Admiral Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa
A Study in Command and Leadership

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All his earlier career had led up to those few seconds of swift decision on the bridge of the Iron Duke at 6.14pm on 31 May 1916, when against all handicaps he seized the advantage over Scheer. That was his greatest moment.

A. Temple Patterson[2]

INTRODUCTION

At 1814h on 31 May 1916, two great fleets sped towards each other in the North Sea. The fleets were only 6 miles apart, and closing at a combined rate of 28 knots[3]. Admiral John Jellicoe, in command of the British Grand Fleet, held the fate of the British Empire in his hands. A significant defeat by Admiral Scheer, commander of the German High Seas Fleet, would have resulted in command of the seas passing to the Central Powers. Great Britain would have been exposed to blockade, bombardment, raids and invasion. As the fleets converged towards the largest surface naval engagement in history, Jellicoe faced possibly the most critical tactical decision faced by any Royal Naval (RN) commander in history – how to deploy his battleships from their cruising formation into a line of battle.

Jellicoe was selected as the subject of this essay out of a desire to investigate further the controversy surrounding his handling of the Grand Fleet at Jutland, and the criticism that followed his failure to inflict an overwhelming defeat on the High Seas Fleet. Jellicoe also holds a personal interest for the author, due to his subsequent service as Governor General of the author's nation.

This essay will assess the competence and leadership of Admiral Jellicoe as an operational commander. In order to achieve this, the meaning of competence in command will be discussed and defined. Jellicoe's competence in command will be assessed against two key criteria; the ability to make good decisions in a timely fashion, and the ability to select the appropriate degree of command centralisation.

Due to the interrelated nature of leadership and command, Jellicoe's leadership style will then be analysed. Three theoretical models of leadership will be used; trait theory, the Vroom-Jago model of leadership, and a more traditional model of leadership proposed by Drucker and Schermerhorn. Lessons will then be drawn from this analysis about the utility of each of the models used.

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1 LCDR Chessum completed the inaugural Australian Command and Staff College course at the ADC in 2001. This essay was written for the Command, Leadership and Management Module of the course.

2 Patterson, A.T., *Jellicoe,* Macmillan & Co Ltd, London, 1969, p253

3 Not forty as is commonly stated – the two fleets were not heading directly for each other.

BACKGROUND

Jellicoe entered the First World War with as distinguished a record as could be expected of an officer from a generation denied action at sea. He distinguished himself ashore in the Egyptian war of 1882, and again during the Boxer Rebellion.[4] He was identified as having potential for service at the highest levels early in his career, and his postings alternated between service on flagships, and service in the Admiralty, as he was groomed for his destiny.

Jellicoe distinguished himself as an operational commander in major pre-war exercises in 1912 and 1913, and his performance in these two exercises established his reputation as the most effective fleet commander of his time. He assumed command of the Grand Fleet immediately upon the outbreak of war, and retained this position until late 1916, when he was promoted to First Sea Lord where his energies were required to combat the submarine peril.

Opinions on Jellicoe's competence invariably focus on his performance as Fleet Commander at the Battle of Jutland, which was his one clear opportunity to demonstrate his skill as an operational commander. The controversy created by disappointment at the results of this battle led to criticism of Jellicoe's performance by a number of contemporary commentators, including Vice-Admiral Beatty, commander of the Battlecruiser Fleet (BCF). Beatty was convinced that he had been let down by Jellicoe, and never wavered from the belief that Jellicoe had thrown away a tremendous opportunity.[5] The Jutland controversy continued for a decade after the war, with commentators being split into "Beatty" and "Jellicoe" camps. With the official publication of the Record of the Battle of Jutland in 1927, however, there was finally enough information available for an objective evaluation of the battle.[6] Commentaries written after the availability of this information have almost universally endorsed Jellicoe's handling of the Grand Fleet.

COMPETENCE IN COMMAND

Competent is defined as being 'fitting, suitable, or sufficient for the purpose.'[7] This definition implies a standard of adequacy, rather than excellence, however the level of performance necessary to be deemed competent depends upon the prevailing context. For an operational level commander, who had been trained and groomed to fulfil his role over a period of several decades, it would be reasonable to expect an extremely high standard of performance.

Command is defined variously as either a noun (the authority of a commander) or a verb (the act of commanding subordinates).[8] The Australian Defence Force (ADF) uses the noun form of definition when it defines command as:

> 'The authority which a commander in the Military Service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority

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4 Gordon, A., *The Rules of the Game – Jutland and British Naval Command,* John Murray, London, 1996, p17

5 ibid, p509

6 Bennett, G., *Naval Battles of the First World War,* Batsford, London, 1968, p261

7 The Macquarie Concise Dictionary, 2nd ed, 1988, p187

8 ibid, p182

> and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organising, directing, coordinating and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel.'[9]

While this definition of command provides a detailed breakdown of the authority and responsibility held by military commanders, it essentially makes command an attribute of the structure in which a commander operates. As one of the objectives of this essay is to assess the "competence in command" of an operational level commander, it is considered more appropriate to interpret command as a verb as applied by Van Creveld.[10] The United States Navy definition of command: 'the authoritative act of making decisions and ordering action'[11] will therefore be applied throughout this essay.

This essay assesses competence in command in two dimensions – decision making, and selection of command approach. Competence in command will be defined in each of these dimensions, and Jellicoe's command will be assessed in each dimension with respect to the ultimate test of his operational career; the Battle of Jutland.

Patterson asserted that making final decisions 'was the real test of aptitude for command in war,'[12] and it is considered that the ability to make good decisions in a timely fashion is the first and foremost criterion when assessing competence in command. Three controversial decisions taken by Jellicoe during his tenure in command of the Grand Fleet will therefore be analysed to see whether Jellicoe's decision-making ability was adequate for a commander with his responsibility and experience.

The Queen Elizabeth class battleships, which joined the fleet in 1915-1916, were the fastest and most powerful battleships of their day. Beatty, in command of the BCF, wanted them to be employed with the BCF at Rosyth, rather than with the main body of the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow. Jellicoe opposed this proposal on two grounds. Firstly, although the Queen Elizabeth class battleships were faster than other battleships, they weren't fast enough to catch the German battlecruisers should the opposing battlecruiser forces meet[13]. Secondly, should the BCF meet the full strength of the German High Seas Fleet, then the five Queen Elizabeth class battleships would not be strong enough to save the BCF, but would hamper its escape by slowing the entire BCF.[14] The Admiralty endorsed Jellicoe's views on this matter, and the Queen Elizabeth class battleships joined the Grand Fleet as the Fifth Battle Squadron. Ironically, this squadron was temporarily detached from the Grand Fleet to reinforce the BCF

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9 Commonwealth of Australia, *ADFP 101*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2000, Glossary p C-10

10 Van Creveld, M., *Command in War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p1

11 Department of the Navy, *Naval Doctrine Publication 6: Naval Command and Control*, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington DC, 1995, p2

12 Patterson, op cit, p146

13 The RN battlecruisers assigned to the Grand Fleet were concentrated in the BCF, under Beatty, which was based at a different location from the remainder of the Grand Fleet, and tended to operate as an independent force. The German battlecruisers were included in First Scouting Group, which also undertook many independent operations separate from the remainder of the High Seas Fleet. Even when the entire Grand Fleet or High Seas Fleet went to sea, the battlecruiser forces tended to be deployed well in advance of the remainder of the fleet. There was therefore a realistic prospect of the opposing battlecruiser forces meeting without the battleships being present, and this did in fact occur on two occasions during the First World War (the Battle of Dogger Bank and the preliminary action to the Battle of Jutland)

14 Gordon, op cit, p45

ten days prior to the Battle of Jutland.[15] During that battle, both of Jellicoe's predictions came true. The Fifth Battle Squadron played very little part in the battlecruiser action during the run to the south, and then came very close to being annihilated during the run to the north when it had insufficient speed to escape the main body of the High Seas Fleet.

As Jellicoe steamed south to meet the High Seas Fleet a critical decision to be taken was how to deploy his battleships from its sailing formation of six parallel lines, into the battle formation of a single line ahead. Jellicoe was hampered by very poor intelligence. Although the BCF had been in action with the main body of the High Seas Fleet for several hours, and was leading the German battle line into a trap being set by Jellicoe, the BCF failed to provide accurate or timely reports. In a pressure situation, with little time to ponder the alternatives, Jellicoe made the decision to deploy his fleet on the port column.[16] This manoeuvre enabled the Grand Fleet to successfully "cross the T" of the High Seas Fleet, placed the Grand Fleet between the High Seas Fleet and its base, and placed the Grand Fleet into a position where it had superior visibility to the High Seas Fleet.[17] As a result of this manoeuvre the leading German battleships were heavily hit, and the High Seas Fleet forced to retreat.

Jellicoe's most likely alternative would have been to deploy on the starboard column, which would have enabled the Grand Fleet to deploy closer to the High Seas Fleet. This manoeuvre would, however, have placed Jellicoe's weakest battleships in the forefront of the battle[18], where their inferior armour could have proved to be a liability, and would have masked the fire of many battleships as the leading battleships passed between them and the enemy. Many years later Churchill proposed a further alternative option – that of deploying on the centre column.[19] This would have been a complex manoeuvre that was not included in the Grand Fleet Battle Orders (GFBOs) and had not been rehearsed by the Grand Fleet. To attempt such a manoeuvre when action with the High Seas Fleet was imminent would have been foolhardy, and would have led to confusion at the worst possible time. With the benefit of hind-sight it is clear that the deployment option chosen by Jellicoe was not only correct, but placed his battle-fleet into a position where it decisively beat the High Seas Fleet during the short action between the battleships. The greatest British Naval Officer of the Second World War, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham, is quoted as saying 'Had I been in command of the Grand Fleet at Jutland, I hope I would have been given the good sense to make the same deployment.'[20]

The final key decision to be analysed in this essay was that to turn away from the High Seas Fleet at 1915, which has been called 'the most hotly debated incident of the entire

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15 This occurred because of the need to detach three BCF battlecruisers to Scapa Flow for gunnery practice. The Fifth Battle Squadron was therefore attached to the BCF for a short period to maintain the strength of the BCF should it be required to act during the absence of the three battlecruisers.

16 Deploying on the port column means that the leading ships of each column (except the leading ship of the port column) turn 90 degrees to port, with the following ships in each column following in the tracks of the ship in front of them. When the leading ships of each column reach the position where the leading ship of the port column was at the time that the order was given, they turn 90 degrees to starboard, following the last ship from the previous column. The end result is a single line of ships led by the ship that originally led the port column.

17 Patterson, op cit, p119

18 The First Battle Squadron, consisting of the oldest and smallest battleships in the Grand Fleet, was deployed in the two starboard columns.

19 Churchill, W., *The World Crisis 1911-1918,* London, 1929, pp1046-1047

20 Patterson, op cit, p120

Jutland action.'[21] At this time, the High Seas Fleet, which was being severely battered by the concentrated fire of the Grand Fleet battleships, performed a *Gefechtskehrtwendung*[22] to extricate itself from a situation which was rapidly becoming untenable. To cover his withdrawal, Scheer ordered his destroyers to conduct a mass torpedo attack on the Grand Fleet. On observing the torpedo attack, Jellicoe chose to turn the ships in his battle line away from the enemy. His ships therefore presented a smaller target to the incoming torpedoes, the distance the torpedoes had to travel before they reached the battle line was increased ensuring that many of the torpedoes exhausted their fuel before they reached the line, and the relative speed difference between the torpedoes and their targets was reduced[23], making it easier for the battleships to manoeuvre to avoid the torpedo tracks. Jellicoe's manoeuvre was successful in view of the fact that all of the torpedoes missed his battleships.

As a result of this turn-away, however, the High Seas Fleet successfully withdrew from the action, and escaped during the night. Jellicoe's decision to turn-away has therefore been the subject of considerable criticism and debate. Jellicoe's critics have claimed that had he turned towards the enemy, and presented the bows of his battleships to the torpedoes instead of the sterns, this manoeuvre would have been just as effective in reducing the target size presented to the torpedoes.

The danger posed by ship-launched torpedoes was very real. RN battleships of this era were particularly vulnerable to underwater damage, and any battleships hit by torpedoes would be unlikely to have been able to remain in the action.[24] Jellicoe had calculated that the High Seas Fleet destroyers would be capable of firing some 440 torpedoes, although many of these vessels had already fired some or all of their torpedoes, and others were unable to get into a firing position. The threat of German torpedoes was also magnified by faulty intelligence provided to Jellicoe shortly before the battle, which had led him to expect that their approach would not be visible.[25] In fact German torpedoes showed a more visible track than British torpedoes, but Jellicoe had no way of knowing this prior to his decision. The assertion that turning towards the enemy rather than turning away would have been just as effective is incorrect. Turning towards the torpedoes would have reduced the distance individual torpedoes would have had to run before reaching their targets, thereby increasing the proportion that did so. Turning towards the torpedoes would also have increased the relative closing rate, making it more difficult for the RN battleships to manoeuvre to avoid torpedo tracks.

The final assessment as to whether Jellicoe should have turned towards, or away from the torpedoes must be based on the possible outcomes of each alternative. By turning away, Jellicoe ensured that the Grand Fleet remained intact as the dominant naval force in the world. This ensured Britain's continued naval supremacy, the ability to maintain a distant blockade on Germany, and the security of the British Isles. Had he adopted the more aggressive

21 Marder, A.J., *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol iii, London, 1966, p116

22 Literally a battle-turn-away-together. All ships in the line perform a 180-degree turn so that the fleet reverses course.

23 The relative speed was reduced because the torpedoes and their targets were now travelling in the same direction.

24 Prior to the battle this had been demonstrated by the loss of the battleship Audacious to a single mine on 27 October 1914. The only RN battleship torpedoed during the battle, Marlborough did in fact withdraw from the battle, while World War II experience with unmodernised RN battleships built before Jutland confirmed the poor underwater protection of these ships. (Royal Oak and Barham sunk by submarine attack, and Resolution and Ramillies severely disabled by single torpedo hits off Dakar and Diego Garcia respectively)

25 Patterson, op cit, p124

approach of turning towards the torpedoes, he might have achieved the overwhelming victory expected of him by the British public. Such a victory would, however, have had little impact on the outcome of the war. The High Seas Fleet was relatively benign in grand-strategic terms, as its destruction would only have ensured a command of the seas that Britain was already able to exercise. An aggressive turn towards the enemy might also have resulted in the Grand Fleet suffering significant losses. Unlike Nelson[26], Jellicoe had under his command virtually the entire naval strength of the British Empire.[27] Significant losses to the Grand Fleet would have resulted in Britain's loss of sea command, and in all probability led to the defeat of Britain. The dire consequences of such an outcome therefore vastly outweighed the marginal gains that would have accrued from a more decisive victory. Till wrote that 'in some geo-strategic circumstances the maintenance of command might be more important that the defeat of the enemy's main fleet.'[28] This situation surely applied at Jutland, and Jellicoe's reluctance to risk his fleet was therefore warranted.

Another aspect of competence in command to be examined in this essay is whether the degree of command centralisation employed by Jellicoe as an operational commander was appropriate to his situation. Van Creveld's classic study on command in war concluded categorically that decentralised command systems were superior to centralised command systems[29], and this philosophy has been adopted by the ADF, whose draft philosophy of command emphasises the need to decentralise command.[30] Subsequent research has challenged the superiority of decentralised command systems. The US Defense Communications Agency (DCA) has proposed a spectrum of command approaches, with varying degrees of directive specificity, ranging from a control-free mission-specific approach, as exemplified by the German army in World War Two, to a cyclic order-specific approach as exemplified by the modern Chinese army.[31] In contrast to Van Creveld, this study concluded that 'the variety of command arrangements adopted by successful military systems over time and space should make it clear that there is no single "correct" approach. Rather, there are alternative approaches that are better and worse in different circumstances.'[32] As selection of the command approach to be adopted in any particular situation is a key decision to be made by any commander, the propriety of this selection is therefore another key area for assessing competence in command.

The ships of the Grand Fleet were divided into squadrons and flotillas[33], each with a commander who exercised tactical control over his subordinate vessels. Jellicoe's command model for the Grand Fleet was embodied in the GFBOs, an elaborate and detailed document that attempted to provide pre-arranged responses to all contingencies anticipated during battle. The GFBOs gave subordinate commanders detailed guidance as to what they should be doing

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26 At Trafalgar, Nelson only had 27 of the RN's 81 ships-of-the-line. Had he been defeated, the RN would still have had sufficient strength to defend Britain against invasion.

27 Bennett, op cit, p256

28 Till, G., *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age,* 2nd ed, Macmillan Press, London, 1984, p133

29 Van Creveld, op cit, p274

30 Commonwealth of Australia, *The Australian Defence Force Philosophy of Command - Draft Version 1 dated 20 September 2000*, Department of Defence, Canberra

31 Alberts, D.S. & Hayes, R.S., *Command Arrangements for Peace Operations,* Institute for National Strategic Studies, http://www.ndu.ect/inss/books/capo/altern.html

32 ibid

33 Battleships and most cruisers were organised in battle and cruiser squadrons respectively. Destroyers were organised in flotillas, with the senior officer of each destroyer flotilla flying his flag in a light cruiser.

in any particular circumstance, but also granted discretionary powers to act independently in appropriate circumstances.[34] During the action at Jutland, Jellicoe acted on the reports provided to him by his subordinates, and gave specific orders for the manoeuvring of the battle line, and more general instructions to the cruiser squadrons and destroyer flotillas.

In spite of a clause in the GFBOs which declares that it will be 'necessary to decentralise command to the fullest possible extent,'[35] when comparing Jellicoe's command arrangements to the spectrum proposed by the DCA, his control of the battleships clearly falls into the classification of "interventionist." This is defined as one in which the central command authority requires continuous and specific reports from subordinates, and attempts to achieve centralised control through detailed directives.[36] Jellicoe's command of the remainder of the fleet, however, fits best into the DCA category of "problem-solving," in which missions and objectives are articulated for subordinates, along with substantial guidance about how the objectives are to be achieved. Although this approach includes detailed direction (ie. the GFBOs), considerable room remains for lower-level initiative and creativity in accomplishing the objectives.[37]

In assessing the propriety of Jellicoe's command arrangements it must be recognised that 'less centralised systems require more creativity and initiative on the part of subordinate commands.'[38] In his battleship squadron commanders, Jellicoe was encumbered with a colourless group of officers whom even Jellicoe described before the battle as "a little shaky."[39] At Jutland they demonstrated an astounding lack of initiative. In spite of the provision for independent action in the GFBOs, there were numerous examples of these officers failing to engage enemy ships when sighted, or even report these sightings to the flagship![40] To adopt a less centralised arrangement for the battleships than that adopted by Jellicoe would therefore have been inappropriate. In contrast, the commanders of the cruiser and destroyer squadrons showed considerably more initiative during the action, which justified the greater freedom given to those units.

LEADERSHIP

Australian Defence Force doctrine emphasises the interrelated nature of the functions of command and leadership. According to ADF doctrine, you cannot be only a good commander or a good leader. While the emphasis placed on each function may vary, both will be needed in all circumstances.[41] A final element in assessing Jellicoe as an operational commander will therefore be an analysis of his leadership, using three documented leadership models; trait

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34 Patterson, op cit, p67

35 GFBOs, Section VI; ADM 186/595

36 Alberts & Hayes, op cit, p5

37 ibid, p4

38 ibid, p7

39 Patterson, op cit, p87

40 During the night action, the RN battleship Malaya sighted a squadron of German battleships, but neither engaged them, nor reported them to Jellicoe. Several other battleships, including Valiant, Barham, Agincourt, Vanguard, Conqueror, Colossus and Belerophon saw gunflashes from the night actions between the High Seas Fleet and RN light forces, but failed to report their sightings. A large number of battleships also sighted the heavily damaged German Battlecruiser Seydlitz feeling her way through the British fleet after becoming detached from the remainder of the High Seas Fleet. Although passing within 4000 yards of RN battleships, she was not engaged, challenged or reported.

41 Commonwealth of Australia, *ADFP 7*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2000, Article 1.13

theory, Vroom-Jago leader-participation theory, and a behavioural model based on work by Drucker.

The earliest leadership theories were based upon the personal qualities of leaders. Popular in the early 1900s, the "Great Man theory" held that leaders and followers were fundamentally different. Leaders were more capable than followers, and possessed a qualitatively different set of personality traits. Considerable research into identifying and classifying these sets of traits have largely been unsuccessful, primarily due to the diversity of successful leaders. 'Some leaders were outgoing and others were more introspective, some were planful and organized [sic] and others were more impulsive and spontaneous, and some were stoic and approachable and others temperamental and distant.'[42] Notwithstanding this diversity, however, followers do appear to admire certain characteristics in leaders. Such a situation may enhance a leader's effectiveness, particularly in respect to key functions such as creating vision.[43] There is no unanimity as to what personality traits should be included in any list of desired leader characteristics. The US Army, for example, lists twenty-three traits of character[44], while Don Clark lists fourteen.[45] For the purposes of this essay, the list of leadership traits to be used for assessing Jellicoe, are those identified by Kirkpatrick and Locke as being important as personal foundations for leadership success: motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, knowledge and flexibility.[46]

Motivation is defined as the 'forces within the individual that account for the level, direction, and persistence of effort expended at work.'[47] For leaders, self-motivation to achieve superior organisational results is a key enabling attribute that is required if they are to motivate and inspire their subordinates. Jellicoe's motivation and work ethic were remarked upon throughout his career. In 1910, the professional journal of the engineering industry commented that Jellicoe 'had the reputation of being a very hard worker, working for 15 or 16 hours a day when necessary.'[48] Of his time as Commander of the Grand Fleet, it was written that 'Jellicoe was so conscientious that he wished the corrections of all troubles to be in his hands.'[49]

Honesty is the quality of being honourable in principles, intentions and actions, while integrity is the soundness of moral principle. Honesty and integrity are essential attributes for leaders if they are to obtain the respect and trust of their subordinates. Perhaps the best tribute to Jellicoe's honesty and integrity was the fact that despite a prolonged period of service in the

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42 Hughes, R., Ginnett, R. & Curphy, G., *Leadership – Enhancing the Lessons of Experience*, Irwin McGraw-Hill, Boston, 1999, pp 198-199.

43 Schermerhorn, J.R., *Management*, 5th Ed, Wiley, New York, 1996, p324

44 The US Army traits of character are bearing, confidence, courage, integrity, decisiveness, justice, endurance, tact, initiative, coolness, maturity, improvement, will, assertiveness, candor, sense of humour, competence, commitment, creativity, self-discipline, humility, flexibility and empathy/compassion. US Army Handbook, 1973, *Military Leadership*

45 Don Clark's list is justice, judgement, dependability, initiative, decisiveness, tact, integrity, enthusiasm, bearing, unselfishness, courage, knowledge, loyalty & endurance. Clark, D. *Leadership – Character and Traits*, http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadchr.html

46 Kirkpatrick, S.A. & Locke, E.A. "Leadership: Do Traits Matter?" *Academy of Management Executive*, vol 5 (May 1991) pp48-60

47 Schermerhorn, op cit, p344

48 Quoted in Bacon, R., *The Life of John Rushworth, Earl Jellicoe,* London, 1936, p167

49 Hough, R., *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p60

public eye, including his time as Governor General of New Zealand, there appears to be no record of any incident which would call into question his personal values.

Self-Confidence is the belief in one's own competence, and the willingness to make decisions. Self-confidence is an essential pre-requisite for leaders to gain the trust and support of their subordinates, as it is reasonable to assert that subordinates will never believe in a superior who doesn't believe in himself. Jellicoe's self-confidence was demonstrated by the calm manner in which he took the critical decisions upon which the fate of an empire rested. For all the criticisms that have been made of Jellicoe's performance at Jutland, his willingness to make timely decisions has never been questioned.

Intelligence is the capacity for understanding, and is an essential pre-requisite for good decision making. Subordinates are more likely to defer to the judgement of superiors who are perceived as being intelligent. One of Jellicoe's greatest attributes was his high level of intellect, and he was described by Fisher[50] in 1904 as 'one of the five best brains in the Navy under the rank of Admiral.'[51] Admiral Simms[52] spoke of his admiration for Jellicoe's intelligence,[53] Gordon speaks of Jellicoe's strength in logical reasoning,[54] and Hough refers to him as having the 'swiftest brain of any serving flag-officer.'[55]

Knowledge is familiarity or conversance with a particular subject. Contextual knowledge is a second pre-requisite for good decision making, and knowledge in the critical success areas of an organisation is essential for a leader to be an effective in that organisation. The critical success areas for a Fleet Commander in World War One were Gunnery and Seamanship. Hough refers to Jellicoe as a 'gunnery officer of unusual distinction,'[56] and a 'superb seaman and handler of ships.'[57] Jellicoe was indeed one of the foremost RN gunnery experts of his day, and he was largely responsible for the installation of director control systems[58] to the main armament of RN capital ships.[59]

Flexibility is defined as susceptibility to modification or adaptation. For leaders, flexibility demonstrates a willingness to learn from experience, and adapt to meet emerging threats or opportunities. Jellicoe demonstrated his flexibility during the Battle of Jutland. The deployment decision described above was complicated by the fact that RN doctrine combined the deployment of the fleet into a single line with the selection of the course the fleet was to take after deployment. The deployment decision therefore had to be delayed until Jellicoe had enough information to determine the battle course, with the result that his battleships were

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50 Admiral Fisher, 1st Baron of Kilverstone, First Sea Lord 1904-1910, 1914-1915

51 Marder, A.J., *Fear God and Dread Nought: the Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, Vol 1*, London, Cape, 1952, p330

52 Rear Admiral William S. Simms, US Naval representative to Britain during First World War.

53 Patterson, op cit, London, p169

54 Gordon, op cit, p473

55 Hough, op cit, p60

56 ibid, p59

57 ibid, p60

58 Prior to 1912, the guns on a ship were controlled separately by turret. A director control system centralised and synchronised the aiming and firing of all the heavy guns of a ship under the control of a single officer stationed aloft in a position where, being above any low-lying smoke and shell-splashes, he had the best view obtainable. This system brought about a major improvement in the gunnery performance in the RN.

59 Patterson, op cit, p50

still manoeuvring for the deployment when the action between the battle-fleets commenced. Jellicoe learned from this experience, and the following morning departed from doctrine by forming the fleet into a single line of battle in anticipation of a short-warning encounter. A further example of Jellicoe's flexibility and responsiveness is shown by the energy that he put into the reorganisation and reformation of the Grand Fleet as a result of the battle. The effect of these reforms was that within twelve months the efficiency of the Grand Fleet had been increased to the point that justified Marder's assessment of Jellicoe: 'His true greatness as a fleet commander lay in his capitalising on the lessons of Jutland.'[60]

Jellicoe therefore possessed all of the traits identified by Kirkpatrick and Locke as being the personal foundations for leadership success. The trait model of leadership predicts that possession of these traits will lead to admiration by followers, and this certainly appears to have been the case with Jellicoe throughout his career. In describing his service as an Executive Officer in 1893, Gordon wrote 'the term "Nelsonic", over-used by naval biographers, is permissible at least in connection with the extraordinary esteem and affection in which the young commander was already held by everyone who knew him.'[61] In 1910 it was commented that 'no controller has been more popular, none has commanded greater respect as an administrator.'[62] Upon taking command of the Grand Fleet in 1914, it was commented that 'all ranks came to love and admire him, just as he had been universally loved and admired throughout his career.'[63] And on his departure from the Grand Fleet on promotion to First Sea Lord, it was said 'it is small exaggeration to compare Jellicoe's departure with Nelson's death 111 years earlier, when hardened sailors who had fought like the devil, sat down and cried like a wench.'[64]

The next model to be used to analyse Jellicoe's leadership style is the Vroom-Jago Leader Participation Theory. This model identifies five different leader decision styles, on a continuum between a highly autocratic style, where the leader makes the decision himself using information available at that time, to a highly democratic style, where a leader shares a problem with their subordinates, and allows them to make a decision. The model then proposes eight diagnostic questions that assess the relative amounts of leader and subordinate participation required in a decision. The final part of the model is a series of decision rules, which transform the answers to the eight diagnostic questions into the appropriate leadership style to be adopted for that decision.[65]

The Vroom-Jago model will be used to assess the decision by Jellicoe to deploy his battleships on the port column. The leadership style he adopted for this decision will be compared with the leadership style suggested as optimal by the Vroom-Jago theory. This decision was chosen for analysis due to the criticality of this decision, and because Jellicoe's actions leading up to this decision have been well documented.

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60 Marder, A.J., From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol iii, London, 1966, p285

61 Gordon, op cit, p299

62 Quoted in Bacon, R. Op cit, p167

63 Hough, op cit, p60

64 Gordon, op cit, p521

65 Daft, R.L., *Management,* 4th Ed, Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth, 1997, pp294-297

As the two battle-fleets approached each other shortly before 1800 on 31 May, Jellicoe was hamstrung by a lack of information on the precise location of the High Seas Fleet. In spite of the fact that the BCF had been in action with the High Seas Fleet for several hours 'the information coming in from VABCF's[66] forces was hopelessly inadequate as a basis for what may be rated the RN's most important tactical decision for more than a century.'[67] Aware that the deployment decision was rapidly approaching, Jellicoe sought the information he needed, signalling Beatty 'where is enemy's battle-fleet'[68] as soon as the BCF came within visual signalling range. At this time he also took ranges on ships on various bearings so that he could get an accurate assessment of visibility in all directions – information which subsequently enabled him to manoeuvre his fleet into a position where it had a significant light advantage over the High Seas Fleet.[69] It was not until 1814 that he finally received a report of the location of the enemy battle-fleet, which gave him insufficient time to fully deploy his ships before contact could be expected.[70] Jellicoe's Flag Captain described the final decision.[71] "He looked in silence at the magnetic compass for about 20 seconds. ... He was as cool and unmoved as ever. Then he looked up and broke the silence with the order to ... the Fleet Signal Officer."[72]

Applying the model's diagnostic questions to this decision gives the following answers. The quality requirements of this decision were high, due to the criticality of placing the Grand Fleet into the best possible position *vis-a-vis* the High Seas Fleet. Commitment requirement was high, as it was essential that Jellicoe's subordinates committed themselves to implementing his decision. Leader information was low, as Jellicoe did not have all the information desirable in making the decision. Problem structure was high, as there were a relatively small number of clearly defined alternatives from which Jellicoe could select a solution. Commitment probability was also high, as it was virtually certain that Jellicoe's subordinates would support whatever Jellicoe decided. It could be argued that goal congruence was low, because many of Jellicoe's supporters saw the goal as being the destruction of the High Seas Fleet, whereas Jellicoe was constrained by the higher goal of preserving the Grand Fleet. Subordinate conflict is difficult to assess for this situation, however this answer is not required for the decision rules in this instance. And finally subordinate information is low, as none of Jellicoe's subordinates had sufficient information to make this decision by themselves.

When the Vroom-Jago decision rules are applied to the answers to the above questions, the model suggests that the appropriate decision style is A11; the leader obtains the necessary information from their subordinates, and then decides on the solution to the problem themself.[73] This matches exactly what Jellicoe did.

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66 Vice-Admiral Battlecruiser Fleet – i.e. Beatty.

67 Gordon, op cit, p421

68 Patterson, op cit, p118

69 During the engagement between the battle-fleets, the German battleships were unable to clearly see the RN battleships, and failed to score a single hit on them.

70 The deployment of the battle-fleet was a manoeuvre that took twenty minutes to complete.

71 An Admiral's Flag Captain, was the Commanding Officer of his Flagship

72 Dreyer, F., *The Sea Heritage,* London, 1955, p146

73 Daft, op cit, p296

The final leadership model that will be used to assess Jellicoe is a behavioural model first proposed by Drucker[74], and later refined by Schermerhorn who called it 'good old-fashioned leadership.'[75] The essence of this model is that there is 'more to leadership than the popular emphasis on personal qualities that offer a sense of personal "dash" or charisma.'[76] Drucker identified three essentials of leadership, and Jellicoe's performance as an operational commander will be assessed against each of these essentials.

Firstly, Drucker asserts that the foundation of effective leadership is defining and establishing a sense of mission, by setting the goals, priorities and standards.[77] It is clear that Jellicoe achieved this during his tenure as Fleet Commander. For twenty-two months Jellicoe managed to maintain the focus of his fleet on the long awaited clash with the High Seas Fleet. Preparedness for this battle remained the principle priority for the fleet throughout this period, and Jellicoe asserted the standards he required by the frequent exercising of the fleet, and by documenting these standards in the GFBOs.

Secondly, Drucker asserts that good leaders accept leadership as a responsibility rather than a rank. Good leaders surround themselves with talented people, and they develop strong and capable subordinates – however they do not blame others when things go wrong.[78] It has been said that Jellicoe 'trusted his own judgement, partly because he had little faith in that of some of his subordinates, and generally speaking both opinions were justified.'[79] Beatty went further when he said that 'Jellicoe is absolutely incapable of selecting good men because he dislikes men of character who have independent views of their own.'[80] An assessment of Jellicoe's squadron commanders at the Battle of Jutland indicates that, despite twenty-two months in command of the Grand Fleet, Jellicoe had failed to either gather or develop strong and capable subordinates; a situation underlined when he was eventually promoted to First Sea Lord, when he felt unable to recommend any of his squadron commanders as being fit to succeed him.[81]

Finally Drucker stresses the importance of earning and keeping the trust of others. Good leaders are trusted by their followers, even if they are not liked. Followers believe that good leaders mean what they say, and that their actions will be consistent with that.[82] Jellicoe certainly met this criterion. As has been discussed above under the trait theory of leadership, Jellicoe was both loved and trusted by his subordinates throughout his career.

In assessing each of the three leadership models used to assess Jellicoe's leadership style, the trait theory appears to provide the closest match. Observations on Jellicoe certainly appear to substantiate the theoretical prediction that a leader who demonstrates the traits identified by Kirkpatrick and Locke will promote admiration amongst their subordinates,

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74 Drucker, P.F. Leadership: More Doing than Dash, *The Wall Street Journal* (January 6, 1988), p.16

75 Schermerhorn, op cit, p333-334

76 ibid

77 ibid

78 ibid

79 Gordon, op cit, p18

80 Letter to Lady Beatty, 13 May 1917, *Beatty Papers*, Vol 1, p430

81 Gordon, op cit, p520

82 Schermerhorn, op cit, p334

thereby making them a more effective leader. The variety of trait "lists" identified in the various iterations of leadership trait theory, however, raise the question of whether the same results would have been achieved had a different list of traits been selected, and if so, how generally applicable this conclusion would be.

The Vroom-Jago leadership participation model appeared to confirm that Jellicoe applied the correct decision-making style when he made his deployment decision. It is considered, however, that this may be coincidental, as the theory did not take into consideration a key aspect of this decision which over-rode many others – time. Regardless of what decision-making style the theory indicated would have been appropriate, there simply wasn't time for any style other than an autocratic one due to the urgency of the situation. The model's failure to incorporate the factor of urgency, which must surely be a key feature of many managerial decisions, raises serious questions as to the utility of this model.

Drucker and Schermerhorn's "good old-fashioned leadership" model identified three essentials of leadership, of which Jellicoe only possessed two. He did not surround himself with talented people, or develop strong and capable subordinates. If the model was correct, then this should have made Jellicoe deficient as a leader. It is a mark of Jellicoe's competence as a commander that he overcame this so-called deficiency by changing his command style. By adopting a high degree of command centralisation, Jellicoe compensated for the weakness of his subordinates, and provided effective leadership for the Grand Fleet.

CONCLUSIONS

Command is the authoritative act of making decisions and ordering action. Competence in command can be measured in two dimensions. First and foremost is the ability to make good decisions in a timely fashion. Second is the ability to select an appropriate degree of command centralisation.

Three critical decisions made by Jellicoe during his tenure as an operational commander were considered in this essay. The first was his decision to employ the fast battleships of the Queen Elizabeth class with the Grand Fleet, rather than the BCF. Jellicoe's rationale for this decision was that the Queen Elizabeth class battleships were too slow to either participate effectively in battlecruiser actions, or escape from the battleships of the High Seas Fleet. Jellicoe's judgement on both of these contentions was subsequently proved correct during the Battle of Jutland.

The second decision analysed was Jellicoe's decision to deploy his battleships on his port column immediately prior to the battleship engagement during the Battle of Jutland. Selecting from a small range of alternatives with very limited information, Jellicoe successfully manoeuvred his fleet into a position where it decisively beat the High Seas Fleet into retreat.

The final decision analysed was Jellicoe's decision to turn away in the face of a massed torpedo attack by the High Seas Fleet destroyer flotillas, rather than turn towards the enemy fleet. This decision saved the Grand Fleet from potentially severe losses, however it effectively enabled the High Seas Fleet to withdraw from the battle, and subsequently escape. The marginal gains that would have been gained from a more decisive victory were more than

balanced by the dire consequences of a decisive defeat, and Jellicoe's reluctance to risk his fleet was therefore warranted.

There is no single correct approach to centralisation of command. Rather, there are alternative approaches that are better or worse in different circumstances. At the Battle of Jutland, Jellicoe employed an interventionist command approach for his battleship squadrons. Given the lack of initiative displayed by his subordinates in those squadrons, this was an appropriate command approach.

The three leadership models applied to Jellicoe confirmed the quality of his leadership style. Jellicoe displayed all of the leadership traits identified by Kirkpatrick and Locke as being the personal foundations for leadership success, and achieved the admiration and loyalty of his supporters that this theory suggested should accrue from these traits. His decision-making style at Jutland matched that which the Vroom-Jago leadership participation theory assessed to be the most effective, however it is considered that this model is rather limited for this form of analysis. And finally, Jellicoe displayed two of the three essentials of leadership identified by Drucker and Schermerhorn, and compensated for the third essential by adopting an appropriate degree of command centralisation.

Jellicoe's performance at the Battle of Jutland demonstrated a high degree of competence in command. His decision making was timely, his judgement sound, and his command approach appropriate, matching the initiative of his subordinates. Jutland was Jellicoe's day. Although denied the emphatic victory he deserved, Jellicoe's strategic victory confirmed Britain's command of the sea in the greatest surface naval engagement ever fought.

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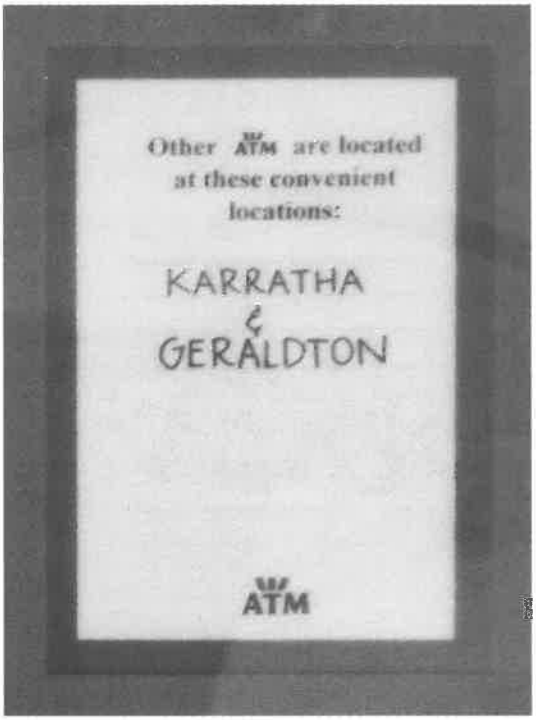

Sign at a Handybank in Exmouth, North West Cape, WA.
*By the **shortest** possible route Karratha is 565 km and Geraldton 848 km!*
Convenient? but ... fortunately – it was open.