINS, 2007). Also, the Argentine government feared the possibility of a Brazilian blockade of the River Plate, as this could collapse the country's economy (A MESSAGE ..., 1910).

Therefore, Chile and Argentina ordered two Dreadnought battleships for each, from a British construction company, and an American construction company, respectively (STURTON, 1996). The balance of naval forces was an important factor, due to the issue of security for both countries. This fact is best observed when the Argentine government authorized a new order for a battleship, which would be the third for the country if the third Brazilian battleship was commissioned in 1912 (SCHEINA, 1987).

THE INTER-WAR PERIOD: TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS, MILITARY DOCTRINES, AND NAVAL STRATEGIES

After the end of the naval treaties, the powers invested heavily in their fleets. In the case of Japan, as already mentioned, the objective of

nullifying the numerical superiority of the American fleet was the main foundation of this country's naval strategy until the Second World War. Measures made for this purpose were numerous, such as the development of long-range offensive capabilities, the extension of firepower, the development of a highly modern naval aerial arm, and the construction of the Yamato class of battleships, the largest ships of this class in history. In addition, this country has focused on the concept of the decisive battle of naval battleships (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

The Battle of Jutland was a confrontation between the main battleship fleets in the United Kingdom and Germany in 1916, in which despite a greater loss of British ships, the Germans were forced to retreat to their ports and the British naval blockade was maintained. However, despite the non-decisive result of this confrontation, for naval thinkers in the inter-war battles, the battle confirmed the naval strategies that placed the battleship as the decisive vessel and the decisive battle, a single confrontation with the largest number of ships available, as the main event to train themselves to face. Therefore, the Japanese continued with the concept of large ships and large cannons, ignoring alternative strategies such as, for example, the use of the submarine in the Corsican war. Meanwhile, the Americans continued with the concept of the battle fleet (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

The submarine in the First World War proved in technical and operational terms as a new important element of power in the seas, particularly in its serious damage done to the British merchant fleet. However, in the interwar period, as the strategic thinking was focused on the battleship fleet, the submarine was considered by the British, Japanese, and Americans only as an important element in the operations of the fleet in support of battleships. For Japan, the role of the submarine and torpedo boats were in the erosion of the American naval superiority, and they planned that these vessels would act on the night before the day of the great battle of battleships, to create chaos and confusion in the enemy fleet (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

Until the beginning of the Pacific war, the United States continued to perceive the submarine as an auxiliary element in fleet operations (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012). The British, on the other hand, did not develop a coherent underwater strategy in the interwar period and this meant that this country had few of these vessels to take the war to Japanese waters (BOYD, 2017). On the other hand, the Germans started the development of

an underwater force with the main objective of destroying the opponent's trade. However, strategically it was also left in the background until the middle of the Second World War since Kriegsmarine considered that surface ships were still more efficient in this objective. This is why in World War II Germany sought to make several surface attacks with battleships and cruisers on British trains, although most of them failed. The non-concentration of German naval investments in submarines, from 1936 to 1941, is evident when analyzing the small number of German submarines in operation during the first years of conflict: between September 1939 and May 1941, Germany had only about 20 active submarines per month. This number started to increase from that moment on when the defeats of the surface ships made Hitler prioritize the construction of submarines. As a consequence, August 1942 is the first month in which Germany had more than 100 submarines in operation in a given month, and this number continued to grow until mid-1943, when there was a convergence of new technologies, such as centimeter radar, and new tactics, facilitating the discovery and destruction of the Axis submarines (DIMBLEBY, 2016).

The destroyer, a ship made originally with the unique task of destroying torpedo ships, was upgraded in the interwar period and became for the British and Americans a ship of broad defensive functions, such as protecting merchant ships, battleships and the fleet in battle, anti-submarine combat and patrolling the seas and oceans. The Japanese, on the other hand, specialized their destroyers, molding them for the night attack of torpedoes, using them with the aim of sinking, critically striking or creating disorder in the enemy's battleships hours before the duel between the battleships of both nations (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

The Americans in the interwar period, despite agreeing with the other countries in the decisive role of the battleship fleet, analyzed that a balanced fleet was necessary to defeat Japan, since the battle fleet would need an expressive number of auxiliary vessels and support, as well as protection, in its movement through the Pacific. This country, with its great industrial potential, managed, in the 1930s, to develop a balanced fleet, with modern submarines, improved logistical capabilities, and a strong naval air wing (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

In the 1920s, a rivalry in the shipbuilding of cruisers occurred for the simple reason that they were the largest class of vessels after battleships, which were severely limited by naval treaties. In the period of the treaties, which was from 1922 to 1935, the naval powers sought

to reach the limits postulated by the multinational agreements in the limited classes and to strengthen arms and services not covered by them. Therefore, in these years of the naval treaties, the Japanese and Americans began the development of the aerial arm of their respective navies, to improve their naval forces and at the same time trying not to exceed the limits of the treaties (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

However, according to the Japanese central strategy, Japan initially emphasized that the navy's air wing had the sole purpose of facilitating action between the fleets, and not acting in an independent command against the opponent. The aircraft carriers entered the combat plane operating a considerable distance from the main fleet and would be tasked with achieving aerial superiority in the region before the battle between battleships began. New strategies and weapons influenced the Japanese and other powers' plans, but orthodox thinking remained. The concept of large cannons and large ships made, after Japan's withdrawal from the Treaties, its next step to be the construction of the largest battleships ever seen, to destroy the US fleet while being out of reach. For this end, they developed 18-inch cannons, keeping this fact secret so that the United States of America would not try to build battleships with cannons of the same or greater thickness (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

The Japanese, giving great importance to the construction of the Yamato super battleship class, sought to keep their plans and vessels in complete secrecy, hiding their hulls during construction and making brief and secret ship launching ceremonies. Japan was successful in this initiative, and the British and Americans did not have extensive knowledge of Japanese naval strategy, as they were also unaware of the existence of the two super battleships Yamato and Musashi until the beginning of the war in the Pacific (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

Germany understood that in the coming confrontation, due to its extreme numerical inferiority in terms of surface ships, it should avoid a decisive battle with the British fleet. Kriegsmarine's objective was to erode the Royal Navy employing surprise attacks on its convoys, thus managing to enter a balanced confrontation in terms of battleships, since British forces would need time to gather (DIMBLEBY, 2016).

For the United Kingdom, it is observed that in the mid-1930s this country understood that it would fight a war in multiple theaters of operation, in which it would need a coordinated response with all its services acting in an integrated manner. Consequently, the fixation on

a decisive battle in the Jutland model ceased. Unlike the Japanese in the 1930s, the United Kingdom considered aircraft carriers to be important in protecting merchant ships, patrolling the seas and in independent actions, not only in support of battleships, while the threat to their merchant ships by submarines in privateering was highly analyzed, and consequently, the construction of destroyers and escort ships was not neglected by this country (BOYD, 2017).

The thought that the decisive battle should not be the navy's only objective was incorporated by the United Kingdom in this confrontation. The defense of communication lines, on the other hand, was the priority for the British. They did not look at each theater of operations singly but as a continuous line from the British Empire, in which events in one impacted their efforts in the others. The Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean were not considered as strategically separate, and the control of these three regions was considered decisive for the British war effort, given that without one of these the United Kingdom would be separated from the rest of its Empire, from resources and labor of their colonies, as well as the precious oil reserves in Iraq and Iran. This does not mean that the battleship had already lost its decisive character to the British: it was still considered the most powerful and avant-garde vessel of the Royal Navy, but the needs forged by the vast Empire of this country and the expectation of facing several enemies simultaneously made the United Kingdom think less strategically about its strategic plans (BOYD, 2017).

British rearmament from 1935 onwards was made with a balance between flagships, i.e., battleships, fleet aircraft carriers, and support vessels. However, in 1939 the Royal Navy changed its production and made a specific effort to obtain greater anti-submarine capacity. This caused the cancellation of the four battleships of the Lion class of battleships so that more destroyers and corvettes could be produced. Also, when there was a greater need for escort ships after the fall of France in 1940, the battleship program sector was sacrificed (BOYD, 2017).

This change in the British shipbuilding program in 1939 preceded the change that gave u-boats construction priority in German plans for more than a year, and consequently made the British better prepared for the eventuality they did not consider, of the use of French ports by German submarines, and that they would need to defend the entire Atlantic communication line (BOYD, 2017).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NAVAL PREPARATIONS FOR WORLD WAR II

The Japanese navy failed to understand the nature of the conflict it anticipated and prepared to face. The fixation on battleships and in the decisive battle caused them to develop a one-dimensional and fragile force, ill-prepared to sustain their war effort. The Japanese were anticipating a limited war, similar to the Russo-Japanese war that occurred in the early 20th century (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012). For such a style of war to be fought by a country, control of the seas is one of the necessary factors (CORBETT, 2009), something that the Japanese failed to obtain (EVANS; PEATTIE, 2012).

The Germans, on the other hand, made an erroneous analysis of the capacity of surface ships in the destruction of merchant ships, mainly in comparison with the capacity of submarines, and this fact caused, in the first place, their battleships to be used inefficiently, in second, the opportunity created by the moment of the fragility of the British in the Atlantic in 1940 was not enjoyed by the Germans and, finally, extensive resources were wasted on battleships Bismarck and Tirpitz. These mistakes made by the two main Axis nations were decisive in World War II as a whole, making victory in the oceans unlikely for these belligerents. The British situation in the battle of the Atlantic had been perceived by this country as being critical at various times, such as in January 1942, when the fleet of German submarines attacked the relatively unprotected American coast, even forcing the allocation of British destroyers for the region (VAT, 2001). As Clausewitz stated, “war is the province of uncertainty” (CLAUSEWITZ, p. 46, 2007), and participants’ perceptions of the progress of confrontations, campaigns and wars are not necessarily in line with reality. That said, at any point in the confrontation of World War II British communications lines in the Atlantic break, and the United Kingdom was able to continuously supply its armies in North Africa and other theaters of operation, in addition to setting up combined amphibious expeditions, to the example of the Madagascar invasion in May 1942 and Operation Torch in November 1942 (BLAIR, 2000).

Conversely, the side that had difficulty supplying its armies with water was the Axis, with the Japanese army present in Burma from 1942 to 1945, inexorably depending on the continuation of its activities on the capture of British supplies, and this factor shaped Japan’s operations on this front (KEANE, 20131). And, as far as it is concerned, the Axis effort in North Africa was severely damaged by the lack of merchant ships from Germany

and Italy and the activity of few submarines British in the Mediterranean (BIERMAN; SMITH, 20043). As seen, the lack of German investment in submarines, from 1936 to 1941, meant that Germany had only about 20 submarines in activity per month in the first three years of conflict, while British investment in destroyers and anti-submarine escorts resulted, in the first years of the war, in four British escorts for each German submarine in operation (BOYD, 2017).

In this regard, the British situation in the battle of the Atlantic, despite perceptions on both sides, was relatively stabilized: only in four months from the beginning of the war until the entry of the United States of America, Germany managed to sink more British tons, in terms of merchant ships, than the United Kingdom produced these vessels per month. After the entry of the United States of America, in just one month, November 1942, Germany managed to sink more tons than the production of both countries. In addition, only about 10% of the trains crossing the Atlantic were attacked during the entire war (BLAIR, 2000). On the other hand, this does not mean that the battle of the Atlantic was easily won and that the number of sunk merchant ships did not create a constraint on British activity throughout the war, but only that British risk management and British industrial production had success in reducing the problems caused by the attacks of German submarines.

In any case, the result was that the window of opportunity created by the defeat of France, the use of French ports by German submarines, and the relative British unpreparedness, with its emergency naval production programs at the beginning, was not fully enjoyed by Germany (DIMBLEBY, 2016). The construction priority was transferred to submarines only from 1942, with this country building about 1,100 submarines during the war, but only two battleships, the Bismarck and Tirpitz, did not fulfill Plan Z due to the reality that the conflict presented (CHESNEAU, 1997). However, this change of priority occurred late, with the British being better prepared to face the German submarine fleet in 1942, and even defeating it the following year (DIMBLEBY, 2016).

Only in early 1941, due to an analysis of the British victory in the battle of Taranto the previous year, when torpedo planes sank or damaged three Italian battleships, that the offensive use of the aircraft carriers was incorporated by Japan. The result was immediate, followed by their planning of the attack on Pearl Harbor and other offensives with these vessels, such as the incursion into the Indian Ocean in 1942 (BOYD, 2017).

In 1942, the countless Japanese victories coming from the torpedo aircraft launched by their aircraft carriers affirmed the instrumentalization of these vessels in an offensive and decisive way, making battleships relatively obsolete from this moment on. After this, the priority in shipbuilding was transferred to aircraft carriers by the British, Japanese, and Americans (BOYD, 2017).

The British and Americans, due to a greater capacity for shipbuilding (BOYD, 2017), were less affected by possible miscalculations made in the naval strategy in the interwar period, as they were able to change their shipbuilding plans more easily in the course of the confrontation, altering the composition of their fleets from 1942 in favor of aircraft carriers. It is noted that the vast majority of German and Italian battleships in this period were destroyed, highly damaged, or immobile in their ports, and consequently after 1942, the two main threats to the allies are the German submarines and the Japanese fleet and, specifically, their aircraft carriers (CHESNEAU, 1997). Like the others, the United States prioritized battleships until 1942, in strategic and tactical terms, that is, as being decisive in the naval war as a whole, as well as in the confrontation itself (EVANS; PEATTIE 2012). In the Pacific, no battleship sunk a large ship, as this was done mainly by torpedo planes (STILLE, 2014), while this relative failure of battleships in World War II is more evident when analyzing their costs: Bismarck cost about 196 million Reichsmark for Germany, disregarding maintenance and upgrading costs. In contrast, a German u-boat cost about 2 million Reichsmark (GRONER, 1990).

PRESTIGE AND DISSUASION IN THE NAVAL AREA BETWEEN 1906 TO 1945

As demonstrated, battleships remained a priority in terms of shipbuilding mainly due to their war potential, but this does not mean that in numerous moments they have not been instrumentalized in prestigious policies or in attempts to dissuade other nations over the years. To dissuade Japan, at the moment when the United Kingdom saw the risk of a simultaneous confrontation against the three countries that would form the Axis, its battleships already built were seen as essential, and planned to position some of these vessels in Singapore to make Japan more susceptible to a constructive relationship. This fleet in Singapore had a defensive task to protect British interests in the east of the Empire, while

the offensive was planned to be taken in Europe. Meanwhile, the naval base in Singapore has also been strengthened for deterrence (BOYD, 2017).

This British plan was made in conjunction with the United States: the American Pacific fleet, with its nucleus containing several battleships, moved from the coast of this country to Pearl Harbor in June 1940, while bombers moved to the Philippines, both actions aimed at containing Japanese expansionism and dissuading the Asian country from waging war (SCHALLER, 1976).

In terms of reputation for action, the use of battleships in the British attack on the Vichy fleet in Mers-el-Kébir demonstrated that the United Kingdom, after the fall of France, understood the need to show the world and, especially, the United States, that he would continue the fight against Nazi Germany. This was one of the reasons behind this attack, in 1940. In this period, which coincided with the battle of Brittany, the United States was undecided on whether they should help the British, with many members of the government and even the ambassador to the United Kingdom, considering that any aid would be wasted because of the supposed inevitable defeat of this country (HOLLAND, 2011). The British attack on the Vichy fleet in Algeria and the defense of the United Kingdom's airspace helped to convince the American government that the British government was firm in its positions (PLAYFAIR, 1954).

Prestige as the sum of all defeats and victories has its loss easily linked to the great naval defeats: when Hitler discovered that his greatest battleship, Bismarck, was sunk in 1941, he claimed that the German prestige was at a low point (KENNEDY, 1975), and Churchill felt the same after the German fleet successfully crossed the English Channel in 1942 (DIMBLEBY, 2016). Besides, in the interwar period, the United Kingdom maintained a squadron of cruisers in Latin America, with the explicit intention of maintaining the prestige of the British in the region. They concluded that cruisers were sufficient for this, and did not use battleships for this purpose (Bell, 2000).

Before 1914, the intensive search for international prestige through battleships was certainly present in the foreign policy of certain countries, such as Imperial Germany. In these cases, the result was an international crisis that resulted in damage to the relations of these countries with their neighbors (MASSIE, 1992). In the Brazilian case, the search for prestige was not the reason that shaped the composition of the Brazilian fleet in the first decade of the twentieth century: the navy of this country sought

the acquisition of battleships because they are the most modern vessels and thus have greater longevity (ALSINA JR, 2014). In the 1920s and 1930s, in the period close to the Second World War, the prioritization of battleships in terms of strategy by Japan, the United States, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom did not occur due to the role of these vessels in prestigious policies, but due to an analysis of the military capacity of these vessels after the conclusion by the States regarding the high decisive character of the battleship in a conflict. The United Kingdom ceased this prioritization in early 1939, swapping the construction of four battleships for destroyers. On the other hand, Germany, Japan, and the United States made this reorientation from 1941 onwards, with the Germans giving priority to submarines and the other two countries to aircraft carriers.

No other case is more explicit concerning the lack of importance of prestige in the formation of naval strategies than that of Japan since this country acted actively to prevent other states from becoming aware of its real naval potential and the existence of its main battleships, the Yamato class ships. The search for prestige and deterrence, for demonstrating strength, would be the opposite of this course of action taken by the Japanese. Nevertheless, it was noted that theoretical and strategic naval thinking, to a large extent, did not keep up with naval technological development between 1906 and 1945. The battle of Tsushima (1905) of the Russo-Japanese war and the battle of Jutland (1916) remained as the main subjects of study by all countries, except the United Kingdom (BOYD, 2017) and Germany in the late 1930s, and it was from the conclusions drawn from these studies that the naval strategies of these powers were shaped in the following decades (MARSTON, 2010). The demonstrated inefficiency of battleships during World War II, in contrast to the countless victories achieved by aircraft carriers, demonstrates how several of the military doctrines in force in the years leading up to the conflict failed to keep up with naval technological development between 1906 and 1945 (VEGO, 2009).

Thus, the search for prestige did not come close to shaping the naval strategies of the powers after the First World War. However, regardless of this fact, these naval strategies of the 1920s and 1930s were largely based on concepts that proved to be wrong during The Second World War. In a broad analysis, it is possible to see the impact that a miscalculation in naval investment can cause to a country. Unlike the production of land and air equipment, warships are extremely costly vessels that can stay under

construction for years, and they need considerable effort to be modernized and kept up and running. Shipbuilding plans bear fruit that appears only years later. Consequently, a miscalculation in the composition of the fleets can dramatically increase the chances of a country's defeat in a naval conflict, coming close to being irreversible.

Regarding the prestige, it is observed that it is a factor that can be raised in favor of arguments that seek to encourage certain investment policies in military armaments, such as the case of Imperial Germany and its naval battleships, and the United Kingdom itself before World War I. Prestige is, by its conceptual definition, subjective and not quantifiable, and as such it is an arduous task for any decision-maker to analyze the real impacts of a prestigious policy on the perceptions of other States. In the case between the United Kingdom and Germany before the First World War, German demand for naval battleships did change the perception of the British about Germany, but this shift was towards the perception that this country had become a threat that should be contained. Consequently, contrary to the fact that German investment in battleships made this country more independent and prevented its foreign policy from undergoing British interventions, this course of action encouraged greater British insertion in continental Europe, in addition to encouraging the United Kingdom to support France in colonial disputes against Germany, following the example of the Agadir crisis in 1911.

In essence, the German error was in failing to identify the importance that the United Kingdom placed, at that time, for its naval supremacy and its maritime security. Consequently, the search for prestige as well as for power, like the German insertion in the naval field before the First War, can be done while neglecting the real dangers and risks that such policies can create for other countries. Ultimately, prestige as an end can be highly damaging to a country's relations with its peers, and, instead of deterring its rivals, such a policy can encourage policies of containment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article we seek to investigate whether naval battleships were instrumentalized in prestigious policies from 1906 to 1945 and whether the naval strategies of maritime powers were shaped by the search for international prestige, in order, ultimately, to analyze the nuances behind prestigious policies in and its possible impacts on relations with other

actors. We observed that, although the question of prestige was present in discussions regarding the construction of naval battleships in Germany and the United Kingdom until the First World War, from this moment until the Second World War, naval strategies were shaped by the perception of the decisive character of naval battleships, and they were built for material and strategic reasons. The prestige, therefore, was a peripheral factor from 1914 to 1945 in relation to the instrumentalization of battleships and the formation of naval strategies.

In any case, it was found that the prestige aspect was used as an additional factor behind the arguments for investments in naval battleships by the United Kingdom and Germany from 1906 to 1914. Specifically, the prestige served as a foundation for Emperor Wilhelm II, in order not to have his investment policy in battleships interfered by the United Kingdom. The result of these investments, however, was the opposite of the one desired by Imperial Germany. In short, the search for prestige, instead of dissuading other states from intervening with a country's foreign policy, can result in a policy of restraint, damaging that state's diplomatic relations with its peers. What is necessary, therefore, is an analysis of the real importance that other States place, at a given moment, in the specific areas that a country will seek to enter with investments in war materials, since any investments can be combated if a State considers them as threatening him existentially.

O IMPACTO DO PRESTÍGIO NAS ESTRATÉGIAS NAVAIS DAS GRANDES POTÊNCIAS NA PRIMEIRA METADE DO SÉCULO XX

RESUMO

Neste presente artigo é procurado compreender os fatores que influenciaram as estratégias navais das principais potências marítimas no período de 1906 a 1945, com o objetivo final de identificarmos as nuances por trás de políticas de prestígio e seus possíveis impactos não desejáveis nas relações de um Estado para com seus pares. O estudo de caso foi a metodologia usada, sendo selecionadas as principais potências marítimas na primeira metade do século XX para análise e verificando o desenvolvimento de suas estratégias navais e do progresso de seus planos de construção navais a partir de uma pesquisa bibliográfica em livros e artigos acadêmicos. Foi visto que o principal fundamento por trás da importância dos encouraçados após a Primeira Guerra Mundial, o qual era o cerne das estratégias da maioria das potências até 1942, era a crença explícita em suas qualidades materiais bélicas, este tipo de navio sendo instrumentalizado com o intuito de se travar batalhas decisivamente, e não por motivos de prestígio e dissuasão. Por último, através da análise dos casos anteriores à Primeira Guerra Mundial, foi concluído que a procura pelo prestígio pode produzir um incentivo a uma política de contenção pelos outros Estados e não, a exemplo de como era desejado nos casos observados, resultar na dissuasão de seus pares por um Estado.

Palavras-chave: Encouraçados. Prestígio. Dissuasão. Estratégia Naval. Potências Marítimas. Segunda Guerra Mundial. Primeira Guerra Mundial.

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