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Analysis Considering the Significance of the Use of Naval Blockades During the Napoleonic Wars

During the course of the 18th and 19th centuries the British Navy took an age old method of manipulating and dominating an enemy, the naval blockade, and perfected it. The blockade was going to be used by a generation of admirals, captains, and crews in a way that would cause financial, physical and psychological pain on a large swath of the western world, much of it specifically centered on ensuring that Napoleon and his aggressively expansionist France would pay too dear a price if they tried to move off of the European mainland. The British Navy and its continued use of blockades throughout the 18th and into the 19th centuries showed the development of naval power on a scale that had never been witnessed, with entire fleets essentially set upon European harbors in order to ensure that French, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, and other potential enemy ships could not form a united front against the Royal Navy, nor could they threaten British territory, at least directly. As a tit-for-tat struggle developed between the continent and Britain, this blockade expanded from strictly military in nature and started to include commerce ships as well, initially from belligerents, and finally expanding to any ship that was thought to be doing business with France or one of its subordinates.

The idea of a blockade was nothing new. Used by combatants for millennia in order to block movements and the supplying of enemy militaries, it was perceived of as an attritional strategy using the navy to prevent the movement of supplies into the blockaded place, in this case, an entire continent. It has been used since the beginning of organized warfare as a passive aspect of siege warfare, often, though not necessarily in Britain's case, in conjunction with land based actions.¹ A total blockade though, including commercial interests, was new in the early 19th century as the navy became able to function for longer periods of time at sea and became both large and nimble enough to move quickly on targets as they presented themselves. The idea of long term blockades was difficult to comprehend in the previous era as supplying ships, keeping crews generally healthy, and simply keeping the ships maintained for an extended time imposed extraordinary strains on the Navy.² Since blockades were traditionally used in combination with actions on land, often times in order to siege towns and other strategic locales, the British used newly developed tactics to block off large swaths of the European continent without landing large numbers of troops, at least at first, changing the medieval idea of addressing a specific target with a 'to whom it may concern' attitude that

¹ Andrew Lambert; H. Bicheno. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Online.

² N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 484.

just was not physically possible for previous generations.³ It was argued between belligerents as to the legality of the blockade, but most jurists of the early modern era were of the idea that as long as a nation could effectively control movement of opposing forces then the blockade was a legitimate method of war.⁴ Napoleon would attempt his own blockade, at least by declaration, and this method of using declarations in order to stop trade was generally frowned upon, and eventually banned a generation later by the Declaration of Paris. These ‘paper blockades’ were seen as detrimental to the exchange of goods between neutral nations and belligerents without the imposer having to actually exert the necessary effort to enforce it.⁵

The use of wide ranging blockades by the British during the course of the Napoleonic Wars continued to highlight the tension between belligerent and neutral rights. During the early period of those wars, particularly until 1798, the British declared the French coast from Brest to the Elbe River blockaded. France vigorously protested this action, and retaliated in kind by declaring a blockade of the entire British Isles. Great Britain then expanded its blockade to France, all of her allies, and the French colonies.⁶ Within a few short years Britain had essentially sealed off external access of food, raw goods, and finished products to millions of Europeans and effectively crushed the economies of some of the most powerful countries in existence at the time.

Already an established seafaring nation, with a very strong naval and military tradition, by the height of the Napoleonic Wars the British had, unquestionably, the most powerful navy the world had yet seen, and an impressive 50%+ of the warships in existence by 1809.⁷ This included not only the strongly built British stock of ships of the line and various frigates, cutters, and troop transports, but also an increasing number of trophy ships captured from the French, Dutch, and other supposed naval power houses. It actually became almost a point of pride to often keep captured ships the same name, just to emphasize the point that they were captured vessels. The sheer number of ships available allowed the Admiralty to develop and efficiently support several methods of blockade, using the more standoff ‘open’ method throughout the Mediterranean basin, and a very antagonistic ‘close’ blockade along much of the Atlantic coast. Such a

³ Edward Stanley Roscoe. “The Evolution of Commercial Blockade.” *The North American Review*. p. 346.

⁴ Edward Stanley Roscoe. “The Evolution of Commercial Blockade.” *The North American Review*. p. 351.

⁵ Charles Noble Gregory. “The Law of Blockade.” *The Yale Law Journal*. p. 339-340.

⁶ Michael N. Schmitt. "Aerial Blockades in Historical, Legal, and Practical Perspective." *Journal of Legal Studies United States Air Force Academy*. 21-86. p. 26.

⁷ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 482.

confrontational posture was something not commonly used by other nations previous to this era as the resources involved were substantial, rather cost prohibitive, and a veritable logistical nightmare. Having such a large advantage in numbers and quality of ships allowed the British to effectively implement this technique to great success for almost two decades.

Early on in the war the French fleet's refusal to leave its harbors gave fits to British commanders, such as Admiral Hood, as they now had to settle for floating off of the French coast and play a waiting game. Instead of a glorious, and quick, battle at sea, the British Navy had to instead develop a new technique as to the control of enemy ships, often with minimal or no real guidance from the Admiralty. This led to the highly independent commanders that would rise to prominence in the early years of the 19th century. This independence was reinforced by leaders such as Nelson, among others, who would give stated end objectives of their strategic plans to their subordinates, and reward them if it went well, and take the blame for 'bold failure' if it did not, as long as they were aggressive, took the initiative, and showed skill. Instead of a more traditional, top down style of leadership, having every move scripted, and no questioning allowed, the Royal Navy quickly developed into a dominant force because leaders and men were allowed to use the information in hand to make decisions that fit the battlespace directly in front of them. This idea of an independent command structure also made it more difficult for enemy forces to anticipate what would happen next, as doctrine became more malleable to the situation at hand.⁸

Blockading reached a new level of dominance as Earl St. Vincent's use of the 'close' blockade of Brest and the Channel coast from 1798 into the first decade of the 19th century ensured France could do little but watch from safe harbor as British ships patrolled just outside of gunnery range from any port where French warships laid in anchorage. This 'grab them by the belt buckle' notion was the base of British strategy, successfully keeping the French fleet in port for large segment of the Napoleonic Wars. Admiral Hotham to an extent, and, particularly, Admiral Jervis continued to increase the professionalism and ability of the fleet in conducting these close actions wherever French ships might sail from. Obstructing movement of the French fleet allowed British operations from the Baltic to the East Indies to operate almost unimpeded, save the occasional privateer or aggressive French commander, for years at a time.⁹ The idea of a 'close' blockade was very difficult for the ships and crews taking parts. The lack of movement, more specifically, the difficulty of keeping a sailing ship in one location made the endeavor problematic to maintain, as ships regularly required maintenance at

⁸ Andrew Lambert. *Nelson: Britannia's God of War*. p. 31, 63, 73, 123.

⁹ Andrew Lambert; H. Bichen. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Online.

British docks. It was also obvious to those being blockaded as to the number of ships off of their coast, with a potential of making a move out at a time of less than perfect coverage.¹⁰

In contrast to St. Vincent, Admiral Nelson used an ‘open’ blockade off Toulon and the southern French coast in the Mediterranean, continuing the methods he learned from Admiral Howe, hoping to lure the enemy out for battle. Instead of attempting to physically hold back the French fleet, the Mediterranean squadrons would stand off shore, out of sight from land, and depend instead on spotter frigates, cutters, and sloops to warn of any movements by the fleet out of their harbors.¹¹ He argued that though St. Vincent’s idea of getting in close to shore and keeping close watch on the enemy had its merits, he preferred the offensive action allowed under Hood’s open regime. Nelson also recognized that a close blockade of a port such as Toulon was difficult to impossible due to frequent winter gales and easy observations of an enemy fleet from high cliffs in the area.¹² By leaving a small door open for the French to leave port, he hoped to be able to meet the various squadrons in open waters and ruthlessly attack. This was something that would take two years, and would end his life, but would also ensure a large portion of the French Navy was relegated to the sea bed or into enemy hands.¹³

Since the Mediterranean Fleet did not have the advantage of having the British Isles as a backstop, and were also tasked with multiple duties that the Channel Fleet did not have to necessarily worry about, it was much more difficult to set up the close blockade on the southern European coast. Innumerable harbors, small actors that ebbed and flowed from British allies to French protectorates, in addition to convoy and sea lane protection throughout the inland sea forced the Royal Navy to take a more distant approach. To directly quote Andrew Lambert, “The Royal Navy stopped France from enjoying her conquests, and denied her the opportunity to rebuild her economy. Everywhere there was room to float a ship, the British were to be found, harassing the enemy, and trading with anyone who could pay.”¹⁴

This proved more efficient so far from a home base because the Mediterranean fleet was chronically under-supported and consistently had to send ships throughout a large area for both resupply and other support actions. By keeping the French fleet guessing as to positions and numbers, Nelson was able to mask any inadequacies and for several years kept a numerically more powerful fleet

¹⁰ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 482.

¹¹ Andrew Lambert; H. Bicheno. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Online.

¹² N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 529.

¹³ Andrew Lambert. *Nelson: Britannia’s God of War*. p. 243, 254.

¹⁴ Andrew Lambert. *Nelson: Britannia’s God of War*. p. xxvi, p. 31, 224.

locked down and essentially untrained.¹⁵ Nelson's subordinates such as Troubridge, Ball, Saumarez, and Collingwood ensured that the French and Spanish fleets were trapped inside of their own stations from the Portuguese/Spanish border to the Ottoman coast, albeit under a constant logistical strain that was not even imaginable just a generation earlier.

Staying at sea for years at a time, getting resupplied by cargo ships or the occasional carved off man-of-war was taxing on the men and on the ships, but probably even more taxing on the French as their potentially powerful navy sat and degraded due to lack of maintenance and proficient manpower.¹⁶ Staying shipboard also allowed captains an opportunity to better control their men, as shore leaves, particularly in Naples and Leghorn, also led to an outbreak of several venereal diseases that forced sailors and officers to be sent home a bit earlier than initially planned.¹⁷ Morale was always an issue, as blockade life quickly devolved into a rather boring, repetitive life. Separated from family for literally years at a time, sea voyages became longer, and often with none of the extra pay that would have been tied to successful expeditions, fruitful trading, or the capture of enemy trophies.¹⁸

After Nelson's heart-rending victory at Trafalgar, Napoleon instituted a 'counter-blockade', what soon became known as the 'Continental System', closing all European ports to British trade. This action angered France's allies and quite possibly did more economic damage to the continent than it did to Britain, though from various Letters to the Editor and newspaper articles from the era it was evident that pain was being felt by the British population as well. For a short time Britain made efforts to keep Russia and other continental powers as neutral as possible, even after they formed alliances with France. By blockading the primary enemy, while maintaining trade contact with the enemy's allies, at least for the short term, it was seen as a beneficial method in keeping some of France's allies on the sidelines, physically, if not diplomatically. Britain continued to allow neutral ships to trade with them through blockades as late as 1810.¹⁹ Both the British blockade and the French effort to counter it contributed to wide ranging economic and civil unrest.²⁰

By 1805 the military struggle between England and France had deteriorated into a war of economic reprisal. Each side used blockades in an attempt to starve

¹⁵ Andrew Lambert; H. Bicheno. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Online.

¹⁶ Arthur Herman. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. p. 399.

¹⁷ Andrew Lambert. *Nelson: Britannia's God of War*. p. 67.

¹⁸ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 526.

¹⁹ C. I. Hamilton. "Anglo-French Seapower and the Declaration of Paris." *The International History Review*. p. 167; N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 551.

²⁰ Andrew Lambert; H. Bicheno. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Online.

(both in reality and metaphorically) the other into submission, to varying degrees of success. When the British issued Orders in Council imposing a cordon on the northwest coast of Europe, Napoleon was forced to retaliate with his Continental System, a series of declarations that prohibited British trade with the continent and threatened confiscation of any neutral vessels found trading with England. In the middle of dispute between Britain and France was the then neutral United States. Without a functioning navy after the ignoble defeat of the French fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar, Napoleon was forced to confine his efforts to American vessels in French ports, a very limited and almost insignificant set of goals. Since it was difficult to argue against French sovereignty over their own harbors, the attention of the United States was focused predominantly at British actions that they argued violated international law, not only through the seizure of ships and cargo, but also through the impressment of some of the American crews.²¹

Britain's stranglehold on the French (and allied) coastline forced France's response in an attempt to counterbalance the Royal Navy's highly efficient use of blockades. The French imposition of the "Continental System" was to be nowhere near as effective as the British attempt, but would cause angst. The economic blockade of Britain introduced in 1806 by Napoleon was intended to cripple the British economy and force peace terms in the Napoleonic Wars. The French were able to extend this system to Russia by the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 and to Spain and Portugal the following year, ensuring that virtually the entire European coastline was off limits to British merchants. Almost immediately the blockade included neutral countries and impelled a retaliatory economic blockade by the British against France and its allies.²² By 1810 Swedish King Charles the XIII signed on to Napoleon's idea of blockading trade, primarily due to his nation being pinched between Russia and France.²³ The British Navy expanded its already remarkable blockade, shutting down trade not only directly to or from France and its dependencies, but now between neutral nations and any French allies, generally shutting down any sea going trade along the entire mainland Europe.

At the same time Napoleon was attempting to lock down the European coastline American President Thomas Jefferson requested that Congress approve the Embargo Act, which it did in December 1807. All American ports were closed to export shipping in either United States or foreign vessels, and restrictions were placed on imports from Great Britain. The act was a hardship on American farmers, and quite possibly even more so to the commercial, mercantile, and maritime interests in New England and New York, especially after being strengthened by

²¹ "Embargo Act." *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica. Online.

²² "Continental System." *World Encyclopedia*. : Philip's. Oxford Reference. Online.

²³ *Caledonian Mercury*, "Swedish Proclamation." 12 Apr. 1810. *British Library Newspapers*. pg. 1. Online.

severe enforcement regulations adopted in 1808.²⁴ Though at the time a political backwater and economically underwhelming compared to its European counterparts, the raw goods that the United States supplied to all sides in the European conflict were soon missed. The continued abuse of American ships and crews by all sides would eventually lead to the United States entering into war against Britain in 1812.

French blockades were referred to as 'paper blockades'²⁵ as they did not have the ability to physically enforce them. This idea of claiming a blockade but not actively trying to enforce it were eventually banned through international conventions in 1856. These 'paper blockades' were in direct response to the British Navy's overpowering harassment of French naval movement and international and seagoing intranational trade. Though blockades were employed freely by the British and other nations throughout the 18th century, the question of the proper balance between belligerent and neutral rights continued to dominate the ideas of legality. In great part, this developed from the idea that late 17th century blockades. Examples include blockades of England in 1662 and France in 1672-73 by the Dutch, and of France in 1689 by the English and Dutch. This later action had been considered a "paper blockades," since the blockaded coasts were simply too long for the navies of the era control effectively.²⁶

The French navy had a substantial investment in warships, but weak training regimens, a depleted and angry officer corps, and Napoleon's lack of interest or understanding of naval tactics made it difficult for the navy to confront the British, and even seemed to lock various French squadrons into their home stations for years at a time. It did not help the French cause that, even though when combined with Spanish and other allied ships, the French Navy outnumbered the British, individual French admirals were fearful of confronting the British. This lack of confidence and leadership at the highest levels ensured that what should have been a capable body spent most of the war at anchorage, except for a few commanders in the Indian Ocean, such as Admiral Allemand, and some privateers in the Mediterranean. A side benefit of this, for both belligerents, was that because the ships stayed in port, approximately one third less French sailors were taken as prisoners of war (27,000) than during the American Revolution (42,000), meaning the French did not lose the services of as many men, and the British did not have to house and feed them.²⁷

²⁴ "Embargo Act." *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica. Online.

²⁵ *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military*. : Oxford University Press, 2001. Oxford Reference. Online.

²⁶ Michael N. Schmitt. "Aerial Blockades in Historical, Legal, and Practical Perspective." *Journal of Legal Studies United States Air Force Academy*. p. 26.

²⁷ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 534, 560.

As France implemented their system of blockades against British interests it appeared, at least initially, that Napoleon might very well have been able to negatively impact huge segments of the British economy. Forcing Prussia in 1805, and Russia in 1806, to sign on to boycotts of British merchandise through what was known as the Berlin Decree and the Milan Decree, all ships from either Britain or her colonies were for all intents banned from going to any mainland European ports, particularly in France itself, plus its vassal states of Naples, Spain, and Holland. Napoleon's outlook at this whole situation was a mercantilistic idea that only property, people, and home industry mattered, and that choking the life out of the British economy through the denial of European trade would lead to a quick and efficient end to the war. The size of this 'Continental Blockade' expanded as French troops expanded dominance over more territory. By 1810 the entire European Atlantic coastline, from Gibraltar to the Baltic Sea was under French control, supposedly severely limiting shipping.^{28, 29}

The idea of the Continental system being a threat to British interests was true only as long as Napoleon could control the whole of Europe. The Peninsular Campaign, Russia's leaving of the alliance, and the general difficulty of controlling such a widespread and unhappy conquered population made the proper implementation of such a large project difficult at best. Once former allies started turning belligerent and current friends physically or financially unsupportive, there was little chance of the paper blockade doing anything of use for France.³⁰

British economic troubles resulting from Napoleon's blockade led to public complaints by many in the merchant and manufacturing realms. The British economy was set up for a large volume of trade to come from and go to a worldwide expanse of colonies and shipment of goods through British ports, on British ships, to markets that were now off limits. Britain itself did not have the population or money to absorb this trade itself, and very quickly pain was felt at every level of the national economy.³¹ Within months of France enacting of the Berlin Decree and Napoleon's implementation of the Continental System, the British economy started to feel enormous pressures that would eventually come to a head. By 1810 British newspapers were reporting dozens of bankruptcies a week in shore side cities, all at least to some extent tied to the lack of trade with mainland Europe.³²

²⁸ Kevin H. O'Rourke. "War and Welfare: Britain, France, and the United States 1807-14." *Oxford Economic Papers*. p. 8.

²⁹ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 552.

³⁰ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 563.

³¹ "To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle." *Morning Chronicle*, 7 Nov. 1811. *British Library Newspapers*. Online.

³² "Foreign Intelligence." *Examiner*, 23 Dec. 1810. *British Library Newspapers*. Online.

To counteract much of this blockade system used against them, the British responded with a series of ‘Orders in Council’, starting at the end of 1807. The British Navy started to seize neutral shipping if they attempted to sail to French controlled ports without first stopping at a British port. This was done in order to force France’s hand, as it had banned any ships that had visited British ports. This basically caused both an internal and external blockade against the continent and caused the continental economy to approach freefall rather quickly.³³ Napoleon’s idea of having a self-sustaining, continental economy, resistant to the British Navy, was a calculated risk taken on the idea that the British would sue for peace first, a way he could “conquer the sea by the land”.³⁴ The economic blockade would become the “principal weapon in the national armory.”³⁵

Not surprisingly, neutrals stridently protested both the ‘British Orders in Council’, and the France’s severe limitations of neutral cargoes. Specifically, the United States expressed strong opposition, and the interference by both sides with American commerce and shipping ensured the eventual hostilities with both the French, though on a lesser scale, and with the British and the War of 1812. The uncertainty concerning where to draw the line between valid belligerent procedures and the right of neutrals to self-determined trade regimens was even reflected in contemporary English court cases that invalidated certain seizures for breach of the blockade, though slow and expensive court proceedings ensured neutrals rarely ever got true satisfaction.³⁶ The British Navy was forced to set up an imperfect blockade of the American coast that still managed to strangle US commerce, bankrupting many, including Thomas Jefferson. Interestingly, it was Jefferson who reversed the policy of accommodation with the British that had permitted American exports to go up significantly from 1794–1801. By rejecting a British offer trade treaty in 1806 and imposing his own ‘continental system’ that had no significant impact on Britain, American exports declined from \$108 million in 1807 to \$22 million in 1808.³⁷

As Britain continued its domination over the seas, imports from outside of Europe to the continent declined between 1807 and 1814 by about half, and exports overseas by French merchants stayed at least a third less than prewar volumes. As

³³ Kevin H. O’Rourke. “War and Welfare: Britain, France, and the United States 1807-14.” *Oxford Economic Papers*. p. 9.

³⁴ Arthur Herman. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. p. 402-403.

³⁵ Andrew Lambert. *Nelson: Britannia’s God of War*. p. 188.

³⁶ Michael N. Schmitt. "Aerial Blockades in Historical, Legal, and Practical Perspective." *Journal of Legal Studies United States Air Force Academy*. p. 26.

³⁷ H. Bicheno. War of 1812. In *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Oxford University Press. Online.

Britain continued to grow in naval abilities and France and its allies regressed, these imbalances continued to rapidly increase.³⁸

The original Order in Council, in 1807, instituted the idea of a ‘cruising blockade’. Instead of ships sitting directly outside of a port, denying access, the Royal Navy would now aggressively pursue ships out at sea and lock down European trade by basically not allowing ships to even approach the coast. Instead of difficult-to-maintain close blockading methods, or the standoffish, mentally taxing open technique, British ships and crews would work more as designed and actively pursue ships in the open ocean.³⁹

By 1814 the British Navy had over 700 ships, including 150 ships of the line, 130,000 sailors and officers, with an additional half million men in the Army. It paid Austria, Russia, and Prussia millions of pounds a year, and managed to fight on two different continents. Britain’s economy was still huge, and the military still immensely powerful, due to the simple fact that France’s use of the blockade was never able to really have any real effect on the British economy. For the duration of the war Britain was able to make money and pay for its powerful Navy without entering a major crisis of confidence.⁴⁰ Instead of avoiding trade with the European mainland, especially outside of France, Britain was able to efficiently send goods, at very high prices, to ports throughout the continent. Unofficially at first, then with government sanction, and finally with government license, Britain encouraged merchants to break the French blockade.

Blockade running and smuggling into and out of France by British merchants grew in importance after about 1808. Always in existence, the British started turning a blind eye towards its own nationals taking nonmilitary related goods, particularly foodstuffs and smaller household goods to France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. This allowed for both a level of financial support to commercial sailors in Kent and Sussex,⁴¹ and probably more importantly, to absorb as much specie out of French held territory as possible, further strengthening the British economy and weakening France’s. The economy of France faltered to the point that by 1810, though not officially welcomed, ports along the European coast opened to smugglers and would actively work around customs agents and military

³⁸ Kevin H. O'Rourke. “War and Welfare: Britain, France, and the United States 1807-14.” *Oxford Economic Papers*. p. 14-17.

³⁹ C. I. Hamilton. “Anglo-French Seapower and the Declaration of Paris.” *The International History Review*. p. 168.

⁴⁰ Arthur Herman. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. p. 413.

⁴¹ Gavin Daly. “Napoleon and the 'City of Smugglers', 1810-1814.” *The Historical Journal*. p. 344.

units in order to make transfers as efficient as possible, and eventually ensured a very limited number of trade licenses were allowed.⁴²

Illicit trade on both sides was evident from almost the beginning of the blockades. In 1809 a bad harvest in Britain forced the British to import grains from the continent. Denmark, a French ally, was forced to pay for their own ships to deliver grain to their colony in Norway with timber to be used by the very navy blockading them. False documentation, repainting normal crates as 'captured' products, and many other methods were used in order to circumvent the French blockade, almost all to the benefit of British trade.⁴³

A novel idea related to blockade running was the trade that blockading ships themselves conducted. Whether it was ships coming from the British Isles, or small vessels coming from the European mainland, crews would either buy or barter for any number of goods that were not supplied by the Admiralty. Clothing, fresh fruits and vegetables, livestock, alcohol, and any number of other necessities were exchanged, often technically in violation of the orders sailors were obligated to enforce.⁴⁴

Unrelenting and strategic use of blockades, whether from a distance or in close, ensured that the French could never pose a real threat to the British Isles through invasion, something Napoleon wanted for much of his tenure. The blockades also limited trading options, almost ruined the continental economy, and kept a veritable king's ransom of French and Spanish ships of the line tied down in harbors up and down the European coastline. Though it would eventually take troops on the ground facing and beating the *Grande Armee* on the European mainland, it was the British Navy's use of blockades that put the Army in the position to eventually win on the battlefield.

⁴² Gavin Daly. "Napoleon and the 'City of Smugglers', 1810-1814." *The Historical Journal*. p. 335.

⁴³ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 558.

⁴⁴ N.A.M. Rodger. *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. p. 502.