

Explain the importance of at the war sea to the final outcome of the war



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Both Germany and Britain believed that naval warfare was going to be of utmost importance to the outcome of the war.

The British Navy had been the strongest in the world for many years. Even before the war, there was a frantic naval race in which both sides attempted to out number the other. Both sides realised, however, that the dominance of the seas was going to remain with Britain. It is obvious that the war at sea played a huge part on the war and as the uses for the ships grew the role of the war at the sea increased. The first revolution in Naval warfare was the invention of the dreadnought battleships; thought by many to be the ultimate in fighting machines at the time.

However, the few battles that the dreadnought fought in played a very limited role upon the outcome of the war. The two most famous battles were the Jutland and Dogger Bank. The thinking behind the battle of the Jutland was to lure the British Fleet into a vulnerable position out of the Scapa Flow. Both sides suffered heavy losses and neither side claimed out-and-out victory. For the Germans however there was some short-term benefit.

The lack of a grand fleet in the North Sea and the Baltic led the blockade of the main Russian supply route. This factor may have led to the withdrawal of Russia from the War. The withdrawal of Russia did not have a large an impact on the war as many perceive. The role that Russia had been playing had always been diminishing and the Russians needed major aid from the Allies if they were to play any role on the war whatsoever. In the entire war between Germany and Britain, the battle was ultimately indecisive. The

sinking of the Lusitania was not the sole reason that America entered the war.

This is clear to see by simply observing the timing of the sinking of the Lusitania and the American entrance, a margin of two years. However, the German blockade of trading from America to Britain led the American economy to lessen considerably, this combined with the sinking of the Lusitania gave America good reason to come into the war. However, it was not the deciding factor and so in this way the war at sea played a limited role, nonetheless the German blockades did have further use. The main role of the navy was directed towards preventative and the defensive. Both sides thought that Naval blockades were the answer to winning the war, the German plan was to block neutral merchant ships, providing Britain with supplies, from reaching the major ports of Britain. This was done in two manners, firstly by deploying German ships just outside the port that often used force to stop the merchant ships from entering the port.

Another way of preventing the supply ships from reaching the port was to sink them whilst they were out to sea; this was done by all manner of ships. The blockade system led to many countermeasures being introduced. One example was the laying of mines off the coast, this prevented any German ships to either blockade the port, or bombard the coast. Mines were laid by small, nimble ships. Mines were also placed in other key places, for example, trading routes to Germany. This played a key role in damaging German morale at the end of the war and brought the German imports down to a mere 55% of their pre-war levels.

Furthermore, mines could be used to entrap the enemy ships momentarily. Another counter-measure introduced was patrol ships. These ships fortified the coast against enemy ships. Rationing was only initiated in 1918 by which time it would have been too late if the German Blockade had been employed successively.

Blockades played a large role in the outcome of the war, this is because if a blockade could have been used successively for a long time, then the enemy would be forced to surrender, however, fortunately the countermeasures introduced by Britain were enough to keep itself supplied with enough rations and other necessary supplies. Another use of ships, which was only introduced in 1917, was the convoy system. This involved large, powerful ships escorting smaller ships that were more important i. e., merchant ships, mentioned in the previous paragraph, and public ferries. However, smaller ships would have been used to escort the ferries.

Both sides did not just depend upon merchant ships to supply provisions. The British used Navy ships to supply men and supplies to both the western front and foreign colonies. This was also done by the Germans albeit on a smaller scale. The convoy system was a huge success and many thousands of ships were successfully convoyed. It is therefore acceptable that to say that the British convoy system played an invaluable role in the outcome of the war. So far, ships have only been mentioned in a defensive role but ships did play an offensive role.

The British Navy was used successfully to overrun Germany's overseas colonies. This was important as it provided Britain with an overseas base to

launch offensives from such as the attacks on Turkish-held Palestine from their bases in Egypt. However, on the other hand ships were used to protect overseas colonies. This proved quite useful but in the grand scheme of things not a major role on the war.

Ships were used to bombard the coasts of enemy countries, however this was not very effective and played a minute part in the outcome of the war. Quite obviously different ships played different roles, some more valuable than others did. The huge scale ships such as dreadnoughts only saw action in battles, of which there were few. Smaller, more nimble ships played a larger role, used for the greatly successful convoy system, to lay mines, and to transport men and supplies.

Overall, it is fair to say that the more smaller scale ships such as the destroyers played a larger role than the battleships. However, another kind of ship used was the submarine. The submarine was used for all manner of things, from reconnaissance to destroying ships covertly. However, the role of submarines was limited.

In summate the overall impact that the war at sea was great. Obviously naval efforts were eclipsed by events on the western front. However, without the war at the sea the entire outcome of the war may have been vastly different. As both sides would have had more supplies, the war may have been lengthened. In addition, Russia may have remained in the war but this would have had very little effect.

The war at sea was invaluable particularly for Britain, which being an island, would have suffered greatly without a navy, the blockade system also played

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a large role on all aspects of war. In conclusion, the war at sea played a huge part on the outcome of the war, and we are only able to speculate what the outcome of the war would have been without the war at sea.