

**British Admiralty Control
and
Naval Power in the Indian Ocean
(1793-1815)
(Volume 1 of 2)**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explain how British naval power was sustained in the Indian Ocean during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. To improve efficiency and economy, the Admiralty had to reorganise the management of shore support services, as well as to rationalise the bases available to the navy to meet the enemy it faced. The basic proposal of this thesis is that British naval power was projected overseas by the Admiralty's effective reconciliation of two competing demands, the naval demand for strategic deployment and the domestic demand for reform.

The thesis argues that British naval power in the Indian Ocean was increased by the acquisition of the Cape of Good Hope and Trincomalee and the naval bases built at these locations. The removal of the navy from complete dependence on the East India Company for support services was part of a long term policy of increasing Admiralty control of facilities in the east. In 1793 Bombay was the main naval base but Madras quickly became another hub supporting naval activities in the east. Other locations were considered. Calcutta was used and investigations were made into developing Penang as a navy base before Trincomalee became part of Britain's long-term naval infrastructure. At the Cape a separate naval command was given responsibility for part of the Indian Ocean. Following the capture of Mauritius in 1810 this island was used temporarily as a forward support base.

Admiralty control of the naval support services delivered to the squadrons at the Cape and in the East Indies was dramatically improved by the appointment overseas of resident commissioners from 1809. This resulted from the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Naval Revision, first suggested by the Commissioners on Fees in 1788. Resident commissioners ensured Admiralty instructions and policies were implemented and executed, resulting in improved efficiency and reduced costs.

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Abbreviations

ADM	Admiralty
BL	British Library
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
Commission on Fees	<i>Reports of the Commissioners appointed by an Act 25 Geo. III cap. 19 to enquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites, and Emoluments which are or have been lately received into the several Public Offices 1786-1788</i>
Commission of Enquiry	<i>Reports of the commissioners appointed by act 43 Geo. III. A bill [as amended by the committee] for appointing commissioners to enquire and examine into any irregularities, frauds, and abuses, which are or have been lately practised by persons employed in the several naval departments therein mentioned, and in the business of prize agents; and to report such observations as shall occur to them for preventing such irregularities, frauds, and abuses in future; and for the better conducting and managing the business of the said departments, and of prize agents, 18th December 1801</i>
Commission of Naval Revision	<i>Reports of the Commissioners appointed for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, 15 reports, 1806 to 1809</i>
DRO	Devon Records Office
MM	<i>The Mariner's Mirror</i>
NAS	National Archive of Scotland
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Caird Library
NRS	Naval Records Society
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
POW	Prisoner of War
RMC	Royal Military College of Canada
TNA	The National Archive, Kew, UK
TNDS	<i>Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society</i>
UKHO	United Kingdom Hydrographic Office
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie

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