The Duke in the Peninsula: Arthur Wellesy and the Application of Operational Art During the Peninsular War 1809-1813

A Monograph

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From April 1809 until June 1813 Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, commander of the Anglo-Portuguese army, developed a well-disciplined military organization, defended Portugal from two French invasions, and successfully ended French control of Spain. During the campaign, Wellington led a diverse coalition of regiments from Great Britain, Portugal, and Spain in varying degree of skill, discipline, and morale against a powerful French army that had successfully subdued much of Europe. Wellington's campaign provides tremendous insight into the operational level of war, employing military forces through integrating ends, ways, means, and risk to link tactical actions in the peninsula to the British strategic outcomes of protecting Portugal, ending French occupation in Spain and overthrowing Napoleon Bonaparte's regime.

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Abstract

The Duke in the Peninsula: Arthur Wellesy and the Application of Operational Art During the Peninsular War 1809-1813 by MAJ Anthony R. Blackburn, US Army, 41 pages.

From April 1809 through June 1813 the Duke of Wellington, commander of the Anglo-Portuguese army, created a well-disciplined military organization, defended Portugal from two French invasions, and successfully ended French control of Spain. During the campaign, Wellington led a diverse coalition of forces from Great Britain, Portugal, and Spain with varying degree of skill, discipline, and morale against a powerful French army that had successfully subdued many other parts of Europe. Wellington's nineteenth-century campaign provides tremendous insight into the operational level of war, employing military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and risk that linked tactical actions to strategic outcomes including protecting Portugal, ending Bonapartist control in Spain, and ending Napoleon's regime in France.

Wellington's decisive victory at Vitoria on 22 June 1813 that liberated Spain was the culmination of a campaign that took over four years to orchestrate. In 1809 he commanded an army that was outnumbered, inadequately supplied, and consisted of Portuguese regiments that were poorly-led, ill-equipped, and unsuitable for major combat operations. French forces, composed of veterans from many successful campaigns, controlled a majority of Spain and portions of Portugal. Within four months Wellington had won two victories and ended the immediate French threat to his army and to Portugal. In late fall 1809 he transitioned to the strategic defense to deter the next invasion, attrite the stronger French forces, and bide for time to improve major deficiencies in his army. When Napoleon withdrew forces from Spain to participate in the French invasion of Russia, Wellington quickly transitioned to the offense and secured the border fortresses between Spain and Portugal before moving into Spain and liberating the capital, Madrid. He was unable to achieve his desired end state by the end of the year and in 1813 he orchestrated a brilliant maneuver that outflanked the remaining French forces in Spain and led to the decisive battle at Vitoria.

Wellington's campaign demonstrates the effective application of operational art to achieve desired results even against an aggressive and stronger enemy. His ability to correctly determine the proper course of action through visualizing and understanding the operational environment aided in his skillful handling of the army during those four years. Viewing this nineteenth century campaign through the modern elements of operational art provide valuable lessons for operational artists today.

Contents

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Illustrations

Introduction

On 22 June 1813, General Arthur Wellesley,[1] the future Duke of Wellington, sent a dispatch to Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Earl Henry Bathurst, informing him of the British decisive victory against French forces at Vitoria the day before. In the letter, Wellington wrote "that the Allied army under my command gained a complete victory, having driven them from all their positions."[2] Although the Battle of Vitoria was not the last battle in Spain, it ended Bonapartist rule in the country. The decisive outcome created conditions for Wellington to begin his own invasion of southern France later that year, and by the end of 1814, in partnership with other European nations, bring about the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte. To achieve these results Wellington orchestrated a methodical and lengthy campaign from 1809 to 1813 in Portugal and Spain that laid the foundation and created the conditions for ultimate British victory. Although Waterloo is the most famous campaign Wellington fought, the Peninsular War demonstrates the best use of operational art from the Napoleonic Wars by the successful British general.

The conditions in which Wellington won these victories makes his success even more impressive. Far from Great Britain, and reliant on the Royal Navy and local allies for logistical support, Wellington managed to build and maintain a field army that conducted meaningful operations. At the political level, the risks that Great Britain took to pursue this line of effort reveals how important Wellington's operations were in the strategic setting. Great Britain had been at war with Napoleon Bonaparte and his French empire continuously since 1803. Efforts by

[1] Wellesley received his promotion to lieutenant-general on 25 April 1808. On 31 July 1811 he received his promotion to general. After the Battle of Vitoria, he received his promotion to field marshal. As for his titles, he became Viscount Wellington after his victory at Talavera in July 1809. On 11 May 1814 he was elevated to the title Duke of Wellington. For simplicity sake, he will be referred to by this title within this monograph.

[2] Arthur Wellesley, *The Duke of Wellington: Military Dispatches*, ed. Charles J. Esdaile (London: Penguin, 2014), 295.

Britain to deploy expeditionary forces on the continent prior to 1809 produced lukewarm results and were not strategically decisive.[3] Committing a sizable portion of the army to the Iberian Peninsula served several major objectives by the British government, but the risks were great. Wellington commanded the largest contingent of the British army in all the theaters of the war. One badly mismanaged battle by Wellington against the French like its continental allies at Austerlitz, Ulm, or Jena-Auerstedt would have been a major setback for British efforts on the continent and might have forced a war wearied nation to sue for peace with Napoleon.

None of this happened, as Wellington kept the British strategic objectives firmly nested with his operational level planning and execution. In doing so, from 1809 to 1813 Wellington carried out a military campaign that incorporated the effective employment of the modern elements of operational art, which contributed to his success against the French army. His campaign incorporated the effective application of ways, means, and risk to achieve the ends. Although Wellington was not familiar with modern doctrine, in his own correspondence the connection between these current terms and early nineteenth century terminology clearly demonstrates his military prowess. He possessed a sharp military intellect firmly aware of his own strengths and weaknesses, who constantly weighed opportunities against the risk and developed an operational approach that was flexible and adaptive based on his assessment of the environment. The result was a campaign employing military forces integrating ends, ways, means, and risk that linked tactical actions to strategic outcomes.

There are numerous scholarly works on the Peninsular War and the Duke of Wellington. Sir Charles Oman's seven volume *History of the Peninsular War* is a detailed and thorough collection of primary sources from the war but is limited to military matters and due to age does not reflect more recent primary resources. Charles Esdaile's *The Peninsular War* published in

[3] Christopher D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-1815* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 120-122.

2002 is a more modern take on the entire war and incorporates primary evidence that was not available to Oman. Esdaile took a different approach then the more military focused take by Oman. In his work, Esdaile synthesizes the political and military aspects of the war and provides a more holistic perspective of the conflict. Indeed, Esdaile writes that "a review of the histography of the Peninsular War suggests there is a strong need to pull military and political treatments of the subject together."[4] This was beneficial for this case study as understanding the British political and military decisions at the strategic level connects to Wellington's own visualization of how his tactical success tied to strategic outcomes. Huw J. Davies's *Wellington's Wars: The Making of a Military Genius* is an invaluable work on the general. Davies focuses on the man's understanding of the relationship between war and politics. The book focuses on Wellington as a political general, aware of how political context interacted and influenced the military world. This helped provide him the insight necessary to command the British expeditionary force in Portugal and Spain while at the same time balancing the needs of those nations with the British government's own strategic objectives.

For primary research, the most valuable work is Wellington's personal correspondence. *Wellington's Dispatches* is a collection of the general's writings from his time on the Iberian Peninsula. These dispatches demonstrate how Wellington articulated how he understood his environment and visualized his expectations to his subordinates. His detailed descriptions of the issues that hampered his army, including logistical problems, his relationship with the Spanish, and the weakness of the Portuguese army helped provide the information needed to craft the necessary analysis on his resources, or means. His after-action reports to the British government reveal the effort he makes in nesting his plans with the government's strategic outcomes.

Wellington's campaign in the peninsula is broken into three phases. In each he orchestrated a different operational approach based on what threat he was confronting. In the first

[4] Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War* (London: Penguin, 2002), x.

two phases, he was unable to achieve all three of his desired end state objectives due to the conflicting requirements. It was not until the final phase, when conditions allowed for Wellington to seize the initiative and achieve all three objectives.

The Peninsular War encompassed more than just the Duke of Wellington, his Anglo-Portuguese army, and the forces that opposed him. It eventually included, over the course of the war, other smaller Anglo-Portuguese contingents, Spanish military forces, and the local guerilla forces in the Spanish countryside. Although each of these major players factored into the eventual French defeat, incorporating these elements would take away from the major focus of this paper. Elements outside the direct command of Wellington are mentioned only if they add context to the paper.

Unlike Napoleon, whose military genius and opponents' ineptitude led to short decisive campaigns that rarely lasted more than one season, Wellington spent four years working on obtaining the conditions necessary to win in the peninsula. He operated in a region that was not conducive to the grand concentration of forces that Napoleon effectively employed in central Europe, nor was the British army equipped to grow to a size comparable to the *Grande Armée*. The fact that Portugal provided over 30 percent of Wellington's regiments by October 1810 reveals Britain's manpower limitations and why it took time for the Anglo-Portuguese army to achieve decisive results in Spain. Nonetheless, slow and steady won the war for Wellington as each tactical success laid the foundation that the next battle built upon. In that span he won eight major victories and defeated four of Napoleon's marshals and the emperor's brother Joseph at Vitoria, proving that one size did not fit all for victory on the battlefield.

In an era when campaigns were often won in short seasonal efforts, Wellington's approach to winning in Spain was more deliberate and systematic. Knowing his limitations his force possessed and constantly making the preservation of his army the top priority in all military planning, he sought success that built upon each operation, which led to him achieving his country's strategic objectives.

Strategic Setting in Europe

How did the British get involved in the Iberian Peninsula? It was driven by the British government's strategic policies that drove the nation's war effort when hostilities resumed with France in 1803. War began anew on 16 May 1803 after the collapse of the fourteen-month long Treaty of Amiens which had ended hostilities previously.[5] As war began again the British government pursued similar strategic policies against Revolutionary France. The desired end state for the British government was restoring the balance of power in Europe, the end of Napoleon's reign in France and Britain maintaining their preeminent position as an imperial maritime power.[6] Achieving these objectives eventually led to British involvement in the peninsula.

When war started, Britain was the most powerful maritime nation in the world. The island kingdom owned valuable oversea markets that ranged from Canada, to plantation islands in the Caribbean, to the expanding East India Company's holdings in the subcontinent. The burgeoning trade due to these markets and producers of raw and finished materials created a sizeable merchant fleet and a powerful navy to protect British interests. The Royal Navy was one of the largest navies in the world and was a critical capability for the British war effort.[7] Government leaders were very keen to protect these interests and maximize their advantages against France and developed a strategy that centered on fleet operations as a priority and the army in a supporting role.

First, Britain needed to protect the homeland from French invasion. Napoleon was keen on crossing the channel and end British interference on the continent. No one had successfully done so since William the Conqueror in 1066. From 1803 to 1805 the French emperor made this

[5] David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* (New York: Scribner, 1966), 321.

[6] Hall, *British Strategy*, 81-98.

[7] Ibid., 1.

his priority in his war plans and the British government took the threat seriously. [8] A second component was securing the trade routes that the island nation depended on for economic and domestic security. Access to foreign markets in the New World, the ever-expanding territory of India, and European markets not under the control of Napoleon were critical to supply and fund the British war effort.[9]

Third, the Royal Navy conducted a campaign to minimize the French navy threat through blockade or outright destruction. With the threat of invasion a real possibility, and the strategic importance of secure sea lanes for British trade and their colonies, the navy focused on either destroying the major French fleet or bottling up the fleet in its harbors. On 21 October 1805, the Royal Navy achieved its decisive result when the joint French and Spanish navy was destroyed by British Admiral Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.[10]

The defeat of the joint Franco-Spanish navy at Trafalgar had several strategic implications that created the conditions for future British involvement in Portugal and Spain. First it ended any major threat to the homeland as the French fleet remained mostly bottled up and rotting away in port for the duration of the war.[11] Second, it ended the major threat of French incursions into the New World or India and secured the maritime sea lanes that Britain depended on for its economy. Commerce raiding remained a threat for the duration of the war, but from this point forward French focus would remain a continental affair.[12] Finally, the decisive victory created conditions which allowed the British Royal Navy the ability to project force and support

[8] Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 318, 322-324.

[9] Hall, *British Strategy*, 20.

[10] Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 402.

[11] Ibid., 324.

[12] Ibid.

any future army expeditions on the European continent. With complete mastery of the seas after Trafalgar, this was now a viable option.[13]

The success that the Royal Navy had against the French navy protected the nation from an invasion and secured its trade routes, but did little to end Napoleon's reign in France. With success on water now assured, the British government turned to the continent to develop a European coalition that opposed Napoleon and was willing to restore the balance of power. To achieve this, Great Britain needed partners on the continent to field armies and wage war against the French emperor on land.

To defeat Napoleon, it was necessary to develop alliances with the other great European states to act in concert against him. Unfortunately for the British, each attempt from 1805 until 1812 to develop a coalition opposing France on the continent met with disaster at the hands of Napoleon. Britain forged its first post-Amiens alliance, the Third Coalition, with Austria and Russia in late 1804.[14] In late 1805 Napoleon crushed the joint Austrian and Russian forces at Ulm and Austerlitz, forcing Austria to sign the Treaty of Pressburg and abandon the alliance.[15] In 1806, Prussia joined Britain and Russia in the Fourth Coalition against France. At the battle of Jena-Auerstedt in October, Napoleon crushed the last vestige of Prussian military superiority by shattering the army.[16] In 1807, following the battles of Eylau and Friedland, Napoleon brought Russia to the negotiating table. The Treaty of Tilsit saw Russia agree to amicable terms with France while Prussia signed a much harsher set of terms.[17] By the end of 1807 Napoleon was master of central Europe, having either defeated or allied with anyone who had opposed him, except Great Britain. The island nation found itself to be the last major opponent to the French

[13] Hall, *British Strategy*, 80-81.

[14] Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 330-332.

[15] Ibid., 438-439.

[16] Ibid., 444, 479-502.

[17] Ibid., 585-590.

emperor. With no more allies available in central Europe, the question arose as to how best continue the war.

So how did Portugal and Spain become the priority of British strategy designed to thwart French aggression? It was a progression of British policy centered on targeting French naval power which escalated into direct conflict with ground forces on the continent. Even though the main battle fleet had been destroyed and the threat of invasion minimized, the French naval capability was still a grave concern for the government. This included French ships harboring in Spain and naval facilities in major port cities.[18] The army's primary role in the war against France prior to 1808 was serving in a supporting role for the navy in raids targeting these French naval facilities.[19] However, a gradual shift to strategic objectives that became more continental Europe centric led to a stronger commitment of the army. The evolution of British strategy now centered on containing French power and access to resources. British leaders were aware now that they were in a fight for survival and they were fighting a protracted war. To defeat Napoleon Britain needed to execute a strategy that diverted, curtailed, and when possible, drained him of his resources. This containment strategy bore fruit out of the destruction of Napoleon's fleet that deprived him access to valuable trading markets in the colonies and remained the cornerstone of British strategy until the end of the war. The navy was doing its part, but British leaders struggled with how to best leverage the army in supporting this policy and where to deploy it to maximize strategic effect.[20] The answer soon became apparent and the road led to Portugal and Spain.

In 1807, Napoleon called on Portugal to cease trading with its ally Britain.[21] When Portugal refused, Napoleon forced Spain to allow his troops to march through to seize Portugal.

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[18] Hall, *British Strategy*, 90-91.

[19] Huw J. Davies, *Wellington's Wars: The Making of a Military Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 76.

[20] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 79-80.

[21] Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 597.

The Portuguese royal family escaped to South America, escorted by the Royal Navy, as French forces occupied the country. [22] The government in exile sought British aid in ending the French invasion and sought intervention. Other events soon transpired that aligned British interests further.

In Spain the situation had been tumultuous since Admiral Nelson had destroyed the joint Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in 1805. Since then, the Spanish monarchy had become increasingly unpopular in its homeland due to its continued support of France and assorted domestic matters. When Napoleon forced the king of Spain to allow French troops to march through the realm, and then replaced the king, Ferdinand VII, with Joseph Bonaparte, this became the final shameful transgression for the Spanish peasants who rebelled against the French garrisons and the pro-French authorities in what became the Dos de Mayo Uprising.[23] This act of resistance was followed by actions by both the French and British in what would become the first major acts in the Peninsular War.

As things escalated on the peninsula the British government agreed to commit an army expeditionary force to the peninsula to support the strategy of French containment. Like the blockades and naval raids, operations in Portugal presented the opportunity of depriving Napoleon of valuable resources, including the naval assets in each country.[24] Second, the geography aided Britain. It commanded the seas bounding the peninsula. This maximized the Royal Navy's own capability and in case of a catastrophe the British army had a way to escape.[25] Third, the region gave the British the ability to take up offensive action against the French in a more suitable environment than central Europe. Due to the difficult terrain and limitations that logistical operations had in the region, armies were hard pressed to sustain a large force in one

[22] Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 599.

[23] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 89-91.

[24] Hall, *British Strategy*, 90

[25] Ibid., 92.

area for extended periods of time. This prevented the French from massing their forces in their standard method like on other battlefields in Europe. This enabled the British to face less overwhelming numbers from the French.[26] Fourth, fighting on the peninsula allowed the British to strengthen their relationship with Portugal, and Spain. With British troops commitment to fighting the French alongside both nations, it was easier to convince each to raise troops and defend their homelands.[27] By the time of the battle of Vitoria, the Portuguese contingent numbered 30,000 men, providing one third of Wellington's combat force.[28] Fifth, by taking up arms and fighting French troops on the continent, Britain projected a message that the island nation was committed to carry its weight to end Napoleon's reign. With these factors in mind, the first major British expedition was committed to the peninsula.

In August 1808, the British force arrived in Portugal.[29] By the end of August Wellington had defeated French forces at Rolica and Vimeiro and eliminated the French threat to Portugal, before recalled back to Britain (Figure 1).[30] Alarmed by the deteriorating security situation in Spain, Napoleon committed his army to restore order. This intervention by Napoleon greatly alarmed the British government as the French quickly restored order and eliminated major pockets of Spanish resistance and threatened Portugal again. By the end of January 1809,

[26] Hall, *British Strategy*, 92.

[27] Ibid., 92-93.

[28] Ibid., 92.

[29] Wellington first command in the peninsula was short-lived as Sir Hew Dalrymple the Governor of Gibraltar outranked him and took overall command on 22 August 1808. Following Wellington's success at Rolica and Vimeiro, Dalrymple agreed to terms with the French army in Portugal resulting in the Convention of Cintra.

[30] On 30 August 1808, the Convention of Cintra was signed between Sir Dalrymple and General Jean Junot, commander of French forces. In return for the withdrawal of French forces from Lisbon, the Royal Navy ferried French forces back to France including their weapons and loot captured from Portugal. Wellington opposed the terms but agreed to sign it. The negative response by the government and public back in Great Britain forced Wellington to return home to protect his reputation, which a Court of Inquiry found him to be blameless in December 1808.

Napoleon had seized the Spanish capital, defeated the Spanish armies, and forced the British expeditionary force sent to help the Spanish to evacuate at Corunna.[31]

Figure 1. Rolica and Vimeiro Campaign August 1808. US Military Academy Department of History, accessed April 15, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/atlases.

The Duke of Wellington as an Operational Artist

The Duke of Wellington's command of the Anglo-Portuguese army consisted of three phases (Figure 2). The first began in April 1809 and ended in the fall of 1809. This period is when he took command, conducted a series of offensive actions to repulse the French armies threatening Portugal, and transitioned to the defense. The second phase lasted until the end of 1811. This period was a time of stalemate, as he focused on improving components of his army,

[31] After Dalrymple and Wellington sailed back to Britain, another British expedition under the command of General Sir John Moore marched into Spain to support the Spanish opposition to the French occupiers. Napoleon outmaneuvered the British force who retreated to the port of Corunna. Moore was killed at the Battle of Corunna 16 January 1809. The French army under the command of Marshal Jean Soult moved into Portugal following the battle.

limiting the risk to his army, protecting Portugal, and countering French offensives attempting to destroy his army and subjugate the peninsula. The final phase began in 1812 and ended immediately after the Battle of Vitoria in June 1813. Wellington determined that the operational environment favored the Allies and commenced offensive actions to seize the initiative after the withdrawal of French forces to support the invasion of Russia.[32] In each phase Wellington's actions represent an attempt to utilize his ways with the means available while balancing the risks to achieve his three desired end states.

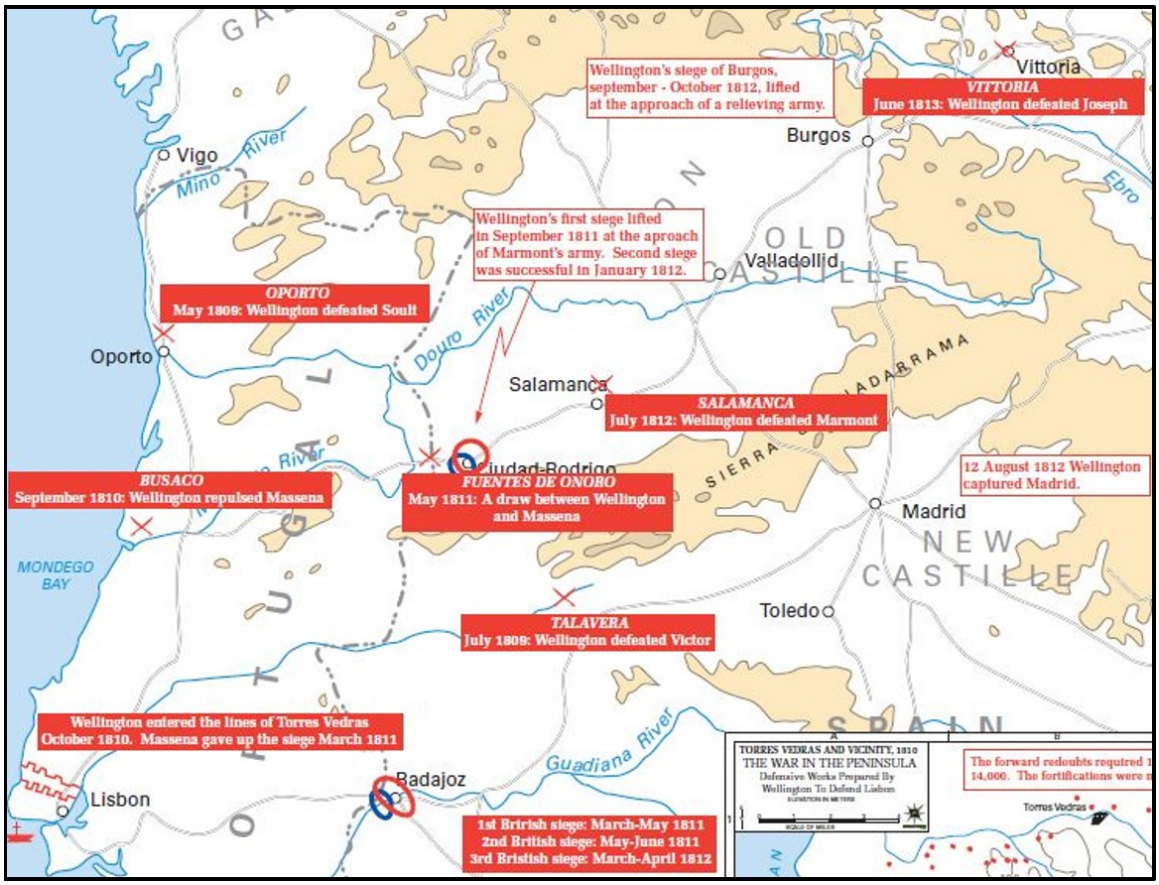

Figure 2. The Duke of Wellington's campaign in Portugal and Spain, 1809-1813. US Military Academy Department of History, accessed April 15, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/atlases.

By dividing the time from 1809 to the summer of 1813 into these three phases it is easier to see how Wellington shifted operational focus to address the environment that he faced. Unlike

[32] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 369-370.

Napoleon Bonaparte whose use of operational art grew rote, using fast maneuver to mass his forces at the decisive point for one major engagement, Wellington's approach was far more adaptive. Each phase took a different operational approach but used a similar framework for each phase. First, he analyzed the operational environment leading up to each phase to support his understanding of his environment. Then he developed a reasonable way based on the available means at his disposal while balancing the danger with the risk to attempt to achieve the desired end state. His framework was centered on accomplishing the following: 1) protect his army, 2) defend Portugal, and 3) eliminate French control in the Iberian Peninsula.[33] Above all else, his main priority was the protection of his force, as a result he was unable to succeed in the first two phases to accomplish all three objectives. He experienced great difficulty in achieving decisive results against strong French forces that eliminated their control in Spain while not risking his army to possible destruction. He also identified critical problems in his own army that limited his operational capability which required time to improve. With all these competing demands and dilemmas presented, Wellington still managed to develop an adaptive operational approach that effectively balanced competing requirements and eventually achieved his three major outcomes.

The British strategic situation had deteriorated by the early part of 1809. While their naval oriented policies had for the most part achieved British superiority in that domain, attempts elsewhere by the British to confront France had been less successful. Most of Europe remained under Emperor Napoleon's control or influence. Previous attempts to develop joint partnerships with other European powers in several different coalitions had failed. The Continental System enacted by the French continued to deny British access openly to European ports cutting off valuable markets. In the Iberian Peninsula the British decision to commit ground forces had led to mixed results. The initial expedition under Wellington resulted in a British victory at the Battle of Vimeiro and the capitulation of French forces in Portugal. However, the Convention of Cintra in

[33] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 101-102; Hall, *British Strategy*, 190.

late summer 1808 and the near destruction of General Sir John Moore's failed expedition in the mountains of northern Spain had put the policy of intervention in the region at a crossroads (Figure 3).[34] By April 1809 most of Spain and parts of Portugal were under French control with the last of the British army defending the port of Lisbon.[35] The British government faced a strategic dilemma: should it remain to defend Portugal and seek coordination with Spanish forces opposing the French forces or withdraw permanently from the region and look for other options to fight Napoleon? As the government debated in early 1809, Wellington weighed in on the matter.

[34] Anglo-Spanish relations had been affected by the British withdraw from Corunna, Spain. This deterioration in relations between the two countries strengthened the position of supporters who advocated ending British involvement in the region. Wellington's attempt to put the focus on defending Portugal and drawing French forces away from Spain circumvented initially the argument surrounding Anglo-Spanish relations.

[35] Hall, *British Strategy*, 190.

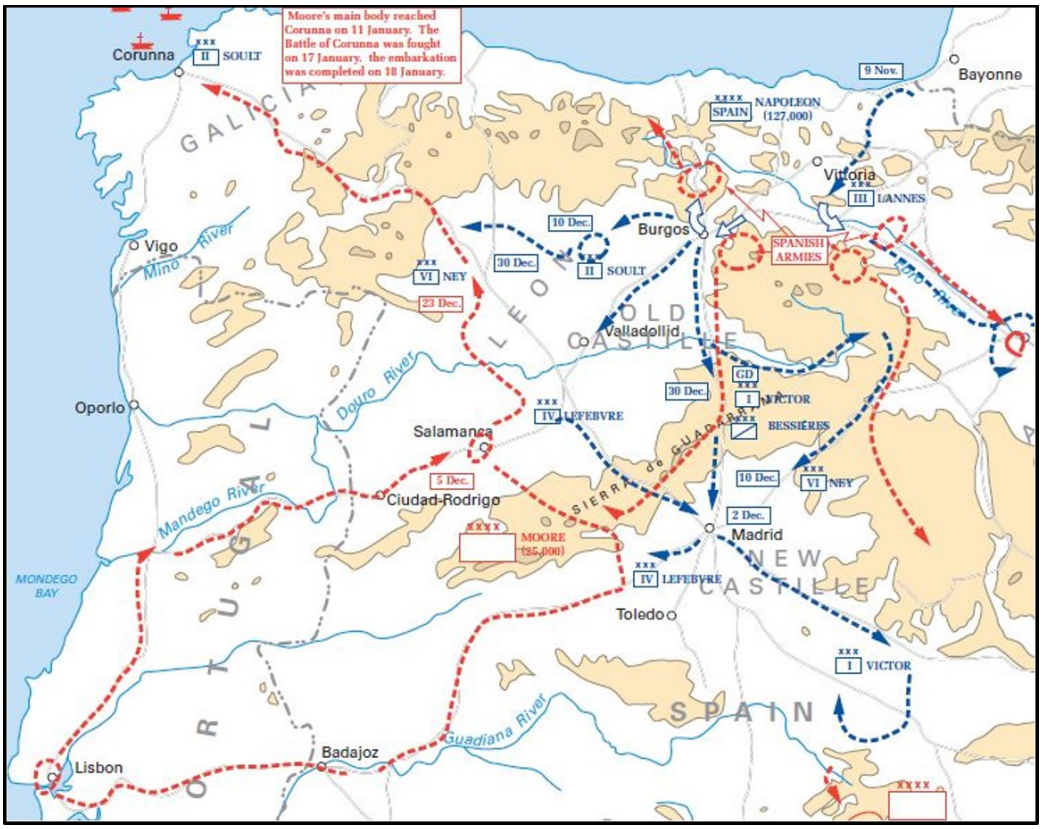

Figure 3. Napoleon's invasion of Spain and British operations August 1808-January 1809. US Military Academy Department of History, accessed April 15, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/atlases.

With Parliament debating the strategic benefits to remaining in the peninsula, Wellington crafted a memorandum and sent it to the British government in March 1809. He approached the problem by narrowing down the focus of the British effort and tied military success in Portugal to Britain's strategic policy of French containment. By framing the operational environment, he presented a vision that linked the operational and tactical benefits of the campaign to the government's strategic policies against Napoleonic France. Instead of focusing on supporting the Spanish he believed that defending Portugal would suffice initially and help support indirectly with the war effort in Spain. In the memorandum he wrote "I have always been of the opinion that Portugal might be defended, whatever might be the result of the contests in Spain; and that in

the meantime the measures adopted for the defence of Portugal would be highly useful to the Spaniards in their contest with the French."[36]

In his view, this action supported British strategic policies. It committed British forces to the continent cheaply in a location (Lisbon) that allowed for effective support from the Royal Navy, forced France to commit a large number of troops from other theaters, and helped strengthen ties with both Portugal and Spain.[37] Moreover, he saw the advantage of placing the Portuguese army under direct British control.[38] This manpower advantage offset the constraints a lengthy expedition imposed on the British who were far from their recruitment depots and unable to raise the same number of recruits as the French *levée en masse*. An important point of his vision was that this campaign was not to be a short decisive campaign like Napoleon executed. He maintained that this war would not be quick, but instead lengthy, and it would eventually be decisive.

In Wellington's view, this would force French forces to commit to a costly war of attrition while the British could wage a campaign they could afford, at limited cost to both manpower and expenditure. His efforts to continue the war in the peninsula received assistance from Austria, which declared war on France in 1809. Although the Battle of Wagram ended the Hapsburg war effort, the desire for a second front against France aligned with those in the British government who wanted to remain committed to the peninsula. These factors led to the government supporting Wellington's plan and approving it.

When viewed through the modern context of operational art, Wellington's understanding of the operational environment had led to a course of action in Portugal that tied in with his government's policies. According to *JP 5-0, Joint Planning*, "Commanders, skilled in the use of operational art provide the vison that links strategic objectives to tactical tasks through their

[36] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 47-50.

[37] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 100.

[38] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 47-48.

understanding of the strategic and operational environment during both the planning and execution of an operation or campaign."[39] Wellington had provided his government with the vision in how a tactical campaign in Portugal tied in and supported the strategic level of British policy. The vision had won favor, now Wellington had to plan and execute it.

In April 1809, Wellington was appointed to command the army and 20,000 reinforcements were sent to reinforce the garrison at Lisbon arriving on 22 April 1809. He assumed command on 25 April with two of his three objectives given to him by the government. First, he needed to defend Portugal and second minimize risk to the army.[40] This commitment came with inherent risk, outlined to him by his government. His force was the largest component of the British army by a wide margin.[41] Other major theaters that had large garrisons like India, the North American colonies, and the British home islands saw reductions in manpower as the army in Portugal became the priority.[42] As a result of their manning limitations, the government made clear that the army couldn't be placed into undue risk. This directive impacted his approach throughout the Peninsular War and explains how risk played a factor in his operations. At the core of each operation was the fundamental belief that no victory was worth it if it opened the army to destruction. His dispatches highlight numerous times his concern in this realm. With his orders clear, he now sought how best to achieve the desired results.

In the spring of 1809 Wellington faced two French armies that threatened Portugal. In the north, a 22,000-man invasion force in the vicinity of Oporto under Marshal Jean-de-Dieu Soult

[39] US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), IV 4-5.

[40] Hall, *British Strategy*, 174.

[41] Ibid., 9. By August 1813 Wellington commanded a British contingent of 60,202 men. In contrast the garrisons in North America and Sicily each numbered less than 17,000. The First Lord of the Admiralty, in 1811, summed up the manning priority succinctly: "The Peninsula and Ireland absorb all we have and would do so were it double what it is."

[42] Hall, *British Strategy*, 4-9, 190.

that was attempting to subjugate the rest of Portugal.[43] To the east was a French army commanded by Marshal Claude Victor-Perrin that would grow to 46,000 troops in the vicinity of Medellín.[44] Wellington surmised that although Victor was the larger threat to his army, he could not leave Soult possessing key terrain in northern Portugal that threatened his line of communications with his base of operations in Lisbon.[45] In May, Wellington outmaneuvered Soult with the help of the Royal Navy at Oporto, cut off the French retreat into central Spain and inflicted over 4,000 casualties and the loss of a majority of their artillery and baggage.[46] This forced Soult to withdraw north out of Portugal and allowed Wellington to turn his attention to Victor in Spain.

In June, Wellington received approval from the British government to commence operations in Spain and coordinate with their forces fighting the French.[47] This new directive added the last of his three major objectives; the removal of French forces from Spain and the end to their influence in the region. To improve the chance of success Wellington coordinated with the two Spanish armies under the command of General Gregorio Cuesta and General Javier Venegas. The plan agreed upon by the three had two components and if successful had the opportunity to reshape the balance of power in Spain and force France on the strategic defense. The plan called for Wellington and Cuesta to combine their forces to confront Victor while Venegas's army prevented reinforcements from reaching the French marshal from Madrid. Failing at that, Venegas was then to seize the exposed Spanish capital once the French moved to support Victor.[48] Although conceptually sound Wellington experienced numerous problems while

[43] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 177.

[44] Ibid., 202.

[45] Ibid., 50-51.

[46] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 104-105.

[47] Ibid., 107.

[48] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 108-109.

coordinating with the Spanish that almost doomed the operation. First, Venegas did not stop reinforcements from moving to support Victor and attacked Toledo instead of Madrid. Second, coordination with Cuesta frustrated Wellington due to the Spanish general's lack of communication and failure to provide the logistical support promised for the Anglo-Portuguese army.[49] Difficulties aside, Wellington managed to cooperate with Cuesta long enough to fight a two-day battle against the French at Talavera from 27-28 July 1809. The allied army achieved a great tactical victory, but the operational success eluded Wellington due to the failure of his Spanish allies in following the agreed upon plan and providing the logistical support the Anglo-Portuguese army desperately needed.[50] Writing to Lord Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, in August, Wellington laid out the logistical issues his army was experiencing and what it had done to impact his follow on operations after Talavera. "I have informed your Lordship of our distress for the want of provisions and means of transport. These wants, which were the first cause of the loss of many advantages after the 22nd July…. still exist in an aggravated degree and have produced all the evil effects upon the health and efficiency of the army which might have been expected from them."[51] In August Wellington received word that a sizeable French force was moving against his line of communications. Facing the possibility of a French army attempting to cut him off and his army struggling to survive Wellington separated from the Spanish and withdrew to Portugal.[52] The French force failed to act against the allied army so Wellington settled in and took stock of his army's performance and looked for viable options to effectively face the French.

In the realm of operational art, the first year of campaigning taught Wellington several valuable lessons about ways, means, and risk. These lessons helped shape his decision making in

[49] Ibid., 108-109.

[50] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 72-74.

[51] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 72-73.

[52] Ibid., 74.

future operations. Wellington's first attempt at linking the three components to accomplish his three military objectives (ends) had gotten him a great tactical success but no further operational or strategic success. A limiting factor was the resources (means) Wellington had at hand in 1809. Some had proven and continued to be a great asset, while others curtailed his ability to achieve success that impacted the operational or strategic level. For one, he had the benefit of the Royal Navy, which provided a link back to Great Britain, most of his war material, and manpower.[53] It also gave him the ability to extend his operational reach by allowing him the ability to maneuver quickly over water as opposed to over the difficult road networks and use the ports along the coastline as valuable supply depots.[54] The army on the other hand was more of a mixed bag. Unlike the navy, the army was somewhat of a concern leading to Talavera. The regiments that fought with him at Vimeiro in 1808 were gone, replaced by regiments that were untested, and the Portuguese contingent was inconsistent at best.[55] Although the British regiments performed admirably at Talavera, the Portuguese regiments needed improvement. Other limiting factors included the lack of a British supply system and an unreliable intelligence network to provide accurate information on the French.

Nonetheless, Wellington employed the means at his disposal to craft a course of action that led to a restoration of the balance of power in the peninsula in 1809. He used a joint approach with the Royal Navy that resulted in Soult losing Portugal and then exercised a combined operation with his Spanish allies to win at Talavera. In the span of three months the French no longer threatened Portugal and had lost a major battle in Spain. But the limitations his means presented became strikingly evident after Talavera and achieving his end state. The defeat of Victor had put him in position to follow through to threaten Madrid and steal the strategic initiative from the French. Wellington was in position to shape conditions to achieve his third

[53] Hall, *British Strategy,* 92.

[54] Ibid.*,* 36-37.

[55] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 314.

objective, ending French hegemony in Spain by seizing the capital, but not at the cost of his first two objectives. With his lines threatened and his army starving, he knew achieving all three was not an option in 1809. His decision to maintain British strategic objectives and withdrawing back to Portugal had diplomatic implications. The decision further eroded Anglo-Spanish relations, already worn thin due to the struggles Wellington had experienced in 1809. Add in the difference of opinion on the role the war played in the strategic arena, to the British a war of attrition to draw French forces, while to the Spanish it was a war of survival, it would take some time for British and Spanish relations to grow and move toward a consensus on war planning.[56]

Finally, the 1809 result reemphasized the type of operational environment he confronted in the peninsula. This war was not going to be a short decisive war, like those in Napoleon's great victories, and certainly not while the French maintained a large presence in Spain. His quick success in 1809 notwithstanding, Wellington was acutely aware that a focus on improving the means available to him if the war was to be winnable. He initiated plans that addressed these concerns. This effort helped align his means more effectively to his ways so that he could achieve all three military objectives together.

As 1810 approached, the Duke of Wellington clearly understood that the strategic situation in the peninsula was changing from what he experienced the year before. He knew the French were not going to take their recent setbacks lightly, but also that he had time to prepare a strategy to confront them as they were first dealing with the Austrians in central Europe.[57] His assessment was accurate, for as soon as the Austrians sued for peace, Napoleon announced his decision to send forces into Spain to stabilize the region in October 1809.[58] By July 1810, the French emperor had gathered an impressive force of 50,000 men along the Spanish-Portugal

[56] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 113.

[57] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 114-115.

[58] Ibid., 114.

border and he had given one of his best generals, Marshal André Massena, the task of eliminating the British threat and subjugating Portugal.[59]

Wellington knew that an operational approach like 1809 was too risky and likely to fail. To combat the oncoming third invasion of Portugal by France, Wellington developed a strategy which he outlined on 9 October 1809. This strategy proposed to accomplish the following: defend Lisbon, conserve his own strength, and attrite the enemy's capabilities. This also allowed him to focus on implementing improvements in his own army. This second phase in the Peninsular War, lasting from the end of 1809 to the beginning of 1811, put the Allied forces in Portugal on the strategic defensive. Wellington correctly analyzed that the operational environment had swung favorably to French favor and that the best chance of survival was to protect his main base of supply and wear out the French through attrition. This minimized major risk to his own army and forced the French to seek battle on his own terms. With his way established, now he needed the means to effectively carry out his vision.

While the French gathered their forces for the invasion, Wellington pursued a multi-pronged plan that tied to his defensive strategy and sought to improve the deficiencies in his army he witnessed in 1809. The first, and most important, was overhauling the logistical system that supported his army. To avoid relying on his allies to provide the supplies, he established a wagon train and magazine system that allowed the army to extend operations and avoid foraging from the local populace.[60] However, the currency needed to procure these supplies and pay the army remained an issue throughout the war as the government struggled to provide the necessary funds.[61]

Second, Wellington turned his attention to improving the army of allied Portugal. Writing about the state of his ally's army in August 1809 Wellington stated, "The troops have lately

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[59] Ibid., 119.

[60] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 113.

[61] Ibid., 105-107.

deserted to an alarming degree; and, in fact, none of the regiments are complete…. the troops have never left their province….and their discipline, and the labors and exertion required from them, were nothing."[62] Understanding they needed help, in 1809 the Portuguese authorities requested the British government provide a commander in chief for their army and institute reforms. The government selected Lieutenant General William Beresford to oversee the required overhaul.[63] Wellington worked closely with Beresford to improve their training, morale, discipline, and quality. They cashiered Portuguese officers who were too old or appeared too incompetent, and assigned British officers and NCOs to the regiments to standardize drill. These efforts improved the quality of the Portuguese army. In some cases, such as the *caçadores* (light infantry), they were equal to their British counterparts in training and skill. This paid dividends for Wellington as the Portuguese contingent would compose no less than a third of Wellington's army for the duration of the campaign.[64]

Third, in October 1809, Wellington tasked his chief engineer to develop in secret a series of defensive fortifications around Lisbon.[65] The Lines of Torres Vedras were a brilliant piece of military engineering. Three lines of trenches, strongholds, and forts protected the port city (Figure 4).[66] The defensive works ensured that Lisbon would not fall to the French unless by either a long siege or by a grand assault inflicting massive casualties on the attacker. He also enacted a policy that stripped the countryside bare of anything useful. Although controversial, the scorched earth policy ensured little in the way of subsistence for the French. By creating these lines and issuing the scorched earth policy, Wellington was forcing a decision on Massena. When he arrived, he could assault the fortifications, besiege it, or withdraw, suffering casualties for little gain.

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[62] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 80.

[63] Ibid., 313.

[64] Hall, *British Strategy,* 92.

[65] Wellington, *Military Dispatches*, 87.

[66] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 115.

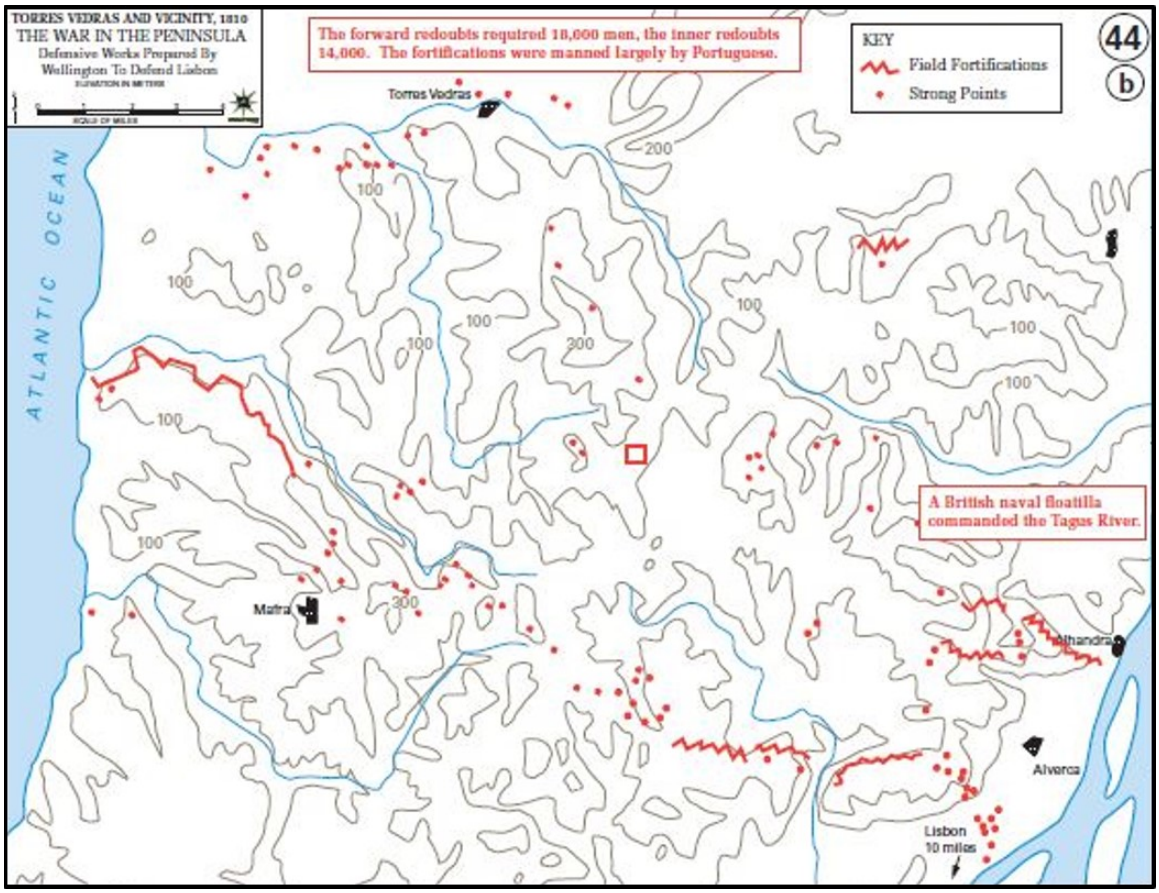

Figure 4. The Lines of Torres Vedras near Lisbon, Portugal. US Military Academy Department of History Atlases, accessed April 15, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/atlases

The last major focus was the overhaul of his intelligence network. Wellington's 1809 campaign showed that he needed to create a more reliable system that provided a clear picture of enemy intentions and capabilities.[67] The emphasis on developing this network led to one of the most sophisticated intelligence gathering systems on the continent. Agents operating as far away as the Franco-Spanish border reported on French movements and composition.[68] The improved system showed its usefulness early on as it reported in early 1810, that 138,000 French troops had massed on the border. By July, they were moving into Spain. The third invasion of Portugal was underway.

[67] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 110.

[68] Ibid., 114.

From the end of 1809 to the summer of 1810, Wellington's army did not fire a shot at the enemy. Instead, the British general took the lull in the fighting to develop a battle plan that fit into the situation he confronted. Major offensive operations into Spain to follow up his success at Talavera were too risky. Instead, Wellington approached the problem by switching from the strategic offense, to the defense. He took into consideration his own capabilities, to include the deficiencies he witnessed while on campaign in 1809, and the ever-growing strength of the French forces in the Iberian Peninsula. He also knew he had one other crucial factor going for him, time. This gave him the space needed to build the Lines of Torres Vedras, develop a training plan for the Portuguese army, overhaul his logistical system, and build an intelligence network that gave him a clearer picture of enemy intentions and capabilities. For the second phase of his campaign, he had analyzed his own means and risk, crafted a way that balanced both and nested with two of his three objectives for his end state (protect Lisbon, and preserve the army). If he was going to have a chance to end French hegemony, he first needed to wear out the French and only then seize the initiative and return to Spain.

Wellington, with the knowledge that the Lines of Torres Vedras provided sanctuary if needed, marshalled the army to meet Massena as he made his way into Portugal with the intent to slow their advance. Knowing he had time on his side, he sought terrain that blocked the French and gave him an excellent position to defend to fight a delaying action. This type of operation served several purposes. First, it forced the French to come to him. By blocking their route, Massena needed to dislodge him and suffer heavily to do so. Second, it forced the French to use up their current supplies with the scorched earth policy in mind. Third, it allowed him to test his newly reformed Portuguese regiments in battle, but in positions favorable to the defending Anglo-Portuguese army. Lastly, it mitigated risk to his own army. Aggressive offensive action was unnecessary if the objective was to eventually withdrawal to the Lines of Torres Vedras. All he needed was for the French to agree to fight. They obliged, at Bussaco.

The Battle of Bussaco on 27 September 1810 was exactly the battle Wellington wanted to fight. Aligning his army of 52,000 men and 60 guns along an easily defendable ridge, the French suffered massive casualties trying to dislodge him.[69] By the end of the battle the French had suffered an estimated 4,500 casualties to the Anglo-Portuguese 1,252 killed, wounded, and missing.[70] Wellington was satisfied with the result. The Portuguese regiments performed well, and the allies had forced the French to take a longer route to Lisbon, which consumed more provisions, and caused Massena's force to suffer major losses.[71] Although it caused morale in the army to plummet, Wellington withdrew from the battlefield and behind the lines by 10 October 1810.

When Massena arrived in front of the fortifications, he no doubt was surprised by what he saw. Unable to storm them without suffering catastrophic casualties, Massena chose to withdraw north and remain in Portugal for the winter. Wellington remained safely behind the lines, amply provisioned by the Royal Navy while Massena scavenged for every morsel of food to feed his starving army. For six months Massena remained in the vicinity of the lines, but finally withdrew on 5 March 1811 with his army near starvation. Wellington pursued him and after several major skirmishes saw the French army reach the border, albeit without most of their baggage, horses, and guns.[72] The French army had lost over 25,000 men since crossing the previous year. Wellington's plan had worked.[73]

When he laid out the plan in late 1809 the decision to conduct a defensive strategy was not popular with the government, but Wellington was steadfast in his pursuit of the final objective that the plan sought to build toward. Writing home, Wellington stated "I have looked to the great

[69] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 324.

[70] Ibid., 326.

[71] Ibid., 326-328.

[72] Ibid., 330.

[73] Ibid., 333.

result of our maintaining our position on the Peninsula and have not allowed myself to be diverted from its wishes of the allies, and probably of some of our own army".[74] He understood better than most, that the French were too strong for him to successfully make meaningful headway by opposing them in pitched battle unless the conditions were ideal. Instead he would use their penchant for aggressive offensive operations against them, developing a plan that took their greatest strength and turn it into their downfall. Prior to Massena entering Portugal, he laid out his vision, "If they should be able to invade (Portugal), and should not succeed in obliging us to evacuate, they will be in a very dangerous situation; and the longer we can oppose them, and delay their success, the more likely are they to suffer materially in Spain."[75] The plan opened up opportunities for Wellington. With Lisbon secure and Massena back in Spain licking his wounds, the time was right for him to seek permission from the British government for offensive action in Spain, which it gave in May.[76] However, 1811 turned out to be a difficult year for the Allied forces and the transition to the third phase, targeting France's hold on Spain, would not come as early as expected.

After Massena withdrew, Wellington set out to consolidate Portugal's security by attempting to seize the three border fortresses that controlled access into the country from Spain. In France's possession, Portugal would never be completely secure, and in the Allies control they served as a jumping off point into the heartland of Spain. Unfortunately for Wellington, the operational environment was not as favorable as he hoped. The French forces numbers were still considerable, and as a result, the remaining months of 1811 played out like a chess game. Each side maneuvering their pieces like on a board, thrusting forward and reacting to the other sides counter thrust. However, Wellington did his best to achieve some positive results against his foe.

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[74] Arthur Wellesley, *Selections from the Dispatches and General Orders of Field Marshal, the Duke of* Wellington, ed. John Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1851), 353.

[75] Wellington, *Dispatches and General Orders,* 353.

[76] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 354-355.

The first thrust occurred in April against the Portuguese border town of Almeida. Thinking Massena too busy refitting after the disastrous invasion into Portugal, Wellington isolated the town hoping to starve it into submission. With any luck, he hoped to then move to the Spanish border fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo, assessing that it was low on food due to Massena's requirements.[77] Massena was cannier than Wellington had expected though, and the marshal quickly recovered enough strength to try relieving the beleaguered French garrison. Wellington, receiving accurate intelligence on the French movements, decided to stand and fight at Fuentes de Onoro between 3-5 May 1811. Wellington once again used the terrain to his benefit and fended off the French attacks. By the end of the battle the Anglo-Portuguese army had suffered 1,711 casualties to the French 2,844, but most importantly, Almeida remained encircled.[78] On 10 May, after the garrison snuck out under Wellington's nose, the town fell to the allies. The first border fortress had fallen, the other two would be much more difficult to take.

In late May, Wellington began siege operations against Badajoz, the most vital of the two remaining towns. His means became a problem once again as the allied army did not possess the proper equipment, primarily large enough siege guns, necessary to breach the walls. The French also had learned from previous mistakes. Accurate intelligence told Wellington that two French armies, one under Marshal Auguste Marmont, Massena's replacement, and another under Soult united and moved to lift the siege with 60,000 men. Confronted by these overwhelming numbers and aware that another pitched battle was too risky even at the expense of lifting the siege, Wellington withdrew.[79] After the French forces separated, Wellington went after Ciudad Rodrigo in August 1811. Aware that he did not have the siege train capable of breaching the fortress, he chose to blockade the town. Once again French forces under Marmont marched to lift the siege

[77] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 349.

[78] Ibid., 354.

[79] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 139.

and Wellington, unwilling to fight, lifted the blockade and moved back into Portugal. The 1811 campaign ended in a stalemate.

As winter 1811 set in, the situation had improved from the year before for the allied forces under Wellington. Portugal was secure with Lisbon safely behind the powerful Lines of Torres Vedras and the border town of Almeida in allied control. The defensive strategy had worked to attrite many French forces with minimal loss to Wellington's own army. The plan worked well to achieve the first two objectives of his end state. But remaining on the defensive was not going to achieve the final objective, breaking French control in Spain, nor was just aggressive offensive action going to work, not against the estimated 350,000 French soldiers currently in theater.[80] The two sieges at Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo were proof of that. If Wellington was going to successfully transition to the third phase of his plan, he needed help in pulling French forces out of Spain to change the balance of power. Luckily, he got that from the other side of Europe.

In late 1811, Napoleon made the less-than-astute decision to attack his former ally Russia. To succeed he needed the largest army ever assembled for a military operation and expected all regions of the empire to provide forces. This required the emperor to pull critical assets from the Spanish theater. Intelligence reports provided to Wellington informed him that Napoleon was recalling elements of the Imperial Guard and other elite elements back to France for the Russian invasion.[81] In January 1812 Napoleon recalled 25,000 soldiers, and by April close to another 35,000 were withdrawn.[82] While French forces were stretched thin still dealing with the Spanish insurgency, Wellington quickly determined the opportunity was right to seize the initiative. On 8 January 1812, he targeted Ciudad Rodrigo again.[83] The transition to the third and

[80] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 367.

[81] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 141.

[82] Ibid., 141.

[83] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 379.

final phase, one of strategic offense designed to break the back of French control is Spain was underway. The final stage of the Peninsular War had begun.

The army Wellington marched on Ciudad Rodrigo in January 1812 was a culmination of all the efforts he laid out during the previous phase that improved his means. The British contingent numbered over 45,000 veteran men and served in regiments that were no longer considered green like in 1809. The Portuguese component numbered over 33,000 and the training reforms had turned them into a highly effective fighting force. The logistical system, nonexistent in 1809, was now a robust network of wagon trains and magazines that gave Wellington the ability to operate longer in the field and operate, when ready, deep into Spanish territory. The intelligence network he had painstakingly built was providing him accurate and timely information on French movements, intentions, and disposition.[84] Finally, the resource he needed in 1811, the siege guns, had arrived in Lisbon. The army was much improved compared to the one that fought in 1809, and it was ready for battle.

Wellington, wanting to maintain a high tempo to ensure Marmont did not respond in time, launched an attack against Ciudad Rodrigo as soon as the more powerful siege guns breached the wall. After an eleven-day siege, the fortress fell to the allies.[85] Wellington, wanting to maintain the initiative, turned his attention to Badajoz and invested the fortress in February. Marmont, struggling to maintain security in the areas he controlled with the limited number of troops he now had available, watched helplessly as Wellington went about his business.[86] On 6 April 1812, Badajoz fell to the allies. The border towns were all in Wellington's control, and the road into Spain was open. Now, Wellington had to determine where to go and how.

[84] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 142.

[85] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 378-379.

[86] Ibid., 380-381.

Wanting to keep Marmont unaware of his true intentions, Wellington devised a deception plan that included the Royal Navy and other British and Spanish forces in Spain.[87] By doing this he kept Marmont off balance, which led to the battle of Salamanca on 22 July 1812. Capitalizing on a French mistake during a flanking maneuver, Wellington took the opportunity to attack, rather than holding to his traditional defensive approach. The result was another allied victory at a cost of 5,000 casualties to the French 12,500.[88] The victory made the French position in southern and central Spain untenable. On 12 August 1812, the allied army entered Madrid.

Complete victory was not at hand yet for Wellington. French forces still had a sizeable presence in northern and south eastern Spain and although his means had improved, the ghosts of Talavera were about to surface again for Wellington. After Madrid, Wellington made the risky decision to pursue French forces into northern Spain. This stretched his supply system to the breaking point and presented the same logistical issues he experienced leading up to the Talavera campaign. Besieging French forces at Burgos, Wellington had gone one step too far. With French forces converging from the east on Madrid and his supply lines stretched, he made the decision to lift the siege and return to the border. The gains after Salamanca were given up. What began as a promising campaign in 1812, ended in operational failure. Wellington correctly ascertained that a similar approach in 1813 was not going to be effective, what he needed was a different approach that maximized the means at his disposal to achieve a better outcome.

The planning for the 1813 campaign began for Wellington immediately after he lifted the siege at Burgos, aided by a decision by the Spanish government. On 6 January 1813, Wellington assumed command of all Spanish forces.[89] He now oversaw command of all allied forces in the peninsula, eliminating the coordination difficulty between the armies. With French forces reduced to 150,000 men due to Napoleon's call for reinforcements after the Russian debacle, Wellington,

[87] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 146-147.

[88] Ibid., 152.

[89] Ibid., 169.

for the first time held the advantage in numbers in theater and he planned to maximize that advantage.[90]

The plan Wellington developed was quite different from those in his previous operations. It called for the Anglo-Portuguese force to march northward into north western Spain and outflank the French forces in central Spain. He expected the French would not expect this maneuver and would maintain most of their army centered around Madrid. This maneuver would make their position untenable. There were risks to this, though. The roads were difficult to traverse, and Wellington's supplies were limited to what the army could carry as the roads made it difficult for wagons to easily make the journey. But Wellington had a great resource to rely on, the Royal Navy. Establishing supply depots along the northern coast of Spain guaranteed Wellington the supplies needed once the army made it out of the difficult mountains of northern Portugal and Spain. By May 1813, Wellington was prepared to make the move.

As the long days of summer progressed, the allied army traveled north. With the intelligence network keeping an eye on the French, Wellington successfully flanked the French army concentrated at Valladolid, forcing their withdrawal.[91] Maintaining the pressure against them attempting to bring about a decisive engagement with the 100,000 available troops under his command, Wellington doggedly pursued the French army, under the nominal command of Napoleon's brother Joseph, the Bonapartist king of Spain.[92] In late June, the French stopped and offered battle, at a small town called Vitoria. On 21 June 1813, the decisive battle for Spain commenced. Numbering close to 75,000 troops, Wellington faced only 57,000 men under Joseph. The battle was never really in doubt. The veteran regiments of Wellington's army, who had fought from Talavera on, overran the French forces. By the end of the day the rout was complete. French losses only numbered 8,000, but more importantly, all but one of their cannons and most

[90] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 173.

[91] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 443-444.

[92] Ibid., 443.

of their supplies and baggage were seized by the allies.[93] French forces retreated north. Wellington was victorious.

Conclusion

The battle of Vitoria was not the last battle between the Allies and French in Spain, but it was the most decisive. Bonapartist control in Spain was broken for good. Wellington spent the rest of 1813 pursuing the French, fighting several battles in the Pyrenees Mountains before pushing into southern France at the end of the year. In April 1814, with allied forces closing in from all sides, Napoleon Bonaparte abdicated. The Peninsular War was over. Wellington had fulfilled his government's strategic objectives. He had achieved his end state.

How Wellington accomplished it speaks volumes on his capability as an operational artist and ability to balance ways, means, and risk to achieve the end state. The means at his disposal in 1809 reveal that achieving this end state quickly was going to be difficult. The British army was recovering from the 1808 expedition that almost saw it destroyed and a logistical infrastructure that was nonexistent. The army was low on artillery, cavalry, and currency to pay soldiers' wages and procure local provisions. The Portuguese military, a possible source of manpower for allied operations was poorly led, trained, equipped, and in need of major reforms. Spanish military leaders were difficult to coordinate combined operations with and promised much, but provided little in assistance, such as provisions. Finally, the French possessed a strong military presence in Spain with enough manpower available to invade Portugal concurrently.

Wellington developed in succession three courses of action, or ways, that addressed his weaknesses and maximized his own strengths in the operational environment as he saw it. This ability to visualize and understand his environment and adapt to conditions is seen in the approach he took in each phase. In the first, immediately after arriving in theater, he quickly determined that two French armies threatened his position in Portugal. Understanding that seizing

[93] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 450.

the initiative and going on the offensive before the French could consolidate was the best course of action, he acted. The result were the battles of Oporto and Talavera which minimized the immediate threat to Portugal. He also learned during this time what components within his organization needed improvement. The lull in the fighting due to his quick victories allowed him to shift to his second course of action that put him on the strategic defensive and allowed him the time to make those improvements. The construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras was the centerpiece of a plan built to attrite the French as much as possible while limiting his own army's risk to loss. This strategy also allowed him the opportunity to reform the Portuguese army, organize a more effective supply system, and improve his intelligence apparatus. However, he was willing to also seek battle if the situation favored him, which he did at Bussaco and Fuentes de Onoro. His attempts to seize the initiative in 1811 saw the French thwart him due to their superior numbers in Spain but Napoleon's invasion of Russia helped change the operational environment in the peninsula. With some of the best French troops withdrawn from theater, Wellington quickly took advantage of the shift in the balance of power and transitioned to the strategic offense, thus moving into phase three, aimed at achieving the final objective. Although he was successful in 1812 in seizing the border fortresses and eventually Madrid, he was unable to remain in central Spain due to his logistical limitations. He adjusted accordingly and orchestrated the riskiest of his operations in 1813, flanking the French forces in central Spain that eventually culminated at Vitoria, which broke the back of French control in Spain forever.

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