

# FERNANDO OLIVEIRA'S *ART OF WAR AT SEA* (1555)

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## A Pioneering Treatise on Naval Strategy

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**T**he era of maritime discoveries was a period of expansive exploration, one that prompted the emergence of a range of maritime thinking in the sixteenth century, mainly in the countries of southern Europe. Of all the insightful and innovative works written at that time, as shown in table 1, Fernando Oliveira's *Art of War at Sea* has two distinctive features.<sup>1</sup> First, it went beyond the usual operational and tactical perspectives and entered the domain of strategy. While *Art of War at Sea* is certainly a period piece, it is unusual in foreshadowing some aspects of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century naval strategic thought in the works of Alfred Thayer Mahan. Second, as evidenced in table 1, Oliveira's volume was the only one to be published at the time of writing.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, it was the first printed treatise on naval strategy. However, it was written and published in Portuguese and never translated into another language.<sup>3</sup> Therefore,

this article aims at presenting *Art of War at Sea* to English-reading audiences, with a focus on its strategic aspects, thus contributing to the international naval canon.

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### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF OLIVEIRA

Fernando Oliveira was born in the small hamlet of Gestosa, in Portugal, in 1507 and entered a Dominican convent at age ten.<sup>4</sup> He was a disciple of one of Portugal's most important humanist scholars, the noted Dominican André de Resende, who educated him in Scholastic philosophy and

**TABLE 1**  
**MAIN WORKS ON MARITIME SUBJECTS WRITTEN IN SOUTHERN EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY**

Date of Writing	Title	Author (nationality)	Date of Publication
1516–20	<i>Les faiz de la marine et navigaiges</i> (On the Nature of the Fleet and Navigation)	Antoine de Conflans (French)	1842
1530	<i>Quatri partitu en cosmografía práctica, y por otro nombre, Espejo de navegantes</i> (Navigator's Glass)	Alonso de Chaves (Spanish)	1983
1550–54	<i>Della Milizia Marittima</i> (Of the Maritime Militia)	Cristoforo Da Canal (Venetian)	2010 (fourth book was printed in 1930)
1552–54	<i>Arte da Guerra do Mar</i> (Art of War at Sea)	Fernando Oliveira (Portuguese)	1555

theology. Oliveira learned to read and write fluently in Latin and studied the most prominent classical authors. When he was twenty-five, he broke with his order and escaped to Spain, where he continued linguistic studies and may have acquired his interest in shipbuilding.<sup>5</sup>

After returning to Portugal, Oliveira published a grammar of the Portuguese language in 1536. This was his first book and also the first Portuguese grammar ever published.<sup>6</sup> It is not clear when and where Oliveira learned navigation, but it may well have been during this time, as nautical matters were then popular in Portugal.

By 1541, he was again in Spain and embarked from Barcelona on a ship bound to Genoa. Oliveira's ship was captured by the French and taken to Marseille, but he soon went from prisoner to pilot of French galleys in the Mediterranean, because of his navigation knowledge and the high regard afforded to Portuguese pilots. He returned to Portugal in 1543, where he stayed for two years. In June 1545, a twenty-five-ship naval force, headed by the baron de La Garde, called at Lisbon to replenish stores on its way to Le Havre to join the two-hundred-ship armada that planned to invade England during the naval war of 1544–46. Oliveira was recruited to serve as a pilot on board the galley of the baron de Saint-Blancard and won his confidence, as well as that of La Garde, by virtue of some very useful suggestions about ship design.<sup>7</sup>

Saint-Blancard's galley was captured after a skirmish between French galleys and an English squadron in May 1546. Oliveira was taken to London, but it seems he was never imprisoned. Most probably, he "was employed as an ambassador in the negotiations over the French galley and its crew" and became well known in the court.<sup>8</sup> Some historians believe that he gained the esteem of Henry VIII,

probably because of his “professional knowledge [as] . . . a pilot” and his “experience in galley construction and warfare, [which were] of immediate interest to Henry at the time.”<sup>9</sup>

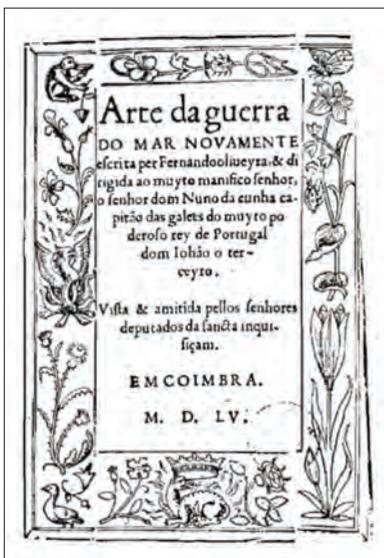
The quickness and apparent ease with which Oliveira gained the respect of La Garde and King Henry VIII are indicative of his profound erudition and culture, qualities that made him valuable to those powerful men. Oliveira stayed in England for almost a year during a period preceding the rise of the country to mastery of the seas under Queen Elizabeth I. By then, Oliveira was certainly well aware that sea power was crucial for the integrity of the Portuguese empire. Nonetheless, during his stay in England he became acquainted with the English merchant classes (which were engaged in extending their overseas trade), consolidating his beliefs on the importance of sea power for the livelihood of maritime nations.

In March 1547, shortly after the death of Henry VIII, he was sent back to Lisbon with a letter to the Portuguese king, Dom João III. In Portugal, Oliveira did not refrain from praising some of the ideas of the arch-heretic King Henry VIII, prompting the attention of the Inquisition. Oliveira was interrogated at length and condemned on charges of heretical practices. He remained in jail until 1550 and under monastery arrest for another year.

In 1552 he joined, as chaplain, a Portuguese squadron composed of five small warships sent to northern Africa to help an allied Moroccan monarch, the king of Velez. The expedition failed, and Oliveira was taken prisoner for a short time by the Turks. He recounted (specifically, in chapter 12 of Part II) this failed campaign in *Art of War at Sea*, which he produced from 1552 to 1554 upon his

return to Lisbon. The book was published in 1555, and in it Oliveira criticized some maritime policies of the Portuguese administration and described chapters of Portuguese history in a manner not aligned with the official version. Therefore, he was imprisoned again by the Inquisition four months after the book’s dissemination; he remained in jail for two more years.

Little is known about Oliveira’s activities from 1557 until his death in about 1585, except that he continued to parlay his vast experience at sea to produce seminal treatises on nautical and naval warfare issues. As British professor Harold Livermore has written, Oliveira was “a passionate character which had imbibed a strain of Dominican zeal . . . and combined it with a rhetorician’s love of words and a marked taste for erudition: these he applied to the meticulous study of seamanship.”<sup>10</sup>



Cover of the original edition of *Art of War at Sea*

Around 1570 he wrote the encyclopedic *Ars Nautica* (Art of Navigation) in Latin, but it was never published. The incomplete manuscript is preserved today in the Leiden University Library in the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> It has three parts: one about navigation, cartography, and meteorology; another about naval construction; and a third addressing broad naval logistical and administrative matters. According to the Portuguese maritime historian Francisco Contente Domingues, the second part was the first theoretical text on naval construction written by a Portuguese author and was unparalleled throughout Europe, with its extensive array of themes and penetrating analysis and explanations.<sup>12</sup>

*Art of Navigation* was followed by a companion work on naval construction, written in Portuguese and entitled *Livro da Fábrica das Naus* (Book on the Building of Ships). This piece dealt with the same subjects as the second part of *Art of Navigation*, but it was more than a translation from Latin to Portuguese of the earlier treatise, detailing and updating some of its subjects. The book was originally written around 1580 but was only published more than three centuries later in 1898.<sup>13</sup> The manuscript of this treatise is in the National Library of Portugal, in Lisbon.<sup>14</sup> Probably around 1581, Oliveira wrote a *History of Portugal*, the manuscript of which belongs to the National Library of France, in Paris.<sup>15</sup>

Oliveira, then, was a clergyman, a sailor, a pilot, a diplomat, a soldier, a philologist, a historian, a naval construction theoretician, and a naval strategist. He was in fact a true polymath, a man who mastered various fields of knowledge and pioneered by writing an original treatise on naval strategy, *Art of War at Sea*.

### **ART OF WAR AT SEA**

*Art of War at Sea* is organized into one prologue and two parts, each containing fifteen chapters. The first part, “Intention and Preparation for War at Sea,” is dedicated largely to broad political and strategic issues, including a reflection on the nature of war in its ethical, ontological, and moral dimensions. The second part, “Of Armed Fleets & Maritime Battles & Stratagems,” covers nautical matters and naval tactics. Table 2 lists all the book’s chapters.

This table of contents shows the comprehensiveness of the volume through a wide range of subjects, including naval construction, ship commissioning, navigation, seamanship, meteorology, oceanography, logistics, recruitment, training, education, command skills, maritime ceremonial, and intelligence. To illustrate his ideas, Oliveira employed warfare examples from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as from the discoveries era, with an emphasis on Portuguese history. Moreover, he recounted personal experiences, such as the capture of his galley by the English in 1546 and the failed expedition to Velez in 1552. Oliveira argues that the principal causes for those defeats were deficient leadership in the former episode and lack of organization, discipline, and training in the latter.

**TABLE 2**  
**CHAPTERS OF *ART OF WAR AT SEA***

<b>Part I: Intention and Preparation for War at Sea</b>	
Chap. 1	That It Is Necessary to Make War
Chap. 2	Of Who Can Make War
Chap. 3	That War at Sea Is Necessary
Chap. 4	Which War Is Just
Chap. 5	Of the Intention and Conduct of War
Chap. 6	Of the Admiral's Service
Chap. 7	Of Arsenals and Their Provisioning
Chap. 8	Of Wood for Ships
Chap. 9	Of When to Cut Wood
Chap. 10	Of Warehouses and Their Provisioning
Chap. 11	Of Victuals
Chap. 12	Of Sailors
Chap. 13	Of Captains of the Sea and of Their Power
Chap. 14	Of How Soldiers Should Be Selected and Recruited
Chap. 15	Of Soldiers' Training
<b>Part II: Of Armed Fleets &amp; Maritime Battles &amp; Stratagems</b>	
Chap. 1	Of Fleets' Ships
Chap. 2	Of Ships' Crews
Chap. 3	Of Provisioning of Supplies, Munitions, and Rigging
Chap. 4	Of When to Set Sail and of Weather Changes
Chap. 5	Of Storm Signs
Chap. 6	Of Winds, Their Regions and Names
Chap. 7	Some Warnings Useful for Sailing
Chap. 8	Of Tides, Currents, and Streams
Chap. 9	Of How Armadas Set Sail
Chap. 10	Of Sea Battles and Some Needed Stratagems
Chap. 11	Of the Place to Engage in Combat
Chap. 12	Of How the Ships That Went with the King of Velez Were Lost
Chap. 13	Of Rules of War at Sea
Chap. 14	Of Some General Rules of War
Chap. 15	Of the Work's Conclusion

Therefore, the book emphasizes the importance of those elements for success in naval warfare.

### ***Influences in Art of War at Sea***

*Art of War at Sea* was inspired by Oliveira's own experience, having spent long periods under way in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic aboard Portuguese and French ships, and also having become acquainted and, in some cases, even working with Spanish, Italian, and English sailors and tradesmen, as well as with Moors.

In addition, Oliveira was a man of his time and therefore influenced by the Renaissance, a movement characterized by humanism, consisting of the rediscovery, study, and imitation of the philosophy, art, history, and literature from ancient Greece and Rome. Many Renaissance humanists were clergymen, and combined the revival of the great classical authors with the promotion of biblical texts. That was also the case with Oliveira, whose Renaissance humanism and Christianity are clearly evident in his writing. Professor Livermore even considers that "much of the value of Oliveira's book lies in the glimpses of reality that shine through a welter of classical and Biblical allusions."<sup>16</sup>

In the prologue of his treatise, Oliveira claimed the pioneering nature of his work on naval warfare "about which no author, to my knowledge, wrote any documents before or, if someone wrote about it, I confess it did not come to my cognizance, only a little thing from Vegetius."<sup>17</sup> However, Publius Flavius Vegetius Renuatus's influence was far from little. Vegetius was a Roman writer of the fourth century AD who wrote *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (Concerning Military Matters), a treatise about warfare and military principles to explain methods and practices used during the Roman Empire. The final chapters (31 to 46) of Book IV of Vegetius's piece are devoted to naval tactics and constituted Oliveira's primary source.

Oliveira mentions Vegetius thirty times in *Art of War at Sea* on such diversified matters as personnel issues, including conscription, qualities required for soldiers and seamen, leadership, training, organization, and discipline; matériel issues, including fleet balance, types of ships, logistics, and properties of materials; and employment of military and naval power, including combat readiness, military and naval tactics, meteorology, and deception. Furthermore, Oliveira presents (in chapter 14 of Part II) thirty-nine general rules of war, inspired by Vegetius's thirty-five general warfare maxims, from chapter 26 of Book III of *Concerning Military Matters*. While most of Oliveira's rules were original, some were adaptations of Vegetius's maxims. Oliveira drew as well on the work of a number of other Greek and Roman authors, summarized in table 3.<sup>18</sup>

The other main sources for *Art of War at Sea* were the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Pauline epistles, and the Gospel according to John) and some medieval Catholic authors, such as Saint Augustine. A notable Algerian-Roman theologian and

**TABLE 3**  
**CLASSICAL AUTHORS QUOTED IN *ART OF WAR AT SEA***

Author	Topics of the Quotes
Quintilian	Rhetoric
Aelian	Combat readiness, dissuasion, and military organization
Plato	Combat readiness and dissuasion
Sallust	Combat readiness and dissuasion
Diodorus Siculus	Combat readiness, dissuasion, characteristics of soldiers, and maritime swell
Alexander the Great	Politics
Aulus Gellius	Characteristics needed for seamen and victory in war
Vitruvius	Qualities of shipbuilding wood and ship design
Pliny the Elder	Qualities of shipbuilding wood, nourishment of seamen, winds, tides, and advantages of teamwork
Julius Caesar	Weapons, influence of meteorology, and maritime signaling
Marcus Varro	Properties of food, characteristics of men, and leadership
Justinus	Unity of command, unity of action, and trade
Cicero	Vicious behaviors
Seneca	Metaphors from Seneca's tragedies and information on winds and storm signs
Cato the Elder	Seamen and military discipline
Julius Frontinus	Seamen and military discipline
Claudian	Transition from oared vessels to sailing ships
Columella	Maxim from one of Columella's works

philosopher of the fourth and fifth centuries, Augustine helped craft the just war theory, which was central to *Art of War at Sea*. Oliveira also quotes Saint Ambrose (on the appropriateness of priests going to war) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (on war and religion).<sup>19</sup>

The bibliography employed in *Art of War at Sea* reveals an erudite author, cognizant of an impressive catalogue on the most varied subjects. Most of the sources Oliveira used are related not to war at sea but to warfare in general and to generic matters, such as rhetoric, wood qualities, and food properties. This confirms that he was being truthful in asserting his unawareness of other works on naval warfare, with the exception of the chapters on naval tactics in Vegetius's *Concerning Military Matters*. Even that source must be qualified, as those chapters correspond to only seventeen pages and were written more than a thousand years before, when navigation and naval warfare were completely different.<sup>20</sup>

### *Strategic Insights of Art of War at Sea*

The British historian Richard Barker opines that “there is little doubt[:] . . . *Art of War at Sea* is on a grander scale than any of its predecessors.”<sup>21</sup> It was also a book ahead of its time, as it established some of the basis of modern naval strategy, according to the Portuguese scholar and naval officer António Silva Ribeiro.<sup>22</sup> In fact, while the preceding and contemporary works on maritime or naval affairs focus on operational, tactical, or technical issues, *Art of War at Sea* offers a strategic reflection on the importance of naval power as the key to maintaining a mighty empire, such as the Portuguese held at that time, with territories and possessions in all five populated continents.

In the sixteenth century the concept of naval power had not been introduced. Nevertheless, a careful reading of *Art of War at Sea* shows that Oliveira uses the expression “war at sea” in a sense that encompassed all aspects of military organization for sea warfare, including construction, commissioning, training, and operation of warships—that is, what would come to be defined as naval power.

In his prologue, Oliveira emphasizes the importance of war at sea: “In particular for this land’s men, that now use the sea more than any others, thus acquiring high profit and honor. . . . Nurturing this war [i.e., this power], Portuguese people have gained lots of wealth & prosperity . . . & have gained honor in a short period of time, as no other nation in longer periods.”<sup>23</sup>

Oliveira’s volume throughout reiterates this idea that nations must defend their interests at sea by the use of naval power, stressing that maritime security should not be taken for granted.

Because the sea is very licentious and men cannot avoid using it to trade, to fish and with other purposes, taking supply and profit from it, it is essential to safeguard it, through fear or severe punishment. . . . Due to all these reasons, it is necessary to have navies at sea, that safe keep our coasts and passages and that protect from the surprises that can storm from the sea, which are much more sudden than the ones coming from land.<sup>24</sup>

This view is as applicable today as it was five hundred years ago, because the main challenges to naval power in the twenty-first century are similar to those of the sixteenth.

Another prominent feature of Oliveira’s book is the way it addresses some perennial strategic principles, with insights that are still valid and useful. In fact, *Art of War at Sea* highlights the importance of a substantial number of factors (noting the reference in the 2008 Portuguese-language edition cited above):

- *National defense*: “Good war makes good peace. And therefore the peace that we now enjoy was conquered by past wars, but careless peace will leave war to posterity. Peace lovers that now enjoy it should not rest if they want it

perpetually, because if the enemies of peace see a soft peace, they will take it away” (Part I, chap. 1, p. 12).

- *Readiness at sea*: “It is necessary to be ready to defend ourselves from those who want to attack, because promptitude, as says Vegetius, is sometimes more useful than strength in war” (Part I, chap. 1, p. 11), and “Promptitude gives victory to the diligent and negligence defeats the careless” (pp. 11–12).
- *Surprise factor*: “Sudden attacks terrify the enemies, but expected encounters do not frighten them” (Part II, chap. 14, p. 133).
- *Time as a fundamental element of strategy*: “There is a time to engage in battle, when we have an opportunity or when the advantage is on our side” (Part II, chap. 10, p. 118), and “[In battles] the occasion is more important, than bravery or wisdom” (Part II, chap. 14, p. 133).
- *Space as a fundamental element of strategy*: “In combats, the location is responsible for a great part of the victory, because those who find themselves in an inadequate position double their works: some caused by the position and some caused by the opponent” (Part II, chap. 11, p. 121), “At sea, as well as on land, there are places . . . that give and take opportunity and benefit to ships at the time of fighting” (p. 121), and “The location is often worthier than the force” (Part II, chap. 14, p. 133).
- *Dissuasion*: “And therefore, favor weapons because they are not as contrary to peace as they may seem, contrarily they protect peace as the dogs protect the sheep, although they may seem their foes” (Part I, chap. 1, p. 12).
- *Deception*: “Let us deceive as much as we can, so that we will be taken as liars” (Part II, chap. 14, p. 134), and “He who tells the truth to his enemy, warns that enemy against himself” (p. 134).
- *Intelligence*: “The captains must have warning about the opponents’ fleets, if they are big or not, so that they do not miss or unnecessarily exceed what is needed” (Part II, chap. 1, p. 68), and “As important as covering our intentions is trying to know the opponent’s” (Part II, chap. 14, p. 134).
- *Unity of command*: “The Greek army, while it had only one head and King [Alexander the Great], conquered and won the world, but as soon as the King died and divisions arose, everything started falling apart” (Part I, chap. 13, p. 49), and “It is necessary that men of war have a head . . . and one that commands over everyone” (p. 50).
- *Unity of action*: “Many times, a few aligned people can achieve more than many non-aligned” (Part I, chap. 13, p. 49).

- *Tailoring war-fighting capabilities to the type of conflict*: “Thus, according to whom we fight, we shall use those weapons” (Part I, chap. 10, p. 42) and “The warships must also be adequate to the wars they are expected to fight, both in number and in type” (Part II, chap. 1, p. 68).
- *Balanced fleet composition*: “Therefore in the fleets it is necessary to have different ships, ones to bear the weight of war, and others to support and help those ones” (Part II, chap. 1, p. 69).

To conclude this analysis of the strategic insights of *Art of War at Sea*, it is worth highlighting some of the listed general rules of war. These short aphorisms summarize and encapsulate the key takeaways of the book, stressing the importance of (as found in Part II, chapter 14, pages 133–34, of the Portuguese-language edition cited above) *recruitment* (“Mistakes in commissioning endanger the battles”), *training* (“Exercises make men braver than nature”), *motivation* (“When personnel are hesitant, do not enter a fight”), *logistics* (“Those who do not supply themselves with provisions . . . will be beaten without fighting”), *organization and discipline* (“Better order than multitude”), *leadership* (“The prudent captain is always ready, the skillful one does not miss a good opportunity, when it shows up”), and *meteorology* (“It must not be the sea waiting for you, it must be you waiting for the sea,” and “We shall protect from sea state and weather, the same way we protect against our enemies”).

These general rules conclude with a maxim, on the contradictory nature of war: “War requires fairness and deceit, truth and lies, cruelty and pity, preserving and destroying.”<sup>25</sup>

#### ***Humanitarian Convictions in Art of War at Sea***

Another important feature of this treatise is the humanitarian (that is, benevolent) approach to the theory of just war and to the problem of slavery. The just war theory evolved from the concepts of holy war contained in the Bible, and *justum bellum* (just war) theorized by the Romans. It sought to justify aggression morally through codification of a set of rules that evolved with time. For example, Augustine averred that Christians should, by definition, be against war. But the pursuit of peace should include the option of going to war (a just war) if that is the only option to prevent a grave wrong. Almost nine centuries later, Aquinas delineated criteria for just war, as needing to be declared by the proper authority, have a just cause, and involve fighting with the right intention.

Oliveira draws on the heritage of Augustine and Aquinas to write in the prologue that “the war of Christians that fear God is not bad, it is full of virtues, because it is done with a desire for peace, without greediness nor cruelty, as a punishment to the bad and relief of the good.”<sup>26</sup> Then, he invoked Augustine to

define just war as “the one that defends a people from those who want to offend it without reason . . . and [the war] that punishes the offenses to God.”<sup>27</sup>

By the mid-sixteenth century, theologians were expanding this theory to rationalize the fights against pagans and heathens who had never encountered Christianity—namely, the indigenous peoples of Africa and the New World. However, Oliveira’s work takes a more fraternal approach: “We cannot make just war to the infidels who were never Christians, like Moors, Jews and pagans, that want to be at peace with us and did not take our lands or prejudiced Christianity.”<sup>28</sup>

Oliveira also imposes humanitarian rules of engagement: “You shall not kill women, children nor beasts, cut fruit trees, burn warehouses, nor damage the things that men need.”<sup>29</sup> These humanitarian convictions prompted him to condemn slavery—a position that was anathema among the widespread acceptance of slavery as natural in the sixteenth century. Audaciously, Oliveira condemns slavery as a “bad habit,” arguing that “no human reasoning allows the public and free practice of buying and selling free and peaceful men, as one buys and sells beasts, cattle or horses.”<sup>30</sup>

#### *Art of War at Sea and Mahan*

Because *Art of War at Sea* was neither widely disseminated nor translated, it had only marginal impact on subsequent naval strategy. Nonetheless, the main ideas that would later be conceptualized and publicized by some of the most notable naval thinkers were already present in this pioneering treatise. In particular, *Art of War at Sea* is a distant yet direct ancestor of the works of the world’s best-known maritime strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who 350 years later brilliantly theorized about the influence of sea power on history and its importance for the wealth and prestige of nations. Both strategists shared the conviction that the prosperity and international status of maritime nations (like Portugal and the United States) depended heavily on seaborne trade and connected maritime activities. They believed that those nations should develop robust sea power, including powerful navies, to achieve their full potential. The main difference between Oliveira and Mahan is that Oliveira wrote when the Portuguese empire was starting to decay (his writings constituting a warning about the consequences on economic and political status of disinvestment in naval power), whereas Mahan wrote when the United States was initiating an expansionist era (his writings representing a road map to world supremacy, based on a strong sea power and a dominant navy).

Furthermore, Oliveira and Mahan were both pious Christians, Oliveira a Catholic and Mahan Protestant. They shared views consistent with the theories of just war and advocated the use of naval/sea power to disseminate Christianity. In *Art of War at Sea*, Oliveira commends the use of naval power for spreading

Christianity, praising the Portuguese discoveries as “allow[ing] multiplying the God’s faith & the salvation of men.”<sup>31</sup> He also adds that “His Highness [the king of Portugal] has armadas at sea to augment the Christian faith and to defend his lands.”<sup>32</sup> Mahan offered a similar sentiment in “A Twentieth-Century Outlook,” an essay for the *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*.<sup>33</sup> “The great task now before the world of civilized Christianity, its great mission, which it must fulfil or perish, is to receive into its own bosom and raise to its own ideals those ancient and different civilizations by which it is surrounded and outnumbered.”<sup>34</sup>

Although written more than 450 years ago, *Art of War at Sea* is comprehensive and relevant, addressing the various elements of establishing, organizing, and employing naval power. It is innovative in the conceptualization of naval power as an instrument for countries’ political goals and economic interests. It considers perennial principles of strategy, with insights that remain valid and applicable. Additionally, its respectful approach is unique and commendable; its benevolence and prescience guarantee this treatise a place in posterity.

It was, therefore, a book ahead of its time, helping to establish the foundations of modern naval strategy. However, *Art of War at Sea* did not enjoy the international dissemination it deserved and has remained in obscurity, having been written in sixteenth-century Portuguese and never translated. This impediment will soon be overcome by a forthcoming English translation.<sup>35</sup> The translation will allow the treatise to receive the attention it deserves, owing to its historical value, the broad range of issues analyzed, and its strategic insights, many of which ring true today.

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#### NOTES

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1. For more information on this emergence of naval thinking in Europe from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth, see Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, “L’émergence d’une pensée navale en Europe au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *L’évolution de la pensée navale* (Paris: Economica, 1994), vol. 4, available at [www.institut-strategie.fr/](http://www.institut-strategie.fr/).

2. Full bibliographic information on the sources listed in table 1 is as follows. Antoine de Conflans, *Les faiz de la marine et navigaiges* (1516–20), printed in Augustin Jal, “Documents inédits sur l’histoire de la marine (XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle),” *Annales maritimes et coloniales* 2 (1842), pp. 29–95. The book was republished in 1982 as Michel Mollat du Jourdin and Florence Chillaud-Toutée, “Le livre des faiz de la marine et navigaiges d’Antoine de Conflans, v. 1516–1520,” in *Actes du 107<sup>e</sup> Congrès national des sociétés savantes, Colloque d’histoire maritime* (Paris: 1984), pp. 9–44. The fifty-one-page scanned manuscript is available online at [gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059155s](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059155s).

Alonso de Chaves, *Quatri partitu en cosmo-graphia práctica, y por otro nombre, Espejo de navegantes*, ed. Paulino Castañeda Delgado, Mariano Cuesta Domingo, and Pilar Hernández Aparicio (Madrid: Instituto de Historia y Cultura Naval, 1983).

Cristoforo Da Canal, *Della Milizia Marittima* (Venice, It.: Filippi, 2010).

Da Canal, *Della Milizia Marittima: Libri Quattro*, ed. Mario Nani Mocenigo (Rome: Libreria dello Stato / Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1930).

Fernando Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar* (Coimbra, Port.: João Alvarez, Imprimidor do Rei, 1555). There are only two copies of the original 152-page treatise, one in the National Library of Portugal, in Lisbon, and another in the Central Library of the Navy, also in Lisbon. The book has been republished four times: Fernando Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, with an introduction (“Comentário preliminar”) by Quirino da Fonseca and a study (“Comentário à *Arte da Guerra do Mar* do padre Fernando Oliveira”) by Alfredo Botelho de Sousa (Lisbon: Arquivo Histórico da Marinha, 1937); Fernando Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, with the introduction and study of the 1937 edition (Lisbon: Ministério da Marinha, 1969); Fernando Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, with the introduction and study of the 1937 edition (in Portuguese, English, and French) and with a facsimile of the original 1555 edition (Lisbon: Edições Culturais da Marinha, 1983); and Fernando Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar: Estratégia e Guerra Naval no Tempo dos Descobrimientos*, with an introduction (“O Padre Fernando Oliveira: Breve Apontamento Biográfico”) and a study (“A Obra: Estudo Introdutório à *Arte da Guerra do Mar*”) by António Silva Ribeiro, and a facsimile of the original 1555 edition (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2008).

3. An English-language translation for publication is currently being prepared by Tiago Maurício.
4. This short biography is based on the following sources: Quirino da Fonseca, introduction (“Comentário preliminar”) to *Arte da Guerra do Mar* (1969), pp. xi–xxxvii; Francisco Contente Domingues, “A expedição de auxílio ao rei de Velez em 1552: o relato oficial versus o testemunho de um participante,” in *A*

*Guerra Naval no Norte de África (séculos XV–XIX)*, comp. Francisco Contente Domingues and Jorge Semedo de Matos (Lisbon: Edições Culturais da Marinha, 2003), pp. 157–72; António Silva Ribeiro, introduction (“O Padre Fernando Oliveira: Breve Apontamento Biográfico”) to *Arte da Guerra do Mar* (2008), pp. ix–xiii; João Gonçalves Gaspar, “Fernão de Oliveira: Humanista insubmisso e precursor,” in *Fernando Oliveira: Um Humanista Genial — V Centenário do seu nascimento*, ed. Carlos Morais (Aveiro, Port.: Universidade de Aveiro—Centro de Línguas e Culturas, 2009), pp. 31–82; Francisco Contente Domingues, “A enciclopédia do mar: o manuscrito da *Ars Nautica* e a sua história,” in *ibid.*, pp. 405–29.

5. Oliveira claimed to have practiced and studied in shipyards in Spain, Italy, France, and England, and even in those of the Moors, probably in North Africa. Fernando Oliveira, *Livro da Fábrica das Naus* (Lisbon: Academia de Marinha, 1991).
6. Fernão de Oliveira, *Grammatica da lingoa-gem portuguesa* (Lisbon: Germam Galharde, 1536). The book has been republished eight times, in 1871, 1933, 1936, 1975, 1981, 1988, 2000, and 2002.
7. His recommendations centered on the efficiency of the rowing arrangements. Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, pp. 71–72.
8. Richard Barker, *Fernando Oliveira: The English Episode, 1545–47* (Lisbon: Academia de Marinha, 1992), p. 16.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
10. Harold Livermore, “Padre Oliveira’s Outburst,” *Portuguese Studies* 17 (2001), p. 41.
11. Cod. VOSS. LAT. F 41, pp. 1–283v.
12. Domingues, “A enciclopédia do mar,” pp. 418–19.
13. Fernando Oliveira, *Livro da Fabrica das Naos* (c. 1580), printed in Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, “O Padre Fernando de Oliveira e a sua obra náutica. Memoria, compreendendo um estudo biográfico sobre o afamado grammatico e nautógrafo e a primeira reprodução typographica do seu tratado inédito *Livro da Fabrica das Naos*,” *Memorias da Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa* 7, part 2 (1898), pp. 149–221. The book has been republished twice, in 1991 and 1995.

14. Cod. 3702, pp. 1–164.
15. Fonds Portugais 12, pp. 1–176.
16. Livermore, “Padre Oliveira’s Outburst,” p. 33.
17. Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, prologue, n.p.
18. Marcus Fabius Quintilianus was a Roman rhetorician of the first century AD. Aelianus Tacticus was a Greek military writer of the second century AD, author of the military treatise *On Tactical Arrays of the Greeks*. Plato was a famous Greek philosopher of the fifth to fourth century BC. Gaius Sallustius Crispus, a Roman historian of the first century BC, wrote on the Catiline and Jugurthine wars. Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the first century BC, is known for writing a monumental universal history, *Historical Library*. Alexander is, of course, the famous king of Macedonia and military genius of the fourth century BC. Aulus Gellius was a Latin author and grammarian of the second century AD. The writings of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman author and architect of the first century BC, inspired Leonardo da Vinci to draw the *Vitruvian Man*. Gaius Plinius Secundus, a Roman author, philosopher, and military commander of the first century AD, wrote the encyclopedic *Natural History*. Julius Caesar, Roman general and statesman of the first century BC, played a key role in the demise of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. Marcus Terentius Varro was a Roman scholar and writer of the second and first centuries BC. Marcus Junianus Justinus, a Roman historian of the third century AD, wrote an abridgment of the monumental (forty-four book) historical work *Historiarum Philippicarum*. Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman politician, orator, and writer of the first century BC. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a Roman statesman, philosopher, and dramatist of the first century AD, wrote tragedies still famous today. Marcus Porcius Cato was a Roman statesman and military commander of the third and second centuries BC. Sextus Julius Frontinus, a Roman senator of the first century AD, is best known for technical treatises, including one on military matters, *Stratagemas*. Claudius Claudianus was a Roman poet of the fourth century AD. Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, a Roman author of the first century AD, was the most important writer on agriculture of the Roman Empire. Oliveira translated to Portuguese Columella’s masterpiece *Res Rustica*.
19. Ambrose, an Italian bishop who became one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the fourth century, influenced, among others, Augustine. Aquinas, Italian priest and Dominican, was an extremely influential theologian and philosopher of the thirteenth century who further deepened Augustine’s arguments about just war.
20. Flavi Vegeti Renati, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (Leipzig: Editio Altera, 1885), pp. 150–66.
21. Barker, *Fernando Oliveira*, p. 9.
22. António Silva Ribeiro, “Uma visão estratégica da *Arte da Guerra do Mar*,” *Revista Militar* 2465/2466 (June–July 2007), pp. 719–33.
23. Oliveira, *Arte da Guerra do Mar*, prologue, n.p.
24. *Ibid.*, part 1, chap. 3, p. 19.
25. *Ibid.*, part 2, chap. 14, p. 134.
26. *Ibid.*, prologue, n.p.
27. *Ibid.*, part 1, chap. 4, p. 23.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, part 1, chap. 5, p. 27.
30. *Ibid.*, part 1, chap. 3, p. 20.
31. *Ibid.*, prologue, n.p.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1897).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
35. Tiago Maurício, *Expanding the Naval Canon: Fernando de Oliveira and the 1st Treatise on Maritime Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Maritime Security, 16 July 2014), available at [cimsec.org/](http://cimsec.org/).