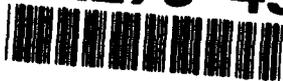


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The Dardanelles Campaign of 1915  
and the Failure of Operational Art

by

Paul M. Insch

Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the  
Naval War College in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements of the Department of  
Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own  
personal views and are not necessarily  
endorsed by the Naval War College or the  
Department of the Navy.

Signed: Paul M. Insch

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Abstract of  
 THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN OF 1915  
 AND THE FAILURE OF OPERATIONAL ART

The World War I Dardanelles campaign is presented as a case study in Operational Art. Specifically, it is used to illustrate the dire consequences of the failure of British Prime Minister Asquith's government's leadership to employ Operational Leadership. The process by which strategic objectives were formed, and the role of key members of the War Council and Admiralty are examined.

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THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN OF 1915  
AND THE FAILURE OF OPERATIONAL ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"In the whole of the First World War, there was only one brilliant strategical idea - and that was Winston's: the Dardanelles"<sup>1</sup> (Clement Atlee)

Scope. The Royal Navy's 1915 campaign in the Dardanelles was a tragically unsuccessful undertaking which had long term, widespread, disastrous implications. The high hopes with which it was launched, namely that it would dramatically shorten World War I by knocking Turkey out of the conflict, open the Balkans as an avenue into Germany, and help the Russians hold on, were quickly dashed. The failure also brought on a political crisis in Great Britain which forced Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith to form a coalition government. In doing so Winston Churchill, then in his third year as First Lord of the Admiralty, was saddled with the onus of the campaign's failure and sacked. This politically expedient move sent Churchill into a political exile which lasted, tragically, until *after* his implacable foe, Adolph Hitler, had brought the world to the brink of World War II. Not surprisingly, a substantial body of writings on the Dardanelles campaign has emerged over the 79 intervening years. These books, articles, and memoirs range from vitriolic attacks on Churchill written shortly after the debacle, to ardent, reasoned defenses which enjoy the perspective of long hindsight and the wealth of historical

data time reveals. This paper's intent is not to detail the full history of the Dardanelles campaign or survey its literature, but rather to use it as a case study which reveals a profound failure in the use of Operational Art. Specific focus will be placed on the role of key individuals in the Asquith government's War Council and in the Admiralty. The failure of these individuals to exercise Operational Leadership, which is the underpinning of Operational Art, doomed not only the Dardanelles campaign, but by unnecessarily lengthening the war, also doomed countless numbers of Europe's youth.

Background. The horrific carnage of the western front in World War I is difficult to imagine today. Soon after hostilities commenced in August 1914, the highly detailed war plans of both sides went awry. Based on rigid preconceptions of what each's opponents would do, the plans were triggered by a "use it or lose it" force employment mindset driven by troop mobilization requirements and limitations. The plans called for slashing attacks and decisive pincer movements which either failed to materialize, or foundered short of a decisive objective. As the huge field armies encountered the unprecedented lethality of masses of modern arms, offensives were blunted, and a series of desperate runs to outflank entrenched defenders ensued. The cost was staggering. In August alone the French lost 206,515 men.<sup>1</sup> By year's end the British had lost 95,654 killed in the bloody stalemate in

France. An unbroken line of trenches zigzagged 466 miles from Switzerland to the Belgian seacoast, with one soldier manning each four inches of the front. Life expectancy in combat ranged from seconds to minutes, surely an irrelevant distinction to the 2,533 men who were killed, 9,121 who were wounded, or 1,164 who went missing on an average day on the western front.<sup>3</sup> Churchill condemned the situation as follows:

"The German fleet remained sheltered in its fortified harbors, and the British Admiralty had discovered no way of drawing it out. . . . The Admirals pinned their faith to the blockade; the Generals turned to a war of exhaustion and to still more dire attempts to pierce the enemy's front. . . . Neutral territory or salt water barred all further extension of the front, and the great armies lay glaring at each other at close quarters without any true idea of what to do next.

Two, and even three, British or French lives were repeatedly paid for the killing of one enemy, and grim calculations were made to prove that in the end the Allies would still have a balance of a few millions to spare."<sup>4</sup>

In his rejection of the strategy of attrition and urgent search for alternatives to the "slogging match" of trench warfare, it is obvious that Churchill grasped the as-yet unnamed concept of Operational Art, and clearly saw the need for the statesmanlike exercise of Operational Leadership. For clarity, it is useful to briefly define these terms.

Operational Art and Operational Leadership. Operational Art deals with the *theory and practice* of preparing, planning, conducting, and sustaining major operations and campaigns in a theater of war or theater of operations. Operational Leadership puts Operational Art into practice, bridging the gap between policy and military strategy on one side, and

tactics on the other. Operational Leadership is responsible for establishing political and military strategic goals and tasks, and then directing and coordinating military actions to achieve those strategic goals. It identifies and defines the war theater or theater of operations. In summary, Operational Leadership is responsible for: mobilization; strategic deployment of forces into theater; intra-theater deployment; command organization; command and control; training of subordinate forces; and operations planning.<sup>5</sup> As will be seen, the Dardanelles campaign suffered from a lack of attention in most of these areas, stemming from the failure of the Asquith government to articulate its strategic objectives and to exercise Operational Leadership. Lacking a coherent vision of "what, why, and how", Britain's leadership drifted, reacting to events rather than shaping them, accomodating personalities and personal agendas rather than striving for a set of common objectives.

## CHAPTER II

### LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

The spur to action. In the earliest days of the war, and with the benefit of personal experience, Churchill clearly recognized the need to seek alternatives to the wasteful carnage in the trenches. Frustrated, on 29 DEC 1914, in a letter to Asquith which proposed offensive actions in the Baltic, he brashly urged the Prime Minister to action.

"...I think it quite possible that neither side will have the strength to penetrate the other's lines in the Western theater. ...my impression is that the position of both armies is not likely to undergo any decisive change - although no doubt several hundred thousand men will be spent to satisfy the military mind on the point. ... On the assumption these views are correct, how ought we apply our growing military power? Are there not alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders? ...cannot the power of the Navy be brought more directly to bear on the enemy? *Without your direct guidance and initiative, none of these things will be done; and a succession of bloody checks in the West and in the East will leave the allies dashed in spirit and bankrupt in policy.*"<sup>6</sup>

Churchill's energetic urgings and bureaucratic machinations would, of course, come to fruition in the Dardanelles, but not with the desired result. The failure of Operational Leadership which doomed the enterprise was firmly rooted at 10 Downing street, with tentacles which spread throughout the government. One scholar of the Dardanelles campaign (and the subsequent landings at Gallipoli) described its inception thus:

"No single man can, or should, bear the responsibility for the series of decisions, half decisions, and evasions of decisions that marked the initiation of the Gallipoli Campaign. The manner in which the Asquith Government

drifted into this vast commitment of men and resources...condemns not any individual but rather the system of war government ...<sup>7</sup>

The War Council. The prewar body charged with the formulation of England's defense policy was the Committee of Imperial Defense (CID). Although subordinate to the Cabinet, and therefore not the ultimate policy making body, the CID exercised broad strategic planning responsibilities. The hallmarks of the CID were its structured agenda, carefully circulated minutes, and free interaction of civilian and military (including War Office and Admiralty Board representatives) members on an equal footing. Its critics have subsequently pointed out that the CID did not foresee the prolonged, universal character of the next war, plan for the expansion of the industrial base or armed forces necessary to fight a war, or consider what organization would actually direct the war effort.<sup>8</sup> When, early in the war, the CID was replaced by the War Council the deficiencies of the CID were carried forward and the CID's strong points and proven format were lost. The War Council was, by dint of personality as well as structure, almost entirely a civilian organization.<sup>9</sup> Its key members were the Prime Minister; Churchill; Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Minister; David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer; and Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War.<sup>10</sup> Lord Kitchener was the only military man of cabinet rank, and except for the Council's secretary Lord Hankey, a LTCOL of Marines, Kitchener's was the only military voice on

the War Council. His key staff advisors, like those of Churchill at the Admiralty, were not members, and in fact felt obliged to remain silent at War Council discussions, a fact the Dardanelles commission made much of. The council's loose *modus operandi* eschewed a regular meeting schedule and a structured agenda, and so contributed to a vague and imprecise style of policy development. Perhaps a more vigorous Prime Minister than Asquith could have risen above the War Council's inherent structural impediments and offered strong Operational Leadership. As it was, the strong personalities on the council exploited his weakness to advance their own agendas.

"Easterners" versus "Westerners". As the search for alternatives to the stalemated war of attrition gained momentum, the War Council found itself quickly divided into two camps, the "Easterners" and the "Westerners".

"Easterners" sought additional military action in the East as a vast flanking movement. The "Westerners" concentrated on the nearer threat to England and were transfixed by the masses of enemy troops in France. Some, like Kitchener, felt the pull of both sides.

"Westerners". As can easily be understood, the most vocal "Westerners" were primarily from the Army High Command in France. This vested interest group was in a most unenviable position. Despite having stumbled into a morass which was bleeding them white, they were loath to abandon its familiarity, however grim, for the prospects of the unknown.

Their simple philosophy was embodied in a statement (from France) by Major General Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations, to Bonar Law, leader of the Conservative (opposition) party:

"...the way to end this war is to kill Germans, not Turks. The place where we can kill most Germans is here, and therefore every man and every round of ammunition we have got in the world ought to come here. All history shows that operations in a secondary and ineffectual theater have no bearing on major operations - except to weaken the force there engaged. History, no doubt, will repeat her lesson once more for our benefit."<sup>11</sup>

"Easterners". From the discussion presented so far, and given the description of "Westerners" as "crusty, stubborn, conservative regular Army officers posted in France", one might readily conclude that "Easterners" were the embodiment of enlightenment and strategic vision.<sup>12</sup> Such a conclusion would, of course, be unwarranted. "Easterners" clearly had a fundamental orientation which made them more likely to be more flexible, but this trait did not necessarily translate into breadth of strategic vision. Neither did "Easterners" have a monopoly on Operational Leadership. Their camp included Churchill, Lloyd George and Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord, and at times, Kitchener, but by no means represented a bloc of totally unified interests. Opposed to the "Westerners" as much as to the enemy, the "Easterners" agreed only that something novel must be found to win the war quickly.<sup>13</sup> Exactly what that should be escaped them. Unfortunately, they quarreled among themselves to an extent which severely

hampered the exercise of the degree of Operational Leadership which the Dardanelles campaign, and indeed the whole war effort, needed.

Asquith's Role. As Prime Minister, it was Asquith's natural role to reconcile the competing strategic views, and choose East or West. Churchill complained, both during the war and after it, that Asquith's failure to provide positive leadership led directly to England's drifting, vacillating military policy throughout the war.<sup>14</sup> Even if he had no clear vision to offer, Asquith could have done valuable service by structuring the War Council in a more businesslike fashion, along the lines of the old CID. Lord Hankey faulted Asquith's government's style, citing another's "celebrated description":

"There was no agenda, there was no order of business... no record whatever was kept of our proceedings...The cabinet often had the very haziest notions as to what its decisions were; ...matter was left so much in doubt that a Minister went away and acted upon what he thought was a decision which subsequently turned out to be no decision at all, or was repudiated by his colleagues...I do not think anyone will deny that the old Cabinet system had broken down, both as a war machine and a peace machine."<sup>15</sup>

If Asquith failed to provide the Operational Leadership which could shape a strategic agenda and apply it to the war, it is not surprising that he likewise failed to adequately coordinate the initiatives which his impatient subordinates pursued. No joint planning staff machinery was established, leading to the inevitable instances of departments planning at cross purposes, or worse.<sup>16</sup>

Churchill's Operational Leadership. Churchill was, first and foremost, a politician, but his formidable intellect, prodigious energy, and dynamic force of will drove him to undertakings far afield from the Admiralty. His imagination knew no bounds in the search for strategic opportunities, weapons, or tactics which could shorten the war. True to his aristocratic lineage, which included the heroic field commander Sir John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, he longed to be in the thick of any fight. Before World War I, Churchill made great political and monetary capital of the fame he won from his widely published first-hand accounts of the fighting on the frontiers of India, and his exploits as an escaping prisoner in the Boer War. He believed himself capable of military greatness - "I can visualize great movements and combinations."<sup>17</sup> - and even allowed himself to be drawn into the active conduct of the war. In October 1914, on one of his many trips to the war zone, Churchill recognized that the Belgian government had become irresolute and the key city of Antwerp was about to fall. After brief consultation with the rest of the Asquith government, he flung himself and his Marines into the defense. He was widely criticized by an uninformed press and public for his actions in directing the losing defense, because the loss of Antwerp, though inevitable, was then seen as a severe blow. In fact, his gap filling exercise of Operational Leadership on the battlefield secured the strategic objective of favorably

anchoring the Allies' defensive front. A far cry from disastrous (the British lost only a handful of men), the defense of Antwerp was officially recognized as invaluable.<sup>18</sup> In a later discussion of the matter, however, Churchill indicated that he clearly understood the politician's or minister's proper role.

"Those who are charged with the direction of supreme affairs must sit on the mountain-tops of control; they must never descend into the valleys of direct physical and personal action."<sup>19</sup>

Still, Churchill would never doubt his own abilities to act at any level of war. At one time or another his actions drove Lord Kitchener, Lord Fisher, and the Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords to offer their resignations in protest. The politically hostile (especially to Churchill) Dardanelles Commission, investigating the campaign's failure, agreed with the popular sentiment of 1915, that Churchill had run roughshod over the advice of his senior advisors and launched the Dardanelles campaign without their support. The Admirals, relegated to silence in the War Council chambers were seen to have somehow been "bamboozled", and the old established practices of the Navy had been subverted by this brash, arrogant civilian.<sup>20</sup> A postwar critic acidly observed that:

"... so far as the conduct of war operations was concerned, the Board of Admiralty disappeared for the time being, and the body which for 300 years the nation had regarded as the sure custodian of its naval interests ceased to exist."<sup>21</sup>

As in the case of Antwerp, this charge was subsequently disproved. The crux of this debate lies in Churchill's

volatile relationship with Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord.

Lord Fisher's Operational Leadership. Lord Fisher was Churchill's choice to become First Sea Lord when the incumbent, a German relation of the King, became an unacceptable wartime political liability. Fisher was then over 70 and retired, but he held the stature of Lord Nelson in the eyes of the British public, and with the Royal Navy. He was quite likely senile, and deeply imbued with the strategic mindset of the era of Lord Nelson, but without that bold commander's daring. Although he had his moments of dash, his aversion to risk led him, in Churchill's view, to rely...

"upon a doctrine widely inculcated among our senior naval officers, that the Navy's task is to keep open our communications, blockade those of the enemy, and to wait for the Armies to do their proper job."<sup>22</sup>

Fisher's crippling vacillation on the feasibility of the Dardanelles campaign was matched only by his alternating feelings of loyalty, as well as disloyalty, to Churchill. He was capable of maliciously passing damaging information to the opposition party leadership, an apparent trend in the High Command, and yet he was candid with the Dardanelles Commission at his personal expense. Lord Fisher's contribution to the War Council's overall stock of Operational Leadership was most felt where it was least needed, in the Home Fleet. In the case of the Dardanelles, his influence was decidedly negative. His most basic, and paralyzing, belief was that ships were not to be exposed to the hazards of combat which did not contribute to the immediate defense of England.

Kitchener's Operational Leadership. Lord Kitchener's status in the Cabinet was utterly unchallenged, owing to his unparalleled reputation. Churchill regarded him with deep respect and warm regard, and noted that:

"His prestige and authority were immense. He was the sole mouthpiece of War Office opinion in the War Council...He was never, to my belief, overruled by the War Council or the Cabinet, in any military matter great or small... Respect for the man, sympathy for his immense labors, confidence in his professional judgement, and the belief that he had plans deeper and wider than any we could see, silenced misgivings and disputes...All-powerful, imperturbable, reserved, he dominated absolutely our counsels at this time."<sup>23</sup>

Kitchener was the first active duty professional soldier to serve in a modern democratic Cabinet, an experiment devised by Asquith for political reasons, but deemed by him to be "hazardous".<sup>24</sup> Disdainful of politicians and reluctant to share his burdens, Kitchener can be said to have "ignored" the General Staff out of existence. He was faulted by the Dardanelles Commission for having allowed himself to become overburdened, and "confusion and want of efficiency resulted."<sup>25</sup> His ego and keen sense of his prerogatives were liabilities in the sense that they led him to occasionally behave petulantly, at the cost of the greater war effort. Such thin skin is not the hallmark of a great practitioner of Operational Leadership, especially in wartime. He was painfully empathetic of the plight of the Army commanders on the western front, and generally threw his lot in with the "Easterners" in the search for new avenues of attack, in hopes of ending the carnage. His empathy was double edged, however,

because it made him vulnerable to the clamor for more troops from "Westerners" such as General Wilson, as previously cited. Kitchener's Operational Leadership was perhaps most acute in the War Council itself where his was the most prescient voice in any discussion of the war's likely scope and duration. In the earliest days it was Kitchener alone who gave accurate estimates of the likely magnitude of the struggle. Had he lent his insight to a bold strategic move such as the Dardanelles campaign, committed assets, and then resolutely backed it with his unassailable professional prestige, he would have contributed more Operational Leadership than the rest of the cabinet could have ever hoped to. But he didn't.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DARDANELLES CAMPAIGN

Inception. The Dardanelles had long been the object of Royal Navy interest and the site of previous expeditions. Years before, Lord Fisher had himself done planning for a naval campaign there, and found the challenges it offered to be daunting. At the end of 1914, as the "Easterners" cast about for potentially decisive new theaters of operation, the first suggestion that the Dardanelles might be suitable came from War Council Secretary Hankey. He emphasized the favorable political ramifications that the fall of Constantinople would likely have in the Balkans. Churchill, as has been seen, was then pressing Asquith for an amphibious operation in the Baltic with purely military objectives. Lord Kitchener now entered the debate in the role of an "Easterner". Endorsing a telegram from the Ambassador in Petrograd which relayed a Russian request for aid in the form of a "demonstration of some kind"<sup>26</sup> against the Turks, Kitchener initiated discussions with Churchill as to what might be done. Donning his "Westerner" identity, Kitchener informed Churchill that no troops were available for this operation. Kitchener then reverted to an "Easterner's" guise and, without Churchill's concurrence, telegraphed Petrograd instructions to assure the Russian Grand Duke that "steps will be taken to make a demonstration against the Turks".<sup>27</sup> The upshot was that Asquith's decision had been made for him.

Decision. Committed to do something, Churchill thought the prospects of a purely naval campaign poor. He was now swayed by the arguments of Lord Fisher, who endorsed Kitchener's action and proposed a large scale combined arms assault with troops supported by obsolete battleships. Although impractical on its face, the concept planted a seed in Churchill's Eastern-looking mind. He sent Vice Admiral Carden, commander of the naval forces standing watch at the Dardanelles, this query on 3 JAN 1915.

"Do you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation? It is assumed older battleships fitted with mine-bumpers would be used, preceded by colliers or other merchant craft as mine-bumpers and sweepers. *Importance of results would justify severe loss.* ...<sup>28</sup>

Carden's favorable reply was "remarkable" to Churchill, and led to a fuller exchange. By 11 JAN Carden had provided a detailed plan for systematically shelling the forts which line the length, and sweeping the minefields which span the breadth of the Dardanelles. This plan was widely circulated, and since it enjoyed the credibility of having come from the naval commander who would have to execute it, it met with universal acclaim. Fisher shepherded the plan through the Admiralty staff, and even embellished it by suggesting that the newest superdreadnaught be committed as well. Unanimous approval to proceed was given at the 13 JAN War Council meeting, resulting in a decision recorded as:

"...the Admiralty should also prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula with Constantinople as its objective."<sup>29</sup>

Reassessment. The approved "mission statement" was flawed. It contained the dilemma long faced by those who sought to use English seapower to influence events on land, or "How can the whale grapple with the elephant"? Thus the realization that troops would be needed to secure the gains made by the fleet began to dawn, and was first raised by the perceptive Marine, Hankey. When the Admiralty took up the question Churchill found himself now driven back full circle, and again began to try to obtain a commitment of troops. Simultaneously, Fisher withdrew his support as the fear of diluting the home fleet overwhelmed him, and threatened to resign and go public with his criticism. The entreaties of Asquith and Kitchener and the arm twisting of Churchill kept the old Lord on, for a time.

Commitment and Reversal. The cancellation of a plan championed by the "Easterner" Sir Grey, which was to have sent troops to Greece, suddenly made the fine Twenty-ninth Division available.<sup>30</sup> Churchill lunged for it, Kitchener assented, and yet the War Council did not give final approval. Still, Churchill termed this day, 16 FEB, a "Day of Resolve"; it was followed by a "Day of Recoil" four days later when Kitchener withdrew his troops.<sup>31</sup> This reversal was explained - in farfetched terms - by a very "Western" sounding Kitchener as driven by the threat of sudden, massive, redeployment of victorious German troops from Russia. A Churchill biographer gives another explanation; that Kitchener was just then

apprised by the self serving "arch-Westerner" Sir John French, commander of British forces in France, of an earlier, informal, offer of Admiralty troops and armored cars that Churchill had made to him without Kitchener's knowledge.<sup>32</sup> The hypersensitive Kitchener took the matter to Asquith, who, even in company with Lloyd George and an apologetic Churchill could not reverse the soldier's mind.<sup>33</sup> Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, symbol of duty, whose stern visage glared from recruiting posters above an accusingly pointed finger and the message "YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU", had simply taken his marbles and gone home.

Leadership by Default. The abject failure of Asquith's leadership is revealed here. At the 26 FEB War Council Churchill argued, on the record...

"that the XXIX division could not make the difference between failure and success in France, but might well make the difference in the east. ... If a disaster occurred in Turkey owing to the insufficiency of troops, he must disclaim all responsibility".<sup>34</sup>

Asquith refused to force the issue, despite his belief that...

"one must take a lot of risks in war, & I am strongly of the opinion that the chance of forcing the Dardanelles & occupying Constantinople...presents such a unique opportunity that we ought to hazard a lot elsewhere rather than forgo it. If Kitchener can be convinced, well & good: but to discard his advice & overrule his judgement on a military question is *to take a great responsibility*. So I am rather anxious."<sup>35</sup>

Attack. Carden's force went into action on 19 FEB. The early successes of his naval gunfire, minesweeping and Marine landing parties led to wild optimism. Losses were negligible, and on 02 MAR Carden reported to Churchill that he could be

through in fourteen days.<sup>36</sup> When operations resumed after a delay for bad weather the defenses had stiffened, and the attacker's resolve had weakened. The force had now reached minefields which were protected by shore guns. The battleships could not get within range to provide accurate suppressive fire to cover the advancing minesweeping trawlers, which turned back. The civilian trawler crews...

"recognize sweeping risks and don't mind getting blown up, but they hate the gunfire, ... they aren't supposed to sweep under fire, they didn't join for that".<sup>37</sup>

Commodore Keyes, Carden's Chief of Staff, sought volunteers from the navy ships, offered bonuses to the trawlers, and mounted another attempt. Incredibly, despite the fact that the Turkish gunfire was so inaccurate that none of the trawlers had been hit yet, they again turned back. Keyes was a fighter, and clearly understood that the operation hung in the balance. He knew that Churchill had prepared the War Council for losses and wrote that...

"It did not matter if we lost all seven sweepers, there were twenty eight more and the mines had got to be swept up. How could they talk of heavy fire if they were not hit?"<sup>38</sup>

Churchill reached the same conclusion and firmly pressed Carden to continue, while giving assurances that losses must be accepted. Instead of pressing on, Carden cracked and resigned. He was replaced by Vice Admiral De Robeck, his deputy. De Robeck confirmed that he still supported the operation, and things went well until midday 18 MAR, when a French battleship was sunk by a mine. The sweepers had fled,

and two more battleships soon suffered mine damage. Despite the fact that the fleet's withering fire had now silenced the shore batteries and the sweepers could advance, De Robeck ordered a withdrawal. On the way out another battleship was sunk by a mine. Except for the 600 plus man French crew, the force had less than 100 casualties.

Retreat. Churchill regretted the losses, but immediately dispatched replacement ships, intelligence reports that the Turks were almost out of ammunition, and bracing encouragement with no hint of reproach.

"Convey to all ranks and ratings their Lordship's approbation of their conduct in action and seamanlike skill and prudence with which His Majesty's ships were handled."<sup>39</sup>

Like his predecessor, however, De Robeck had had enough. His Fisher-inspired mindset could not contemplate additional losses. The drama continued as the War Council debated alternatives, and De Robeck soon availed himself of an opportunity to shift theater command to the Army General whose belated arrival signified the beginning of the equally indecisive, yet much costlier, invasion of Gallipoli. The naval attack was never renewed in earnest. At the Dardanelles, Keyes pressed to continue the naval campaign. But apparently only Keyes appreciated the truly strategic scope of his superior's failure to exercise the Operational Leadership that the situation demanded. He wrote later ...

"We simply *couldn't* have failed...and because we didn't try, another million lives were thrown away and the war went on for another three years."<sup>40</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

Responsibilities of Leadership. Today we know what Churchill then suspected, that the Turkish government would have collapsed had British warships appeared off Constantinople in 1915. Russian wheat would have filled Allied stomachs, and the Germans would have faced a grave new threat. The "Easterners" were right, the war would have been shortened. But their strategic grasp of this fact in London was not enough. The Asquith government's failure was a failure of Operational Leadership. Without a single centralized campaign plan which assessed the threat, allocated resources, and communicated to the commanders responsible for its execution the campaign's role as a critical component of a national strategy, it could only have failed. Only a system which formally communicates national strategic objectives to warfighting Commanders-in-Chief can hope to prevent another Dardanelles.

Responsibilities of Authority. Today we accept the absolute rule of civilian authority over military commanders as an unassailable principle. We are smugly safe, but our neighbors, allies and trading partners may not be, for one does not have to look far in today's world to find the danger of a strong military and a weak executive. Truman fired MacArthur, but Asquith could not face down Kitchener. When Fisher finally quit changing his mind on the Dardanelles and

decided that he must resign to protest it, the Asquith government was forced into a coalition and was saved from complete collapse by agreeing to the opposition's demand for Churchill's head. Leadership must come from a position of legitimate strength. Lincoln relieved McClellan because the general feared he would lose his army if he used it. Churchill would have relieved Fisher, Carden, De Robeck and others on the Admiralty staff, but was prevented by the political fallout which would have resulted. Ironically Churchill understood the situation perfectly; he wrote:

"The distinction between politics and strategy diminishes as the point of view is raised. At the summit true politics and strategy are one."<sup>41</sup>

1. William Manchester, The Last Lion, Winston Spencer Churchill, Visions of Glory, 1874-1932. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), pg. 15.
2. Manchester, pg. 493.
3. Manchester, pp. 507-508.
4. The RT.HON. Winston S. Churchill, C.H., The World Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), pp 3-4.
5. The Joint Military Operations Department Syllabus/Study guide for Joint Maritime Operations 1993-1994. (Newport: Naval War College, 1993), pp 12-13.
6. Churchill, pg. 30. Italics mine.
7. Manchester, pg, 527. Quote from Robert Rhodes James.
8. Trumbull Higgins, Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles, A Dialogue in Ends and Means. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963) pp. 63-64.

9. Higgins, pg. 63.
10. LTGEN Sir Gerald Ellison, K.C.B, K.C.M.G., The Perils of Amateur Strategy. As Exemplified by the Attack on the Dardanelles Fortress in 1915. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. LTD., 1926), pg. 35.
11. Manchester, pg. 522.
12. Manchester, pg. 522.
13. Jeffery D. Wallin, By Ships Alone: Churchill and the Dardanelles. (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1981) pp. 13-14.
14. Wallin, pg. 44.
15. Higgins, pg. 64.
16. Higgins, pg. 93.
17. Manchester, pg. 515.
18. Manchester, pg. 502.
19. Manchester, pg 505.
20. Alan Moorhead, Gallipoli. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) pg. 46.
21. Ellison, pp 46-47.
22. Manchester, pg. 489.
23. Manchester, pp. 521-522.
24. Higgins, pg. 66.
25. Higgins, pg. 67.
26. Churchill, pg. 85.
27. Wallin, pg. 53.
28. Churchill, pg. 90. *Italics mine.*
29. Churchill, pg. 104,
30. Manchester, pg. 529.
31. Churchill, pg. 182.
32. Manchester, pp. 529-530.
33. Manchester, pg. 530.

34. Manchester, pg. 531.
35. Manchester, pg. 531. *Italics mine.*
36. Churchill, pg. 194.
37. Manchester, pg. 536.
38. Manchester, pg. 536.
39. Churchill, pp 234-235.
40. Manchester, pg. 542.
41. Wallin, pg. 2.

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