NAVAL WARFARE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

WAR is the armed conflict of national wills, an appeal to force as between nation and nation. Naval warfare is that part of the conflict which takes place on the seas. The civilized world is divided into separate, independent States or nations, each sovereign within its own borders. Each State pursues its own ideas and aims and embodies them in a national policy; and so far as this policy affects only its own citizens, it is subject to no control except that of the national conscience and the national sense of the public welfare. Within the State itself civil war may arise when internal dissensions divide the nation into two parties, of which either pursues a policy to which the other refuses to submit. In this case, unless the two parties agree to separate without conflict, as was done by Sweden and Norway a few years ago, an armed conflict ensues and the nation is divided into two belligerent States which may or may not

become, according to the fortune of war, separate, independent, and sovereign in the end. The great example of this in our own time was the War of Secession in America, which, happily for both parties, ended without disruption, in the surrender of the weaker of the two, and after a time in a complete reconciliation between them.

Thus war may arise between two parties in a single State, and when it does the two parties become, to all intents and purposes, separate, independent, and sovereign States for the time being, and are, for the most part, so regarded and treated by other independent States not taking part in the conflict. For this reason, though the origin of a civil war may differ widely in all its circumstances and conditions from that of a war between two separate States, sovereign and independent *ab initio*, yet as soon as a state of war is established, as distinct from that of a puny revolt or a petty rebellion, there is, for a student of war, no practical difference between a civil war and any other kind of war. Both fall under the definition of war as the armed conflict of national wills.

Between two separate, sovereign, independent nations a state of war arises in this wise. We have seen that the internal policy of an independent State is subject to no direct external control. But States do not exist in isolation. Their citizens

trade with the citizens of other States, seeking to exchange the products of their respective industries to the advantage of both. As they grow in prosperity, wealth, and population, their capital seeks employment in other lands, and their surplus population seeks an outlet in such regions of the earth as are open to their occupation. Thus arise external relations between one State and another, and the interests affected by these relations are often found—and perhaps still more often believed—by one State to be at variance with those of another. In pursuit of these interests—which, as they grow and expand, become embodied in great consolidated kingdoms, great colonial empires, or great imperial dependencies, and tend to be regarded in time as paramount to all other national interests—each State formulates and pursues an external policy of its own which may or may not be capable of amicable adjustment to the policy of other States engaged in similar enterprises. It is the function of diplomacy to effect adjustments such as these where it can. It succeeds much more often than it fails. Conflicting policies are deflected by mutual agreement and concession so as to avoid the risk of collision, and each State, without abandoning its policy, modifies it and adjusts it to the exigencies of the occasion. Sometimes, however, diplomacy fails, either because the conflicting

policies are really irreconcilable, or because passion, prejudice, national ambition, or international misunderstanding induces the citizens of both States and their rulers so to regard them. In that case, if neither State is prepared so to deflect its policy as to avert collision, war ensues. The policy remains unchanged, but the means of further pursuing it, otherwise than by an appeal to force, are exhausted. War is thus, according to the famous definition of Clausewitz, the pursuit of national policy by other means than those which mere diplomacy has at its command—in other words by the conflict of armed force. Each State now seeks to bend its enemy's will to its own and to impose its policy upon him.

The means of pursuing this policy vary almost indefinitely. But inasmuch as war is essentially the conflict of armed force, the primary object of each belligerent must in all cases be to subdue, and, in the last resort, to destroy the armed forces of the adversary. When that is done all is done that war can do. How to do this most speedily and most effectively is the fundamental problem of war. There is no cut-and-dried solution of the problem, because although war may be considered, as it has been considered above, in the abstract, it is the most concrete of all human arts and, subject to the fundamental principle above enunciated, its particular forms may, and indeed must, vary with the

circumstances and conditions of each particular war. Many commentators on war distinguishing, with Clausewitz, between "limited" and "unlimited" war, would further insist that the forms of war must vary with its objects. I cannot follow this distinction, which seems to me to be inconsistent with the fundamental proposition of Clausewitz, to the effect that war is the pursuit of policy by means of the conflict of armed force. If you desire your policy to prevail you must take the best means that are open to you to make it prevail. It is worse than useless to dissipate your energies in the pursuit of any purpose, however important in itself, which does not directly conduce, and conduce better than any other purpose you could pursue, to that paramount end. The only limitation of your efforts that you can tolerate is that they should involve the least expenditure of energy that may be necessary to make your policy prevail. But that is a question of the economics of war; it is not a question of "limited war" or of "war for a limited object." Your sole object is to bend the enemy to your will. That object is essentially an unlimited one, or one that is limited only by the extent of the efforts which the enemy makes to withstand you. The only sure way of attaining this object is to destroy his armed forces. If he submits before this is done it is he that limits the

war, not you. Bacon's unimpeachable maxim in this regard is often misinterpreted. "This much is certain," he says, "he that commands the sea is at great liberty and may take as much or as little of the war as he will." That is indisputable, but its postulate is that the belligerent has secured the command of the sea; that is, as I shall show hereafter, that he has subdued, if not destroyed, the armed forces of the enemy afloat. Having done that he may, in a certain sense, take as much or as little of the war as he chooses; but he must always take as much as will compel the enemy to come to terms.

Naval warfare is no essential part of the armed conflict between contending States. In some cases it exercises a decisive influence on the conduct and issue of the conflict, in others none at all or next to none. But sea power, that is, the advantage which a nation at war derives from its superiority at sea, may largely affect the issue of a war, even though no naval engagements of any moment may take place. In the Crimean War the unchallenged supremacy of England and France on the seas alone made it possible for the Allies to invade the Crimea and undertake the siege of Sebastopol; while the naval campaigns of the Allies in the Baltic, although they resulted in no decisive naval operation, yet largely contributed to the success of the Allied arms

in the Crimea by compelling Russia to keep in the north large bodies of troops which might otherwise have turned the scale against the Allies in the South. In the War of 1859, between France and Austria, with the Sardinian kingdom allied to the former, the superiority of the Allies at sea enabled considerable portions of the French army to be transported from French to Piedmontese ports, and by threatening the flank of the Austrian line of advance, it accelerated the concentration of the Allies on the Ticino. It also enabled the Allies to maintain a close blockade of the Austrian ports in the Adriatic, and might have led to an attack from the sea on the Austrian rear in Venetia had not the military reverses of Austria in Lombardy brought the war to an end. In the War of Secession in America the issue was largely determined, or at least accelerated, by the close but not impenetrable blockade established by the North over the ports and coasts of the South, and by the co-operation of Farragut on the Mississippi with the Federal land forces in that region. On the other hand, in the War of 1866 there was no naval conflict worth mentioning between Austria and Prussia, because Prussia had no navy to speak of; but as Italy, a naval Power, was the ally of Prussia, and as Austria had a small but very efficient naval force led by a great naval commander, the conflict between these two Powers

led to the Battle of Lissa, in which the Italian fleet was decisively defeated, though the triumph of Prussia over the armies of Austria saved Italy from the worst consequences of defeat, and indeed obtained for her, in spite of her military reverses on land, the coveted possession of Venetia. In the War of 1870 again, although the supremacy of France on the seas was never seriously challenged by Prussia, yet her collapse on land was so sudden and complete that her superiority at sea availed her little or nothing. The maritime trade of Prussia was annihilated for the time, but it was then too insignificant a factor in the economic fabric of Prussia for its destruction to count for much, and the fleets of France rode triumphant in the North Sea and the Baltic; but finding no ships to fight, having no troops to land, and giving a wide berth to fortifications with which they were ill-equipped—as ships always are and always must be—to contend without support from the military arm, their presence was little more than an idle and futile demonstration. In the Boer War the influence of England's unchallenged supremacy at sea, albeit latent, was decisive. The Boers had no naval force of any kind; but no nation not secure in its dominion of the seas could have undertaken such a war as England then had to wage, and it was perhaps only the paramount sea power of this

country that prevented the conflict taking a form and assuming dimensions that would have taxed British endurance to the uttermost and must almost certainly have entailed the loss of South Africa to the Empire. Certain naval features of the Cuban War between Spain and the United States, and of the War in the Far East between Russia and Japan, will be more conveniently considered in subsequent chapters of this manual.

The normal correlation and interdependence of naval and military forces in the armed conflict of national wills is sufficiently illustrated by the foregoing examples. In certain abnormal and exceptional cases each can act and produce the desired effect without the other. In a few extreme cases it is hard to see how either could act at all. If, for instance, Spain and Switzerland were to fall out, how could either attack the other? They have no common frontier, and though Spain has a navy, Switzerland has no seaboard. Cases where naval conflict alone has decided the issue are those of the early wars between England and Holland. Neither could reach the other except across the sea, there was no territorial issue directly involved, and the object of both combatants was to secure a monopoly of maritime commerce. But as territorial issues, and territorial issues involving the sea and affected by it directly or indirectly, are nearly

always at stake in great wars, history affords few examples of great international conflicts in which sea power does not enter as a factor, often of supreme importance.

It must of course enter as a factor of paramount importance in any war between an insular State and a continental one—as in the war between Russia and Japan—or between two continental States which—as in the war between Spain and the United States—have no common frontier on land. War being the armed conflict of national wills, it is manifest that the opposing wills cannot in cases such as these be brought into armed conflict unless one State or the other is in a position to operate on the sea. The first move in such a conflict must of necessity be made, by one belligerent or the other, on the sea. This involves the conception of "the command of the sea," and as this is the fundamental conception of naval warfare as such, our analysis of naval warfare must begin with an exposition of what is meant by the command of the sea.