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# The Battle of Jutland and the teaching of naval warfare at the French Army's higher war school in Paris, 1920-21

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## ABSTRACT

*The French Army promoted and practiced inter-service familiarity in advanced professional studies carried out at its well-established higher war school in Paris that reopened immediately after the First World War. As part of the curriculum, naval officers lectured to army officers on naval tactics and strategy with a strong historical focus. This activity involved early teaching by one of the French Navy's leading original thinkers in the interwar period. Recent war experience against the Germans provided rich content for those lectures. The naval battle of Jutland was one case given particular consideration. A mimeographed typescript copy of the original lectures indicates that the French showed interest in a sea encounter with which they were only tangentially involved.*

## Introduction

After the First World War, the French Army (*Armée française*) reopened its higher war school (*École supérieure de guerre*) which since 1876 had educated competitively selected officers for staff and higher command positions, in a two-year programme. Although inspired originally by Imperial Germany's war college (*Kriegsakademie*), the French equivalent developed independently and compared favourably with the curriculum and teaching at the similarly reopened British army staff college at Camberley.<sup>1</sup> At these professional military education (PME) institutions, inter-service

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<sup>1</sup>Iain Alexander Farquharson, "A High Brow Scheme to Mess People About': Missed Opportunities to Reform Staff Training in the British Army, 1919-1939', PhD thesis, Brunel University, London, 2021, p. 82; Brian Bond; *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972); Joseph Moretz, *Thinking Wisely*, 83

relations with their respective navies received attention through dedicated lectures and joint exercises.

Inclusion of the French Navy (*Marine nationale*) at the French Army's higher war school had been a longstanding feature since establishment of a naval chair filled by an officer from the naval service when Lieutenant (*Lieutenant de vaisseau*) Robert Degouy was first appointed by Major-General Joseph de Miribel in June 1888.<sup>2</sup> Study of naval tactics and strategy progressed over the years to include the latest developments and ideas in the French and foreign navies, with emphasis on cooperation with the army. In the early interwar years, a commitment to maintaining naval instruction as an elective course for army officers, with a fixed number of lecture hours, was renewed at the higher war school.

The receptiveness amongst army officers to instruction in naval affairs remains much harder to gauge. Armies and navies possessed different traditions, cultural milieus, organisation, ranks and pathways to promotion, and modes of operating and fighting. The French Army's regiments, brigades, divisions, and corps that encompassed functional combat arms and support branches were distinct from the arsenals, depots, dockyards, squadrons, and fleets in the French Navy. In many respects, the army and navy were two worlds apart. The need for promoting common language and understanding across the services was, therefore, imperative. British naval officer and historian John Creswell observed, 'if all commanders and staff officers continue to be educated, as they are now, to understand the problems, capabilities and limitations of the other Service; there need be no fear of falling short of the best results attainable when they are called on to co-operate.'<sup>3</sup> The naval lectures furnished at the higher war school in Paris sought to bridge, in some measure, that familiarity for the army officers attending.

In general, the content and instructors delivering the lectures adopted a detached perspective that viewed naval operations and the Battle of Jutland specifically from that of a numerically inferior navy dominated by a much larger army. Emerging as a weakened victor power from the world war, France balanced continental and

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*Planning Boldly: The Higher Education and Training of Royal Navy Officers, 1919-39*, (Solihull: Helion, 2014), p. 59; Edward Smalley, 'Qualified, but unprepared: Training for War at the Staff College in the 1930s', *British Journal for Military History*, 2, 1, (November 2015), p. 58, <https://bjmh.gold.ac.uk/article/view/638/760> [accessed 24 October 2023].

<sup>2</sup>*Annuaire de l'Armée française*, (1889), p. 688; 'Military Studies in France', *Acton Gazette*, (16 June 1888); Lieutenant de vaisseau R. Degouy, *Étude sur les opérations combinées des armées de terre et de mer*, (Paris: Librairie militaire de L. Boudoin et cie, 1888).

<sup>3</sup>Captain John Creswell, RN, *Generals and Admirals: The Story of Amphibious Command*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 188.

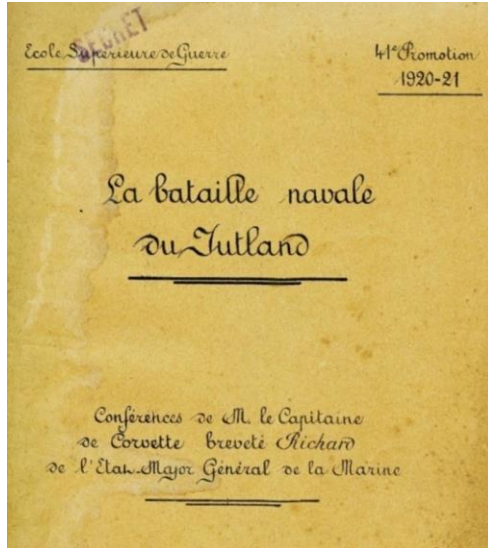
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maritime circumstances in assessing the recent past and formulating a naval policy for building a fleet with a view to the future.<sup>4</sup> The higher war school provided a safe and non-discriminating forum for professional officers like Commander (*Capitaine de frégate*) Raoul Castex to express and advance critical ideas grounded in careful reading of history from the perspective of a lesser continental maritime power that invoked some controversy and condemnation from France's closest ally. The curriculum taught at the French Army's higher war school still overwhelmingly catered to an army audience and military matters of material interest. That naval tactics and strategy received some measure of attention is surprising enough, but that the army's higher war school became the focal-point for such questioning and reassessment is indeed significant in terms of original thinking, and drawing lessons from the wartime naval experience.

Why then a French interest in the Battle of Jutland? Although the *Marine nationale* missed the most significant major fleet action during the First World War due to the deployment of its main fleet in the Mediterranean, the naval battle held a certain fascination for army and naval officers alike. It was well known, mainly for its missed opportunities and at the time, indecisive result. Beyond the details of the sea battle itself and the forces involved, naval lectures at the higher war school emphasised Imperial Germany's choice of a submarine warfare campaign. During the interwar period, Castex eventually synthesised the precepts of both the *Jeune École* and Mahan schools that were already prevalent in the French Navy into a coherent theory of strategy and naval warfare. The 152 pages of lectures on the naval battle of Jutland delivered by Lieutenant-Commander (*Capitaine de corvette*) Édouard Richard to army officers attending Promotion 41 (1919-21) at the Paris higher war school (Figure 1) illustrate efforts to produce army officers with at least a modicum of knowledge of naval warfare.

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<sup>4</sup>Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, 'French Naval Strategy: A Naval Power in a Continental Environment', ed., N.A.M. Roger, *Naval Power in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 61-62.



**Figure 1:** Front cover of Alfred Édouard Richard's lectures on the naval battle of Jutland, marked secret.<sup>5</sup>

### **Professional French Naval Commentary on the German War at Sea**

The *Marine nationale* entered and finished the First World War in a materially substandard state which severely restricted how it could deploy and what it could do operationally. French warship construction that had begun under a 1912 naval law, with planned expenditures projected out to 1920, was largely left undone.<sup>6</sup> During the war, priority for employment of labour in naval arsenals, shipyards, and maritime-related industrial concerns was given over to shell production and armaments manufacture for the army. Following the *Entente Cordiale* it was agreed that French battleships, like the *Paris* commissioned in 1914 (Figure 2), and armoured cruisers would be concentrated in the Mediterranean naval army (*Armée navale*). The zone of northern armed forces (*Zone des armées du Nord*) involved mostly maintenance of mine barrages, coastal defence, patrol work, and escort duties by destroyers and

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<sup>5</sup>*École supérieure de guerre. La bataille navale du Jutland – Conférences de M. le Capitaine de corvette breveté Richard de l'État-Major Général de la Marine, 41<sup>e</sup> Promotion 1920-21*, original document in author's possession; Surviving copies can also be found at selected non-lending European defence libraries and an English translation in The National Archives, Kew (hereinafter TNA), ADM 203/68; All translations from the original French in this document and other sources are by the author.

<sup>6</sup>Ray Walser, *France's Search for a Battle Fleet: Naval Policy and Naval Power 1898-1914*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 210.

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smaller warships.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, French participation in naval operations against the heavy units of the German fleet before, during, and after the Battle of Jutland was limited. That left the British Grand Fleet, under Admiral John Jellicoe's command, the primary contender on the Allied side in this theatre of operations.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2:** The Courbet-class dreadnought *Paris* spent most of the First World War in the Mediterranean with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armée navale and continued active service in the *Marine nationale* throughout the 1920s.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Capitaine de vaisseau de réserve A. Thomazi, *La marine française dans la Grande guerre 1914-1918: La Guerre navale dans la zone des armées du Nord*, (Paris: Payot, 1925); Olivier Gomez, '« Tranchées mouvantes... »: vivre et combattre sur les torpilleurs et contre-torpilleurs de la Zone des armées du Nord', *Revue d'histoire maritime*, 20, (2015), pp. 43-64.

<sup>8</sup>Mike Farquharson-Roberts, *A History of the Royal Navy – World War I*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2014); David K. Brown, *The Grand Fleet: Warship Design and Development 1906-1922*, (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2010); Jellicoe became First Sea Lord at the Admiralty in November 1916, where he was overly preoccupied by the threat and tribulations of German submarines. Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, *The Crisis of the Naval War*, (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921).

<sup>9</sup>*Marine*, vol. 3, June 1938-February 1939, scrapbook in author's possession; John Jordan and Philippe Caresse, *French Battleships of World War One*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017); Jean Moulin, 'France La Marine Nationale', eds., Vincent P. O'Hara, W. David Dickson, and Richard Worth, *To Crown the Waves: The Great Navies of the First World War*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), p. 69.

The Battle of Jutland attracted notable contemporary comment in Paris. Olivier Guihéneuc's straightforward factual recounting was the first attempt in French to assess the naval battle's significance, within the limits of wartime censorship: 'The Battle of Jutland is therefore a beautiful, indisputable victory for the British fleet, a glorious victory certainly, which dealt a disastrous blow to the enemy and greatly reduced its means to do harm, but which did not entirely reduce it to impotence: Germany still has a 'fleet-in-being'.'<sup>10</sup> Contemporary claims that the major sea battle in the North Sea was a win for the Allies, or at least a draw, received some backing.<sup>11</sup> Retired Rear-Admiral Robert Degouy, a regular contributor to the *Revue des deux mondes*, offered that the numerical and gunnery advantages favoured the British, so much so, that the German High Seas Fleet was unwilling to take risks and retired back to port: 'Obviously, the battle of 31 May did not definitely decide the pre-eminence of the British fleet in pitched battle. We are well aware that this was due to the circumstances particularly favourable for the weaker of the two parties, circumstances which are not found twice in the same war.'<sup>12</sup> The German admiral commanding decided when to accept or refuse combat, preferring instead preservation of irreplaceable capital ships and continuation of a fleet-in-being strategy. Based on his previous teaching at the higher war school, Degouy knew that though indecisive, the naval battle's outcome caused the respective sides to reassess their strategies toward 'moral maneuver', one of the French admiral's favourite catchphrases.<sup>13</sup> Other naval professional overviews concentrated on perceived tactical implications and stressed the impact of new technologies on naval combat between fleets, which made another battle like Jutland remote.<sup>14</sup>

Immediate post-war analysis of Jutland by French naval professionals extended this opinion. Rear-Admiral René Daveluy, well-known for his earlier published writings on naval strategy, tactics, and organisation, presented a broad historical narrative, grounded in a keen appreciation of theory, of the naval war against Imperial Germany

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<sup>10</sup>Olivier Guihéneuc, *La bataille navale du Jutland 31 mai 1916*, (Paris: Perrin, 1917), p. 210.

<sup>11</sup>Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Jutland 1916: Death in the Grey Waters*, (London: Cassell, 2003), pp. 417-425; V.E. Tarrant, *Jutland: The German Perspective*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup>*Contre-amiral Degouy, La guerre navale & l'offensive*, (Paris: Librairie Chapelot, 1917), p. 255.

<sup>13</sup>Jean-Noël Grandhomme, 'Du pompon à la plume: l'amiral Degouy, commentateur de la guerre et de la « paix d'inquiétude », 1914-1919', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 227, 3, (2007), p. 60.

<sup>14</sup>*Capitaine de frégate de Parseval, La bataille navale du Jutland (31 mai 1916)*, (Paris: Payot, 1919), pp. 141-156; *Capitaine de frégate J. Vaschalde, Les leçons de la guerre: Marine et guerre navale*, (Paris: Masson & cie, 1920), pp. 88-96.

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in his two-volume *Maritime Action during the Anti-German War*. A section on the Battle of Jutland stressed the enduring contest between accurate penetrating gunfire and protective armour as well as the effect that torpedoes with longer effective range had on dispositions and engagements.<sup>15</sup> Although superior in numbers of torpedo-carrying boats, the Germans achieved little success in pressing home attacks in the face of British counter-maneuver.<sup>16</sup> A central premise behind the Jeune École's favouring of torpedo attacks by smaller warships thus came into question. At least one French naval professional writing in 1920 still favoured day and night actions with torpedoes over gunnery.<sup>17</sup> Of course, the submarine was the stealthiest means to fire torpedoes against massed surface ships, and the *Marine nationale* had significant numbers of them, although mostly for defensive purposes.

Lieutenant Jacques Amet solicited a preface letter from Vice-Admiral Lacaze for his own writing (Figure 3):

The high seas fleets, for their part, played no less a useful role, by blockading the ports of our enemies, who had to give up trying to conquer the mastery of the sea. This was an essential condition for the use of these great maritime nations, the loss of which was bound to cause them to give up the fight. The Germans understood this well, and the Battle of Jutland, long prepared, marks a capital hour by the supreme effort attempted to open a way to the oceans which is essential to the life of peoples.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Contre-amiral Daveluy, *L'Action Maritime pendant la guerre anti-germanique*, vol. I (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1920), pp. 136-140.

<sup>16</sup>*Service historique de la Défense* (SHD), Vincennes, Lieutenant de vaisseau R. Leloup, *Opérations des forces légères et des torpilleurs à la bataille du Jutland*, École supérieure de guerre navale, Promotion 1921; Contre-amiral Lepotier, *Les derniers torpilleurs*, (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1969), pp. 74-76; John Brooks, 'British Destroyers at Jutland: Torpedo Tactics in Theory and Action', *British Journal for Military History*, 3, 3, (2017), pp. 36-38. <https://bjmh.gold.ac.uk/article/view/757> [accessed 24 October 2023].

<sup>17</sup>Lieutenant de vaisseau A. Jeannin, *Les bâtiments de surface dans la guerre navale*, (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1920), pp. 10-11; John Brooks, *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland: The Question of Fire Control*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>18</sup>Lieutenant de vaisseau Jacques Amet, *Le Jutland: Bataille navale du 31 mai 1916*, (Paris: Renaissance du Livre, 1923), pp. 8-9; Edward Breck book review Jacques Amet, 'Le Jutland: bataille navale du 31 mai 1916', *American Historical Review*, 29, 2, (January 1924), pp. 335-337.





**Figure 3:** Vice-Admiral Lucien Lacaze, France's Minister of Marine (October 1915-August 1917)<sup>19</sup>

From Lacaze's perspective, Jutland was less important than the steady work that the warships of the *Marine nationale* performed in countering German submarines over the course of the war and the utter lack of regard for the wartime navy by the French polity.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the French Navy finished the First World War in a worse condition than when it started, due to some notable losses and a lack of replacement

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<sup>19</sup>Section photographique de l'Armée, photograph in author's possession; Jean-Philippe Zanco, *Dictionnaire des ministres de la marine 1689-1958*, (Paris: Éditions SPM, 2011), pp. 538-540.

<sup>20</sup>Martin Motte, 'Une surprenante surprise: les U-boote dans la Grande Guerre', *Stratégique*, 106, 2, (2014), p. 57.

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shipbuilding. Amet's own brother was lost as an ensign on the armoured cruiser *Léon Gambetta* sunk by an Austrian submarine on 27 April 1915, to whom he dedicated his study of the naval battle.<sup>21</sup> The book, divided into three parts, explained general considerations of naval tactics, the episodes and encounters of the battling fleets, as well as the resulting indecisiveness and some critical tactical errors. Amet lamented the posture adopted by Admiral Jellicoe and the Grand Fleet:

Defensive and non-offensive spirit, which considers only strength of numbers capable of ensuring Victory, leaves one satisfied if the adversary leaves the battlefield, without worrying about the price paid for this half-victory, without having tried to make the enemy pay dearly for his ardor, nor to deprive him of the means of attempting a new assault. Such a tactic applied on land would have made it very difficult for us to drive the Germans out of France.<sup>22</sup>

According to his analogy between naval and land warfare, the Grand Fleet's task was left undone. Memoirs from duelling senior officers and treatment in official histories would leave the debate over Jutland unsettled.<sup>23</sup> It was therefore an interesting topic in a PME setting for discussion by army officers, as it could be seen from many angles, not purely naval ones.

### **Students and the Curriculum at the Higher War School**

When the *École supérieure de guerre* resumed its programmes in Paris in November 1919, a new senior leadership brought a sense of seriousness and purposefulness to the provision of advanced officer education in the French Army. The position of commandant went to General Marie Eugène Debeney (Figure 4). Debeney was previously a professor of applied tactics (infantry) at the pre-war school, and was considered a protégé of Marshal Philippe Pétain, whom he served under as a chief-of-staff in 1917. He commanded the French First Army in the final battles and offensives of the war, coordinating closely with General Henry Rawlinson and the British Fourth Army at Amiens, and in Allied military operations against the Hindenburg defensive

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<sup>21</sup>Matt Perry, 'Vive La France: Death at Sea, the French Navy and the Great War', *French History*, 26, 3, (2012), p. 345; Stephen S. Roberts, *French Warships in the Age of Steam 1859-1914: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*, (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Seaforth, 2021), p. 366.

<sup>22</sup>Amet, *Le Jutland*, p. 114.

<sup>23</sup>Moretz, *Thinking Wisely, Planning Boldly*, pp. 42-43; John Brooks, *The Battle of Jutland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. xvii; Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London: John Murray, 1996); Keith Yates, *Flawed Victory: Jutland 1916*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), pp. 257-269.

line.<sup>24</sup> Debeney therefore combined practical experience of higher command, an inclination for offensive action, and strong ideas about the type of officers needed to conduct the modern forms of warfare.



**Figure 4:** General Marie Eugène Debeney, commandant *École supérieure de guerre* (November 1919-January 1924), Chief of the General Staff (February 1924-January 1930)<sup>25</sup>

In a 1920 article entitled *The Officer*, General Debeney wrote:

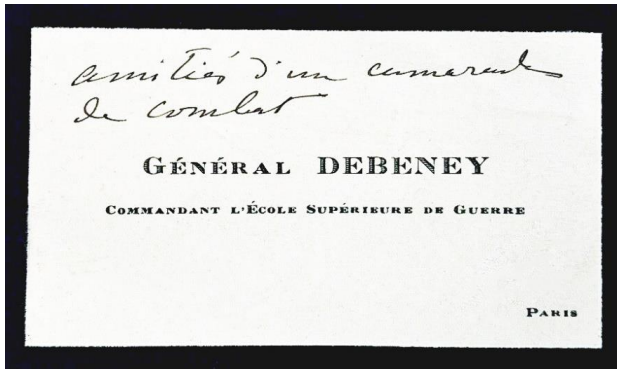
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<sup>24</sup>Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 324-328; Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 498-499.

<sup>25</sup>*L'illustration* print, in author's possession.

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Education intended to train officers is therefore given first and foremost by the very framework of their existence in terms of social values. He is, in addition, developed and invigorated by a purely professional education intended to train the officer, whatever his branch of arms, in the dual role of leader and instructor. It is to this professional education above all else that applies the experiences of war.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 5:** The commandant's visiting card from the higher war school.<sup>27</sup>

The winning ways of 1918 were codified into French military doctrine. During his time at the higher war school (Figure 5), Debeney participated in a commission to produce the landmark *Provisional Instruction on the Tactical Employment of Large Units*, which underpinned the French Army's thinking during this period.<sup>28</sup> After the February 1924 death of General Edmond Buat, Debeney became the Chief of the General Staff, and served at the top of the army for the rest of the decade. Under Debeney's earnest direction, the higher war school educated officers selected for the first promotion classes after the First World War.

Promotion 41 (1919-21) marked a full return to the usual two-year programme. A shortened Promotion 40 (1919-20), which had been halted half-way through 1914,

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<sup>26</sup>Général Debeney, 'L'officier', *Revue des deux mondes*, 57, 1, (1 May 1920), p. 25; Debeney was an engineer officer by background, but he commanded infantry formations. Faris R. Kirkland, 'Governmental Policy and Combat Effectiveness: France 1920-1940', *Armed Forces and Society*, 18, 2, (Winter 1992), p. 178.

<sup>27</sup>Original card in author's possession.

<sup>28</sup>SHD, *Ministère de la guerre, L'instruction provisoire sur l'emploi tactique des grandes unités* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1923); Robert J. Young, 'Preparations for Defeat: French war doctrine in the inter-war period', *Journal of European Studies*, 2, (1972), pp. 160-161.

started concurrently on 4 November 1919, and comprised of those officers still alive after the war.<sup>29</sup> Admission to the higher war school was by competitive examination, from which successful candidates were ranked by placement.

Infantry	56
Artillery	24
Cavalry	8
Engineers	1
Colonial infantry	2
Colonial artillery	1
<b>Total French Admissions</b>	<b>92</b>
Foreign officers <sup>30</sup>	28

**Table 1:** Table for admissions of officers to Promotion 41 *École supérieure de guerre*.<sup>31</sup>

Roughly half the officers attending Promotion 41 were infantry, a little less than a quarter artillery, some cavalry, and a few others (Table 1). The colonial infantry and artillery were closely associated with the French Navy. A sizeable number of officers also came from other foreign countries to study at the higher war school. The language of instruction remained French, although courses in English and German were offered. The United States Marine Corps later sent its officers to the higher war school in Paris, although none joined in the 1919-21 years.<sup>32</sup> Four United States Army officers with wartime service in France also attended and advanced later to higher rank: Lieutenant-General Raymond Wheeler, Colonel Charles Lull, Colonel Charles Martin, and Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Budd.<sup>33</sup> Georges Lescornez from Belgium and Jan

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<sup>29</sup>*Bulletin trimestriel de l'Association des amis de l'école supérieure de guerre*, 91, 3, (1981), p. 11; Claude Franc, '120 ans d'École supérieure de Guerre (2/2): 1920-1992', *Revue défense nationale*, 818, (March 2019), p. 78.

<sup>30</sup>Belgium, China, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Greece, Japan, Peru, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, and Yugoslavia were represented.

<sup>31</sup>*Journal officiel de la République française*, 196, (22 July 1919), pp. 7580-7582.

<sup>32</sup>Donald F. Bittner, 'Foreign Military Officer Training in Reverse: U.S. Marine Corps Officers in the French Professional Military Education System in the Interwar Years', *Journal of Military History*, 57, 3, (July 1993), p. 486.

<sup>33</sup>The Trustees of Reservations Archives and Research Center, Sharon, Massachusetts, Arthur D. Budd papers, series VI, box 6, file 1, Major A.D. Budd, Infantry, 'Report on École supérieure de guerre, at Paris', 27 June 1922; Wheeler was Louis Mountbatten's deputy supreme commander (American general working for British admiral) in the South East Asia Command (SEAC) during the Second World War. Hoover Institution

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Sadowski from Poland also attended and reached the rank of general in their respective armed forces. France sent military missions to Poland, Romania, and other allied countries, which reserved spots at the higher war school in Paris for promising officers.

Studies at the higher war school followed a scheduled routine. The main building possessed two large lecture halls with the latest audio-visual aids, and were each able to hold 120 persons; one room was reserved for each of the Promotion courses underway at any given time.<sup>34</sup> Officers were also organised into smaller individual groups consisting of ten French officers and typically three or four foreign officers, who met in classrooms for discussions, wargames, consideration of tactical schemes, and problems posed by professors and instructors. Students stayed with the same class group for the entire two years, getting to know each other well. The day started with forty-five minutes of compulsory horse-riding up to four times per week.<sup>35</sup> Lectures were an hour long, usually in the morning, and the afternoons were devoted to group work, preparatory reading, or assignment writing. Officers were assessed on their professional and academic performance with final examinations held at the end of the programme on all taught subjects.

Naval content in the curriculum at the higher war school formed only a small portion in an otherwise busy programme comprising more than 200 lectures in total. Resident military faculty professors and assistants delivered the Core Courses, which received the overwhelming number of instructional hours across both years (Table 2). As General Debeney noted,

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Library and Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California, Raymond Albert Wheeler papers, box 11, file 50, letter, Mountbatten to Speck, 23 September 1945.

<sup>34</sup>The 'Ecole Supérieure De Guerre,' Paris', *RUSI Journal*, 70, 477, (February 1925), pp. 1-7.

<sup>35</sup>Lieutenant-Colonel G. Guy Waterhouse, 'Notes on the École Supérieure de Guerre, Paris', *Army Quarterly*, 8, (July 1924), p. 325; General Henri Bonnal, an infantry officer, military historian, and zealous equestrian, had first made horse-riding mandatory during his time commanding the higher war school, as a form of physical exercise, team-building practice, and requisite skill for any staff officer; officers were prohibited from show jumping due to too many injuries. Commandant Bonnal, *Équitation*, (Paris: Librairie militaire de L. Baudoin et cie, 1890); Fencing was another popular semi-compulsory sport and the school's outdoor playing field used for hockey and other ball games. The relative age and fitness levels of the students led to much over-exertion and 'walking wounded' during school days, besides good stories that added to the constant general banter in the classroom typical of the military environment.

take care during the first year at the school to limit the work of officers to the in-depth study of procedures specific to each weapon - infantry, artillery, aviation, cavalry, signals; then, during the second year focus specifically on the combination of all these weapons together, and you will have created a flexible thinker eminently suited to form the qualities, I do not say ever sufficient, but necessary for good judgment and decision in a practical sense.<sup>36</sup>

<b>Mandatory Core Courses</b>
General tactics and staff duties
Military history
Applied infantry tactics
Applied artillery tactics
Applied cavalry tactics
Fortification, engineering, and telegraphy equipment
Aeronautics service
Munition and armaments manufacture
Horse riding
English language
German language
<b>Secondary Elective Courses</b>
Sanitation and health
Administration
Applied naval tactics and strategy

**Table 2:** Subject courses on the two-year programme at the higher war school.<sup>37</sup>

Instructors and lecturers brought in from outside the higher war school customarily delivered the Elective Courses in either of the two years. Applied naval tactics and strategy, one of those electives, received a total of nine instructional hours in the second year. When the French Navy's higher naval school (*École supérieure de marine*) became active again in January 1920, General Debeney established good relations with its director, Rear-Admiral Jean Ratyé, and arranged for the exchange of instructors, such as Commander Georges Laurent.<sup>38</sup> The higher naval school was restructured to

<sup>36</sup>Général Debeney, 'L'école supérieure de guerre', *Revue de deux mondes*, 37, 1, (1 January 1927), p. 91.

<sup>37</sup>*Annuaire officiel de l'Armée française*, (1920/1921), p. 1294.

<sup>38</sup>Rémi Monaque, 'L'enseignement interarmées à l'École de guerre navale avant la Second Guerre mondiale', *Revue historique des armées*, 198, (March 1995), p. 118; Vice-amiral Ratyé, 'L'École de Guerre navale', *La Revue maritime*, 61, (January 1925), pp. 6-

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become the naval war school (*École de guerre navale*) in May 1921. Compared to the 120 army officers attending the two-year Promotion 41, fifteen naval officers spent twelve months on the higher naval school's Promotion 1920-21, including one foreign officer from Brazil.

In the second year of Promotion 41, the naval lectures at the higher war school were delivered by knowledgeable naval officers invited from the French Navy's central service and naval general staff (*État-major general de la Marine*), and included a set of three covering the Battle of Jutland. The focus on subjects corresponded with what Debeney as commandant deemed necessary for facilitating active learning amongst the army officers.

### **Sober assessments of an indecisive naval battle**

General Debeney made a point of finding the best subject matter experts available to lecture at the higher war school and they followed a common pedagogical approach. Pairing of Jutland with general lectures on naval warfare accorded with Debeney's preference for 'concrete cases' that allowed officers to work through a historical event or operational situation on their own terms, and then subject their analysis and deductions to in-depth criticism and reflection from instructors which involved 'the officers quickly analysing a situation, finding as many a practical solution quickly, and pursuing with conviction execution.'<sup>39</sup>

The purpose was not to accumulate general knowledge, but to train officers to assess and ponder a tactical or operational problem toward decision. Some army officers certainly had friends or relatives, typically fathers, brothers, uncles, or cousins, in the navy, which allowed them to talk with some authority in relation to the general knowledge level present in the higher war school classes, though rarely enough to hold strong opinions on the intricacies of naval tactics and strategy.<sup>40</sup> For many attending army officers, this time was their first real in-depth exposure to navies and naval matters, in the same way that they learned about the combat arms outside their

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7; Laurent was Ratyé's assistant director and professor of strategy and naval tactics at the higher naval school in 1920-21. *Annuaire de la Marine*, (1921), p. 915.

<sup>39</sup>Debeney, 'L'école supérieure de guerre', pp. 90-91; The historical method was not universally liked. Henri Nichel, 'Pour l'enseignement de l'organisation à l'École supérieure de guerre', *Revue militaire française*, 92, 7, (1 January 1922), pp. 209-210.

<sup>40</sup>In some families with military ties or middle-class origins, one or more siblings joined the army, while others entered the navy or pursued professions like engineering, law, and medicine. Ronald Chalmers Hood III, *Royal Republicans: The French Naval Dynasties Between the World Wars*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 22-26.



own service branch. The provided instruction was meant to be broadening with new content.

Debeney sought out instructors well-versed in the topical field of study as well as possessing some measure of relatable field service experience. Lieutenant-Commander Édouard Richard, the officer assigned to deliver the Battle of Jutland lectures, commanded a torpedo boat and a gunboat during the war, finished the abbreviated Promotion 1920 at the higher naval school, and served as a detached officer with the French Navy's historical service and then in the naval general staff's 3<sup>e</sup> bureau – operations (EMG 3).<sup>41</sup> He was subsequently deputy chief of the military cabinet under Senator Flaminius Raiberti, Minister of Marine (January 1922-January 1924), and eventually attained the rank of vice-admiral in 1939. Commander Raoul Castex, the other naval officer, was chief of the historical service and archives, having served in various staff and operational wartime roles.<sup>42</sup> He authored several books before the war dealing with the naval general staff (1908), military ideas in the navy to the eighteenth-century from de Ruyter to Suffren (1911), commerce warfare and convoy (1912), and the policy, strategy, and tactics behind the 1781 naval battle at La Praya (1912). Castex had attended the truncated Promotion 1913-14 at the *École supérieure de marine*.<sup>43</sup> He was the designated naval lecturer at the higher war school during Promotion 41 and a constant face in naval uniform for the army officers, whom were there to learn and to some extent be entertained. The material was meant to get them thinking, as Debeney hoped, to become critical generalist staff officers and future commanders in the French and foreign armies.

Richard's opening lecture on Jutland described the geography, the comparative numbers, types, and fighting strength of the British and German fleets, and the premises on which they were deployed according to modes of operating, and the

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<sup>41</sup>*Annuaire de la Marine*, (1922), p. 53; Étienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, (Paris: Tallandier, 2002), pp. 448-449; *Contre-amiral Rémi Monaque, L'école de guerre navale*, (Vincennes: Service historique de la Marine, 1995), p. 384.

<sup>42</sup>*Annuaire de la Marine*, (1921), p. 55; Jean Martinant de Préneuf, 'Neptune et Clio: Le Service historique de la Marine 1919-1974', *Revue historique des armées*, 216, (September 1999), pp. 6-9; In contrast to journals and notes kept during the war, Castex's personal papers mostly miss this period as the historical service's chief and lecturer at the army and navy higher war schools, though one box contains Washington conference materials. SHD, GG2 125, Admiral Raoul Castex.

<sup>43</sup>Chris Madsen, 'Attendance at the École Supérieure de Marine in Paris from 1900 to 1914', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 108, 2, (May 2022), p. 238; Wartime duties also left a book unfinished on combined arms in the naval context using much historical illustration. *Amiral Castex*, ed., Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, *La liaison des armes sur mer*, (Paris: Economica, 1991).

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personalities of the admirals commanding the respective navies. The second lecture expounded on the movements and dispositions in the build-up to the naval battle, through distinct chronological phases. The decision-making of the commanders with the communications received and information available at any point in time was especially emphasised. The third lecture gave a detailed account of the engagement of the main fleets, and the turn away of the main body of the German High Seas Fleet. The focus was again primarily on the actions and decisions of responsible admirals and commanding officers, in particular the perceived cautiousness of Admiral Jellicoe. The army officers learned the basic difference between a battleship and a destroyer, and related command in the naval context to more familiar land milieus. For an army imbued with the offensive, the indecisive result of the naval battle was bewildering.

Richard drew out for his army audience the broader strategic implications of this missed opportunity from the French perspective:

Militarily, can we say that from the Battle of Jutland there was a clear winner or loser? No. Obviously, considered from the general strategic point of view, this battle constituted a type of indecisive action, without influence on the development and final outcome of operations. The destruction of the German fleet would have had great morale, political, and military consequences. Without even insisting on the effect of morale breakdown, perhaps indirectly that would have been produced amongst our enemies; it would have enabled us to deprive the Germans control of the Baltic, which they retained until the end.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, Jutland was of interest mostly in the negative, and to show the consequences of not pushing offensively, as the Royal Navy had done so successfully in the past (many times against the French Navy). The German fleet lived to see another day, with the Great War finally decided on land and by blockade.

Castex was even more unmoved about the Battle of Jutland's relevance in his 1920-21 naval tactics lectures at the higher war school, focused mainly on submarine warfare and the liaison of arms. The brief engagement between the rival battle fleets warranted only a brief mention and he instead focussed on the German plans for the use of submarines before, during, and after the battle.<sup>45</sup> The indecisiveness of Jutland was

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<sup>44</sup> *La bataille navale du Jutland – Conférences*, pp. 146-151; *Capitaine de corvette É. Richard, 'Réflexions sur la bataille du Jutland', La Revue maritime*, 7, (July 1920), pp. 1-30, 192-216.

<sup>45</sup> *École supérieure de guerre, Tactique navale: Nouveaux aspects de la liaison des Armes – A propos de la Guerre sous-marine allemande, Capitaine de frégate Castex, 1920-21*, pp. 197-198, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9610376q?rk=2145:2> [accessed 24 October 2023].

more important for its effect on the German submarine campaign against commerce, which like warfare on land continued unabated.

Army officers learned that the submarine was a potent weapon that was used effectively in an offensive manner to sink shipping and seek out the warships of the Allied fleets. Imperial Germany resorted to unrestricted submarine warfare that followed no legal rules of visit and search, to maximise Allied losses at sea and cut off vital supply routes. That strategy brought the United States into the war and tipped the balance on the land fronts by bringing to France large numbers of fresh trained troops in General John Pershing's American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).<sup>46</sup> Castex drew the connections to the indecisive result at Jutland back to his main themes:

The enemy realised only too late that in order to ensure the success of their submarines, the Allied Grand Fleet had to be annihilated by some means, and they missed every opportunity for this reason.

The U-turn of the German fleet on the day of the Battle of Jutland, to name but one, definitely sealed the fate of the submarine war. In terms of liaison of arms, the weakest party on the surface, or turn-tail in this theatre, could not hope to be victorious by limiting itself to acting from below.

This monumental error by the enemy is the fundamental and real cause of the failure of submarine warfare. It was enough to fix many shortcomings among the Allies. In war, everyone makes mistakes; the winner is often the only one who has committed the fewest. The key is not to make mistakes 'that cause the enterprise to be lost', as Admiral Suffren said, and neglecting liaison of arms is one of those.<sup>47</sup>

For Castex, the fleet-in-being strategy pursued by the Germans hindered effective coordination between surface and underwater forces. Attacks on commerce alone could not win the war at sea, although German progress on the technical and construction sides was impressive, especially compared to French efforts.

Accordingly, the French Navy sought and obtained a sizeable share of submarines, torpedoes, diesel engines, and stocks of stores and spares as reparations under the

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<sup>46</sup>*École supérieure de guerre, L'effort américain pendant la grande guerre – Conférence faite aux officiers de l'École supérieure de guerre, le 7 Janvier 1920*, pp. 39-44, original document in author's possession; Meighan McCrae, *Coalition Strategy and the End of the First World War: The Supreme War Council and War Planning, 1917-1918*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 140-142.

<sup>47</sup>Castex, *Tactique navale*, pp. 213-214.

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Treaty of Versailles, including some of the latest cruising and higher surface speed U-boats.<sup>48</sup> Castex held that Germany's prosecution of submarine warfare was basically sound, and furthermore commended itself to another continental power like France if faced with waging a major conflict against a superior navy. The mixed squadrons of ex-German submarines and existing French submarines provided an interim capability until France could embark on building larger numbers of newer designs based on wartime experience and imported technical know-how (Figure 6).



**Figure 6:** Nighttime view of crew lined-up on the French submarine *Daphné* (Q-108), commissioned in 1916, with the *Gustave Zédé* (GZ) alongside and *Dupuy de Lôme* (DL) behind.<sup>49</sup>

As a first step, Adolphe Landry, Minister of Marine (January 1920-January 1921), added twelve submarines to the existing 1920 naval construction programme initiated by his predecessor, Georges Leygues, while the stated eventual goal was at least 100.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>*Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual* (1920-1), p. 52; Henri Le Masson, *Du Nautilus (1800) au Redoutable*, (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1969), pp. 255-258; Aidan Dodson and Serena Cant, *Spoils of War: The Fate of Enemy Fleets after the Two World Wars*, (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2020), p. 24.

<sup>49</sup>Photograph in author's possession; Henri Le Masson, *Les sous-marins français: des origines (1863) à nos jours*, (Brest and Paris: Éditions de la Cité, 1980), p. 146.

<sup>50</sup>Zanco, *Dictionnaire des ministres de la marine*, p. 346; Capitaine de frégate Le Peu, 'Le sous-marin en France au lendemain de la première guerre mondiale', *Revue historique des armées*, 3, (1990), p. 28; Ministère de la marine, *Projet de loi présenté à la Chambre des Députés portant fixation du Budget général de l'exercice 1920*, (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1920); Étienne Taillemite, 'Georges Leygues 1917-1933: Une politique maritime pour la France', *Revue historique des armées*, 201, (December 1995), pp. 33-101

Submarines fulfilled defensive and offensive purposes in the *Marine nationale*, close-to and far away from French shores.

### **The Castex Affair & British Concerns**

Though merely professional opinions, Castex's teachings at the *École supérieure de guerre* evoked controversy as the French government negotiated naval limitations and pondered future naval construction programmes. The lectures were serialised under the title *Synthesis of Submarine Warfare* across four issues of *La Revue maritime*, a revamped professional periodical published by the French Navy's historical service and edited by Castex.<sup>51</sup> During discussions about putting wider restrictions onto submarines, a British delegate to the Washington conference on armaments limitations and First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Lee of Fareham, quoted directly from one of Castex's articles to make the claim that France held ulterior motives for using submarines in a similar manner to the Germans against the commerce of Great Britain and the Royal Navy.<sup>52</sup> French officials were quick to point out that Castex's views were strictly personal, having no bearing on the formal policies of either the French government or the *Marine nationale*. In fact, they found the whole suggestion quite preposterous and a disheartening dispute amongst two supposed allies, since Lord Lee stubbornly refused to retract his assertions.<sup>53</sup> Diplomatically in Washington, the British favoured abolishing submarines outright, while the French wanted to possess large numbers of them.<sup>54</sup> Something had been lost in the translation between French and English, Lord Lee's critics maintained, that led to this misunderstanding.

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34; Chalmers Hood, 'The French Navy and Parliament between the Wars', *International History Review*, 6, 3, (1984), p. 389.

<sup>51</sup> *Capitaine de frégate R. Castex*, 'Synthèse de la guerre sous-marine', *La Revue maritime*, 1<sup>st</sup> semestre, (1920), pp. 1-29, 161-184, 305-326, 478-503; republished in first half of *Synthèse de la guerre sous-marine: de Pontchartrain à Tirpitz*, (Paris: Challamel, 1920); Martin Motte, 'L'après-grand guerre dans *La Revue maritime*, 1920-1923', ed., Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, *L'évolution de la pensée navale VI*, (Paris: Economica, 1997), pp. 144-150.

<sup>52</sup> *Conference on the Limitation of Armament, Washington, November 12, 1921-February 6, 1922* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), pp. 652-662; 'France Uneasy', *Western Morning News*, (31 December 1921).

<sup>53</sup> 'Sharp Exchanges. Lively debate on submarine issue', *Pall Mall Gazette*, (1 February 1922); 'A Point of Honour. France and the Submarine. Naval Expert Misquoted', *The Times* (London), (6 February 1922); 'France and the Submarine. Lord Lee's Error', *Evening Mail* (London), (8 February 1922).

<sup>54</sup> Joel Blatt, 'France and the Washington Conference', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 4, 3, (1993), p. 205.

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Castex's teaching positions and writings conferred him with some influence, but as yet little beyond the confines of the PME institutions in France's army and navy. In 1920-21, Castex lectured at the higher naval school on staff organisation and duties, far different subject matter than the second-year naval lectures at the higher war school:

The aim of the staff course is to define the rules of organisation and aiding operating mechanisms placed at various levels of command, when they operate in the current service, and especially when they may act in wartime.<sup>55</sup>

Rear-Admiral Ratyé corroborated that another resident faculty member, Commander Laurent, was responsible for teaching naval tactics and strategy at the higher naval school, whose course content was substantially different to Castex's lectures to the army. More so than the army officers, naval officers attending the *Marine nationale's* Promotion courses pushed back against some of Castex's historical interpretations and ideas as conflicting with both their own and with prevailing opinion in the navy. In July 1921, Castex had left Paris to become chief-of-staff to Rear-Admiral Maxime Raphaël Le Vasseur in the Second Battleship Division of the Mediterranean squadron.

Personally, Castex and his fellow naval officers at Toulon were bemused by the attention given in London to his published higher war school lectures. Lord Lee sparred with the *Times* newspaper over the accuracy of reports on his original dispute with Castex, and according to its editor, Wickham Steed, crossed over into misrepresentation.<sup>56</sup> The *Times* curtly refused to publish a letter received from Lord Lee in response. Arthur Balfour rose in the House of Commons on 23 February 1922 to clarify that Castex was entitled to view unrestricted submarine warfare as a preferred method of warfare, just not explicitly against Great Britain.<sup>57</sup> France formally

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<sup>55</sup>*Ministère de la Marine, École Supérieure de la Marine, Etat-Major. Conférences de M. le Capitaine de frégate Castex*, vol. 1, 1921, p. 3, original document (2 volumes) in author's possession; The previous year 1920 lectures are held in military libraries at Brest, Cherbourg, and Toulon, SHD.

<sup>56</sup>'A Point of Honour. Captain Castex and Lord Lee', *The Times* (London), (20 February 1922); 'Challenge by Lord Lee', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, (18 February 1922); Lord Lee offered to contribute £100 to a local London hospital if found to be wrong about Castex. 'Captain Castex. Lord Lee and the 'Times'', *Westminster Gazette*, (18 February 1922); 'France and Submarines. Lord Lee and the Castex article', *Civil and Military Gazette*, (21 February 1922).

<sup>57</sup>'Submarine War. Mr. Balfour on Captain Castex's Outburst', *Daily News* (London), (24 February 1922); 'Castex Castigated', *Hull Daily Mail*, (24 February 1922); 'France and Submarines', *The Scotsman*, (24 February 1922); Christopher M. Bell, *The Royal*

was a military ally and its land army an important counter to Germany on the continent.

Although forced to accept a building holiday on battleships, strict tonnage limits on cruisers and aircraft carriers, and a parity ratio with Italy during the Washington Treaty negotiations, France ensured there were neither size nor quantity limitations placed on the construction of submarines and destroyers. The elected Chamber of Deputies in Paris finally ratified the Washington Treaty in July 1923 and authorised increased funding commitments towards the building of up to 124,000 tonnes of submarines (naval authorities asked for 96,000 tonnes).<sup>58</sup> The result was all the more surprising since the French government was in retrenchment concerning most matters of national defence. The nine-boat Requin-class were improved French copies of German wartime designs, eminently suited to conducting ocean-going operations against maritime commerce.<sup>59</sup> They naturally concerned the British, until the French Navy turned its attention to fleet submarines, larger destroyers, and modern cruisers in the remainder of the decade. Signifying the ties between the French Army and *Marine nationale*, one of those cruisers was named after Marshal Ferdinand Foch, a former military professor and commandant at the higher war school. Disquiet over results from the Washington conference and Castex's lectures at the higher war school cast a shadow over the intent of interwar French naval strategy and already guarded relations with the British.<sup>60</sup>

The uproar did not impair Castex's intellectual pursuits or advancement to the highest rank of admiral. He subsequently developed his ideas on strategy and naval warfare

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*Navy, Seapower and Strategy between the Wars*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), chap. 1.

<sup>58</sup>John Jordan, 'French Submarine Development Between the Wars', ed., Robert Gardiner, *Warship 1991*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1991), p. 62; *Capitaine de vaisseau de réserve Claude Huan, Les sous-marins français 1918-1945*, (Bourg-en-Bresse: Marines Édition, 2004), p. 24; Nabil Erouihane, 'La 'construction des armes navales' en France de 1871 à 1961: naissance et restructuration d'un système politico-industriel', PhD thesis, Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, 2020, p. 610.

<sup>59</sup>Paul E. Fontenoy, *Submarines: An Illustrated History of Their Impact*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2007), p. 24; Thierry d'Arbonneau, ed., *L'encyclopédie des sous-marins français*, vol. 2, *D'une guerre à l'autre*, (Paris: SPE-Barthélémy, 2011).

<sup>60</sup>Anthony Clayton, 'Growing Respect: The Royal Navy and the Marine Nationale, 1918-39', eds., Martin S. Alexander and William J. Philpott, *Anglo-French Defence Relations between the Wars*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 29; George E. Melton, *From Versailles to Mers El-Kébir: The Promise of Anglo-French Naval Cooperation, 1919-1940*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015), p. 7; A. Pearce Higgins, 'Naval Strategy. Submarines and the Fleet', *The Times* (London), (27 December 1922).

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during two periods as director of the naval war school and director of a national defence college of advanced studies (*Collège des hautes études de défense nationale*) that was established in August 1936. His lecturing found expression in the published five-volume *Strategic Theories*, a ponderous synthesis of history and theory drawing upon French and foreign examples.<sup>61</sup> He reconciled the historical and materiel schools that had influenced the *Marine nationale's* development up to the First World War and immediately afterwards. According to his biographer, Castex's writings and deep intellectual knowledge elevated discourse surrounding the place of armies and navies in France's defence as a nation.<sup>62</sup> Arguably, Admiral Castex stands out as an original French military thinker during the interwar period, starting from his early lecturing at the higher war school in 1920-21.

### **Armies and Navies**

To be effective in war and peace, armies and navies have long encouraged working collaboratively and gaining familiarity of each other's acknowledged differences in organisation, culture, and *modus operandi*. Some higher PME institutions dedicated to delivering advanced studies institutionalised inter-service cooperation in their curriculum and teaching. The French Army possessed a reputation for including instruction in naval tactics and strategy at its higher war school. After the First World War, France was a country consumed by domestic and foreign policy concerns surrounding security, reparations, and war debt.<sup>63</sup> In this challenging environment, leadership at the reopened higher war school sought to learn from the experience of the war and instill in officers an ability to assess and think through complex operational problems. The Battle of Jutland, the historical case lectured on Promotion 41 during 1920-21, met the criteria of an interesting and known event surrounded by controversy, and an event with broader strategic implications, from which to distill professional knowledge and understanding.

That army officers at an army PME institution would learn about a single naval battle and so intently might seem curious, but the lectures validated many French

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<sup>61</sup>Raoul Castex, *Théories stratégiques*, (Paris: Société d'éditions géographiques, maritimes et coloniales, 1929-35); abridged English version Admiral Raoul Castex, intro. and trans., Eugenia Kiesling, *Strategic Theories*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994).

<sup>62</sup>Hervé Coutau-Begarie, *Castex: Le stratege inconnu*, (Paris: Economica, 1985), pp. 219-224; Lars Wedin, *Maritime Strategies for the XXI Century: The Contribution of Admiral Castex*, (Paris: Nuvis, 2016), pp. 108-109.

<sup>63</sup>Andrew Williams, 'Why don't the French do Think Tanks? France faces up to the Anglo-Saxon superpowers, 1918-1921', *Review of International Studies*, 34, (2008), p. 63; Faris Russell Kirkland, 'The French Officer Corps and the Fall of France – 1920-1940', PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1982, p. 27.



presumptions about the conduct of the war at sea and its relation to land warfare. In accord with prevailing French professional naval opinion, the Battle of Jutland was presented as a missed opportunity to deal the German High Seas Fleet a crippling blow at a particularly vital point in time for the Allied war effort. Lack of offensive spirit on the part of Admiral Jellicoe and the Grand Fleet explained the indecisive result, a common French view subscribed to by Richard, the knowledgeable naval officer delivering the set of three lectures. Jellicoe later confided to a French acquaintance:

I have always been loath to write about the Jutland action in open as my own personal experiences are concerned. My greatest disappointment was that the misty weather and lack of information given to me, made it – together with the late hour of meeting – impossible to force a conclusion on May 31<sup>st</sup> or June 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>64</sup>

The naval battle only confirmed for Castex the significance of submarine warfare as conducted by the Germans and a failure on their part in the liaison of arms, known in the army as combined arms. That teaching point assumed more importance than any insights army officers might have picked up on naval tactics and the maneuvers of fleets. Navies remained very much an oddity to many of them, accustomed as they were to fighting on land, and for which the broader professional studies at the higher war school prepared them to do. As an audience, army officers were inclined to accept whatever Castex and Richard told them during the naval lectures as subject matter experts representing a degree of professional opinion in the French Navy. The controversy subsequently sparked by Castex's publication of the lectures, while the British and French negotiated allowable naval limitations in Washington and the fate of submarines, only added to Castex's notoriety and reputation as an original thinker willing to challenge orthodoxy.

Neither was the higher war school's consideration of the Battle of Jutland a one-off in interwar French PME. Captain Ollivier Diaz de Soria revisited Jutland in lectures at the

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<sup>64</sup>Foreign Navies collection – French Navy, letter, Jellicoe to deputy (Basses-Alpes) Jacques Stern, former marine under-secretary, 8 December 1932; Other available Battle of Jutland correspondence in Jellicoe's private papers show the British admiral's general personal approach toward the debate. British Library Manuscripts Collections, G58, Add. Ms. 49028; Nicholas Jellicoe, *Jutland: The Unfinished Battle*, (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Seaforth, 2016); On the occasion of Jellicoe's death in November 1935, François Piétri, France's Minister of Marine (February 1933-June 1936), and senior naval officers paid the highest tribute to the British admiral, and Vice-Admiral Georges Durand-Viel, the Chief of the Naval Staff (March 1931-December 1936), was a pallbearer for the funeral at London's St. Paul's Cathedral. 'A Very Model of Naval Honour', *The Scotsman*, (22 November 1935); 'Impressive Scenes at Earl Jellicoe's Funeral', *Portsmouth Evening News*, (25 November 1935).

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naval war school in 1935-36, and even with the benefit of greater documentation, concluded that Jellicoe was still blameworthy because:

in the presence of the occasion which offered itself in particularly favourable circumstances, the admiral did not think he could reject for a time all his theoretical concerns, and run at the enemy that he had the means and he was in a situation to crush completely.<sup>65</sup>

If the judgment was critical, the French Army and the *Marine nationale* were at least in agreement. That after all was France's aim in achieving a common understanding across service-centred environments through the PME enterprise as a whole.

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<sup>65</sup>Capitaine de vaisseau Diaz de Soria, *Tactique générale Séances d'Application No. 8 La Bataille du Jutland 31 May 1916. École de guerre navale*, session 1935-36, p. 70, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9760342j?rk=21459:2> [accessed 24 October 2023].