

## CHAPTER TEN

# Naval Leadership and the ‘Art of War’: John Jervis and José de Mazarredo Compared (1797–9)

Agustín Guimerá

Instituto de Historia, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid

‘This trinity [of war] is composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity ... of the play of chance and probability, within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to pure reason.’ (Clausewitz, *On War*, 1780–1831)

In his final book, entitled *Nelson, the Admiral*, Colin White explored the great British naval officer’s gift for leadership – his strong emotional ties to the profession, and his dedication to the service of his King and country, as well as his ability to build an outstanding team of officers with whom he shared these concerns and to whom he provided not only an example, but also affection and even friendship. Nelson’s great sensitivity to the harsh conditions endured by the crews of his ships and fleets won the admiration of even the least of his subordinates.<sup>208</sup>

There can be no doubt that the quality of leadership in the three great maritime powers of the period – Great Britain, France and Spain – affected how international conflicts unfolded at sea between the years 1750 and 1850.

---

### How to cite this book chapter:

Guimerá, A. 2017. Naval Leadership and the ‘Art of War’: John Jervis and José de Mazarredo Compared (1797–9). In: Harding, R and Guimerá, A (eds.). *Naval Leadership in the Atlantic World*. Pp. 117–130. London: University of Westminster Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book2.1>. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

The present paper will compare two naval officers who faced each other at the culminating moment of their careers: the British admiral John Jervis (1735–1823), commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, and the Spanish lieutenant general José de Mazarredo (1754–1812), commanding officer of the *Escuadra del Océano* and Spain's premier naval officer in the eighteenth century. The arena for their confrontation was the close blockade of Cádiz by Jervis's fleet between April 1797 and August 1799, during which Mazarredo was the architect of the port city's defence. The former was a typical example of a great fleet commander in a highly efficient naval organisation such as the Royal Navy. The latter was a naval leader *par excellence*, whose career coincided with an acute economic and political crisis in Spain, when the navy was in rapid decline.

Andrew Lambert has reflected on the true 'admiral's art', emphasising the importance of military command, management and leadership as key factors in the effective use of naval power in numerous spheres, such as diplomacy, deterrence and the projection of that power, among others.<sup>209</sup> Modern leadership theory also clearly distinguishes leadership from authority, administration, charisma and heroism. A military leader goes beyond these. It is not sufficient to exercise control and wield great social influence, or to be effective in an organisational sense. To be effective in war, he must have a clear sense of what will bring victory and must wisely apply the values of his time to inspire collaborators, create a sense of teamwork and determination to win in the most unforgiving of competitive environments.<sup>210</sup>

After situating the blockade of Cádiz in its strategic context within the Anglo-Spanish confrontation of 1796–1802, this paper will consider one aspect of the leader's role: the choice of strategic pathways. That choice was between attritional warfare and a war of annihilation; between humanitarianism and extreme violence. For Mazarredo, this was expressed in the protocols he observed in his interaction with his adversary John Jervis.

### Jervis and Mazarredo, parallel lives

Both Jervis and Mazarredo were effective fleet commanders within the military context of their time. They were both good seamen and exhibited unremitting concern for the training of their crews and the health and welfare of their subordinates. They had mastered all the areas of their profession: navigation, strategy, tactics, logistics, organisational structure, naval intelligence, armaments and such like. They had also distinguished themselves in important campaigns throughout their careers. They even both participated in the Battle of Cape Spartel on 20 October 1782, during the American War of Independence. In their confrontation during 1797–9 they turned their respective fleets into efficient machines – in Jervis's case for destruction and for Mazarredo deterrence.<sup>211</sup>

While Jervis was a magnificent fleet commander, he was not, in a sense, a true leader – he did not try to lead his subordinates, but to command them. His manner was harsh: he imposed a savage discipline on his crews, implacable towards mutineers and fierce in response to officers who voiced objections. According to Lambert, he was inflexible – always adopting a strategy of confrontation rather than cooperation.

This can be seen clearly in his term as First Lord of the Admiralty (1801–04), which is generally considered to have been disastrous for the Royal Navy.<sup>212</sup> Some of his other defects had come to light earlier during his campaign in the Caribbean in 1794. Here, he revealed a rapaciousness for the booty of prize ships and a readiness to mistreat neutral ships in pursuit of this end.

During his tenure as commander of the Mediterranean Fleet (1795–9), his inflexibility made it impossible to create a true team. He was highly critical of the divisional commanders who were under his orders and merciless towards those whom he considered to be ineffective captains. He was only able to connect with a small group of young and ambitious officers, such as Nelson, Troubridge, Collingwood, Fremantle, Miller and Hood. It is true that he was genuinely concerned about the health and welfare of his crews and that he was sometimes generous with the common sailor. However, these gestures were in stark contrast to the public mistreatment of his men, which exacerbated the social antagonism between his officers and sailors.

Mazarredo was entirely different – displaying what might now be considered a true naval leadership. In the words of a contemporary, he was phenomenal, 'the Hercules from Biscay', displaying boundless energy and capacity for work. A well-educated philanthropist, he was part of Spain's enlightened military elite. He perfectly combined knowledge of science and maritime warfare. He was a sponsor and organiser of the most important scientific institutions and expeditions of his time. He was also a distinguished author of seven books on naval warfare, in addition to the famous naval ordinances, published in 1793. As ambassador to Algiers, he was responsible for the signing of the preliminary peace accords with the Regency in June 1785. He was also a good diplomat for naval affairs to First Consul Bonaparte in Paris, when the *Escuadra del Océano* was stationed in Brest from 1799 to 1801.

His gifts for leadership allowed him to put together teams that made the most of the abilities of some of his subordinates. The list of illustrious officers who served with him in the *Escuadra del Océano* (1797–1801) is impressive: officers such as Gravina, Álava, Churruca, Alcalá Galiano, Valdés, Vargas, Uriarte, Cisneros, Villavicencio, Nava and Espinosa were among many who were later to become heroes at Trafalgar.

Standing out above them all was the future lieutenant general Antonio de Escaño (1752–1814), who was for decades Mazarredo's inseparable collaborator. The pair operated perfectly together on many campaigns and left a deep impression on their fellow naval commanders. Together they built an innovative team that exemplified the spirit of service to their country.

However, there was a further difference between Jervis and Mazarredo – Mazarredo lacked Jervis’s political sense. Jervis’s antipathy towards the nobility did not stop him from seeking their support in order to realise his professional and political ambitions. He made good use of his family and political connections, being a member of Parliament from 1783 until his death.<sup>213</sup> Mazarredo, on the other hand, followed a very different trajectory. In contexts that were favourable to the navy, he was able to work effectively with the political leaders of the state. This was the case in his collaboration with Secretary of the Navy Antonio Valdés (1783–95) and Secretary of State Mariano Luis de Urquijo (1798–1800). However, Mazarredo’s character and professionalism were incompatible with bending to the sensibilities of powerful men where he felt the interests of the navy were at risk. He was incapable of submitting to his superiors when he believed that he was in the right, and his candour at times mingled with naivety. All of this created difficulties for him, including being politically outcast during some of the most crucial years of the Spanish-British War (1795–7 and 1804–8), the very times when the disastrous battles of Cape St Vincent (14 February 1797) and Trafalgar (21 October 1805) took place. This crisis for the Bourbon dynasty was a long and trying time for a leader like him, forced to watch the decline of a navy that on so many other occasions he had helped save from disaster.

### Context of the Anglo-Spanish War (1796–1802)

When Spain declared war on Great Britain in October 1796, the country was pursuing political aims that were consistent with a huge shift in its diplomacy. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Spanish Empire was caught between two giants that were often at war with one other: France and Great Britain. With countless territories and interests spread all over the globe, long-term neutrality was an impossible policy for a nation as significant as Spain. In 1796, faced with limited options for manoeuvre on the international stage, the Secretary of State, Manuel Godoy, chose the lesser of two evils, an alliance with France, through the instrument of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, a defensive pact signed in August of that year. It was an ‘unnatural’ agreement, between a Catholic monarchy and a regicide, secular republic, but it arose out of the specific political situation of the moment. Through it, the Spanish monarchy sought to check French expansionism. For Spain it would have been suicide to remain at odds with such a powerful neighbour, which throughout much of the century had been restrained through the so-called ‘Family Pacts’. Another of Spain’s political objectives was to thwart British ‘ambition’ in European and colonial seas, which had led to over 100 years of friction, most recently evidenced in the Nootka Sound incident in 1790. Spain continued to have many grievances against Great Britain: the centuries-long English contraband trade with Spain’s American colonies, corsair activity in Corsica – to which Great Britain turned

a blind eye – and the restitution of Gibraltar. Moreover, the Spanish monarchy accused its erstwhile ally in the war against revolutionary France of disloyalty.<sup>214</sup>

In this war, Spain's military objective was consistent with the traditional idea of attritional warfare associated with the *ancien régime*.<sup>215</sup> When the Spanish monarchy declared war on Great Britain, it was a preventive move. Spanish policy was not to seek out and destroy British power at sea, but rather by the presence and cooperation of the allied fleets present a strong means of deterrence – a 'fleet in being' – to act as a restraint on the superiority of the Royal Navy. During the talks in Basel in 1795, the French had encouraged the Spanish to form a confederation of maritime powers of Northern Europe to further counteract British superiority at sea. It was essentially a defensive policy aimed at maintaining the status quo in Europe and the Americas.

Great Britain's military objective in 1796 was very different from that of her opponents. Once war had been declared, Great Britain worked tenaciously to get Spain to end its alliance with France. Another of its political goals – a constant theme in its foreign diplomacy – was opening Spanish colonial markets to British shipping and trade.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Great Britain had increasingly practised the war of destruction: 'absolute war' or 'the absolute of war', which Clausewitz would define years later. The wars of the French Revolution and their consequences accelerated this process. The defence of British national interests and the Napoleonic Wars would soon crystallise in a total war between nations. The 'hostile intentions' of a government towards the enemy would become 'hostile sentiments' among its people.<sup>216</sup>

During the period 1797–9 the Royal Navy once again pursued the destruction of Spanish fleets in decisive battles, in addition to inflicting great damage to her maritime trade, through privateering and the blockade of her principal ports. Special emphasis was put on the traditional policy of interrupting Spanish colonial trade to the Americas, which, for two centuries, was a key source of financing for the Spanish monarchy. The ultimate goal of this strategy was to starve the Spanish economy of bullions thereby limiting the capacity of the monarch to finance the war and exerting pressure on public opinion so that the people would demand peace from their government.

### The strategies of Jervis and Mazarredo, 1797–9

With these different strategic objectives, the strategies deployed by the two antagonists were also very different.<sup>217</sup> With Spain's declaration of war in October 1796 and the advance of the French armies in Italy, Jervis was obliged to abandon his bases in the Mediterranean, including the important bases in Corsica and Elba. In December of that year, Jervis was in Lisbon, which would serve as the winter base of the Mediterranean Fleet for a time. This withdrawal served only to incite discontent among his crews and British

public opinion, which now supported war of annihilation with Spain more than ever.

Jervis was subsequently the architect of the close blockade of Spanish ports in 1797, especially Cádiz, the key to colonial trade. With this blockade he continued the same strategy that he had employed in Toulon and Leghorn (Livorno) during the previous year. The blockade was intended to force Mazarredo to bring his squadron out of Cádiz and engage Jervis in battle. The British admiral had full confidence in his fleet of 23 ships of the line, after the victory over the Spanish fleet in Cape St Vincent in February 1797.

The blockade of Cádiz began in April 1797 and continued after the end of Jervis's command until 1808, when Britain started backing the Spanish rebellion against Napoleon. Jervis anchored a squadron very close to Cádiz, the Inshore Squadron, initially under the command of Rear Admiral Horatio Nelson, with the bulk of the fleet continuously making long tacks out to sea, like a military parade of naval power, in sight of the Bay of Cádiz. On other occasions he anchored at Rota. During the winter season, Jervis took his fleet to Lisbon, leaving the surveillance squadron off Cádiz. Sometimes, bad weather forced him to draw near to the Bay of Tangiers. It was an enormous feat of navigation, logistics and naval intelligence. The blockade was so effective that 1797 was the worst year for Spanish-American trade in all of recent history.<sup>218</sup>

Moreover, Jervis had to carry out other missions. He had to prevent the allied squadrons at Toulon, Cartagena, Cádiz and Ferrol from rendezvousing; protect Portuguese trade and sovereignty; neutralise possible threats to Gibraltar; and carry out cruising missions in the Mediterranean to diminish French pressure on the Kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies.

Jervis's strategy was to compel the Spanish into a decisive battle, in order to diminish their operational capability. He tried to force Mazarredo to come out of the bay with his fleet and engage in battle by shelling Cádiz on the nights of 3 and 5 July 1797. Action against enemy trade was another facet of this war of annihilation. The abortive assault on Santa Cruz de Tenerife by a squadron under Nelson's command at the end of July 1797 is the most significant example of this policy.

For his part, Mazarredo recognised the weakness of his fleet at Cádiz. The Spanish navy in 1797 was a shadow of its former strength. The Cádiz squadron could effectively arm only 21 ships of the line and later had to lower this number to 19. Mazarredo's response, therefore, had to be nuanced. In the first place, he accepted the inevitability of the Cádiz blockade by Jervis's fleet. However, he sought unceasingly to wear down both its physical power and the combat morale of the enemy through a strategy of active defence. To protect the city and the fleet he developed what were called 'subtle forces', which followed the model of the *flotille a la hollandaise* and which had had so much success in the Great Siege of Gibraltar (1779–82). Within two months of having taken command, Mazarredo had more than 100 smaller vessels, armed with cannons and mortars, the most important being the gunboats.<sup>219</sup> He was thus able to

neutralise the shelling by the British in July 1797, and these units were a thorn in the side of the enemy throughout the blockade.

He also made the most of the few opportunities that arose in this war of attrition to prevent the total interruption of Spain's trade with its colonies and to weaken the enemy's naval power. With the help of Escaño and his team, he organised a fleet of 21 ships in Cádiz also within two months, although it was a 'fleet in being' only since there were severe shortages in terms of seamen and gunners. He never granted Jervis the opportunity of a decisive battle, but he did surprise his rival when he took his fleet out to sea on the night of 6 February 1798. For a week it sailed towards Cape St Vincent in pursuit of the British surveillance squadron, and then returned to its base. This sortie raised the morale of the fleet and the people of Cádiz and was applauded by the government.

### Leadership values

In the Anglo-Spanish conflicts between 1776 and 1815 there seems to have been a shift between two traditional conceptions of armed conflict; away from attritional warfare towards a war of annihilation and the concept of total war. Attritional warfare was the *ancien régime's* customary form of armed conflict. It was dynastic and conventional in nature, waged between kings, and limited in duration. It was a 'war of cabinets', where strategic manoeuvring took precedence over battle. It had concrete objectives, such as the defence or break-up of a commercial system, redrawing of borders or the conquest of territory. Once this objective was met (or could not be met), the parties promptly negotiated peace to limit their losses. The war of annihilation goes far further. It pursues the destruction of the enemy's material and military resources through decisive battles, burning down dockyards and warehouses, dismantling fortifications, plundering settlements and harvests. The objectives or ambitions could be far wider, encompassing the collapse of the enemy as a political or economic entity. The eighteenth century saw both types of conflicts. Neither conflicted with the values of the Enlightenment, but the strategy of annihilation became more prominent as the French Revolution produced more implacable hostilities at a fundamental ideological level and mobilised societies which had the resources to prosecute wars more ferociously over time.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars thus mark the dawn of total warfare, which was to become an increasingly common form of armed conflict in centuries to come. These conflicts involved a country's entire population, by way of universal and compulsory enlistment, and the use of all the resources belonging to a community, which had become united around the ideology of the nation. War was now a conflict between peoples. This shift coincided with the emergence in European society of new sentiments of a pre-Romantic variety.

This evolution of violence was studied in detail by Clausewitz in the decades following the war. For this military theorist, ‘absolute war’ or ‘the absolute of war’ was not the same as ‘real war’. The former gave primacy to the political realm while the latter was the day-to-day practice of war which tended towards pure violence, in which the political end was subordinate to the paroxysm of fighting. The annihilation of the enemy was a product of the reality of war itself. For Clausewitz, the effective conduct of war depended on establishing a balance between the components of the trinity of war mentioned above: violence, the game of chance and instrument of policy.

Depending on the duration and importance of a particular conflict, the transition from hostile intentions to hostile sentiment occurred with greater or lesser ease. Daily life had a direct influence on the emotional world of the fighters. It was a context in which threat and uncertainty reigned. In battle – ‘the first-born son of war’ – this tension reached a climax. As the scene of survival, death and destruction, battle catalysed hostile sentiment among the protagonists, as well as their ambition and their eagerness for glory. The conduct demonstrated by Jervis and Mazarredo during the Cádiz blockade of 1797–9 corresponds respectively to the conception of the war of annihilation, in the case of the British admiral, and that of attritional warfare in the case of his Spanish counterpart.<sup>220</sup> This naval operation also allows us to examine the change in Jervis’s day-to-day conduct: that is, his transition from conducting ‘absolute war’ to ‘real war’.

### Attitudes towards the enemy

Under the circumstances of the blockade, the British admiral alternated between two extremes. On the one hand, he was frustrated by having been expelled from the Mediterranean and by not being able to destroy Mazarredo’s fleet, which lay out of reach at anchor in Cádiz. On the other, he praised the virtues of the Spanish crews.

One of his protégés, Rear Admiral Nelson, epitomised the hostile sentiment. In November 1796, in spite of the allies’ superior numbers, he was confident that Jervis would defeat the enemy and make Spain pay dearly for its interference in the Franco-British conflict. When Jervis’s fleet pulled out of the Mediterranean in January 1797, Nelson again demonstrated his rancour towards the Spanish – referring to them pejoratively as the *Dons* – for having declared war on Great Britain.<sup>221</sup>

Yet Nelson and Jervis admired their opponents’ courage. The former praised the valiant conduct of Jacob Stuart, the commander of a frigate captured in December 1796, and Miguel Tryason, the leader of a flotilla of gunboats, whose barge was taken by Nelson after a tough hand-to-hand struggle in the course of the famous night action that took place on 3 July 1797, in Cádiz Bay.<sup>222</sup> In the spring of 1797 Jervis defended the magnificent performance of Moreno, a



division leader of the Spanish fleet during the Battle of Cape St Vincent, at his court martial in Cádiz.<sup>223</sup>

For his part, Mazarredo also alternated between criticism and admiration of his enemy. In August 1795, at the time of the Peace of Basel and the end of the Spanish alliance with the United Kingdom, he criticised Great Britain's zeal for overseas domination through the destruction of the Spanish and French navies:

'England with its sea moat, England with its industry and its navy, will be master of the world for many years hence, and the stronger its dominion becomes the longer the calamities will continue on the continent of Europe. It will pay for these calamities with money, cementing her superiority.'<sup>224</sup>

But in the same letter he recognised the positive qualities of his adversary, the British virtue of fostering scientific study and technical advances in the service of naval warfare – in sum, the search for perfection:

'But beware, her Navy is formidable. It is what matters to her. It's her great object of study... There is nothing that she will not put to the test. There is no new advance that she will not immediately adopt... Let us not deceive ourselves with flattering ideas about honour, pride, and goodwill. Will alone is not enough in the Navy. It is necessary to distil the means of making will fruitful, as the English do...'

### War of destruction

All was fair in the conflicts at the end of the century of the Enlightenment. For example, the British used a false flag to take a Spanish merchant vessel by surprise at the beginning of the blockade.<sup>225</sup> We also witness a change in Jervis's attitude towards the war. In May 1797 he worried about the shots fired by his fleet at the gunboats and batteries in Rota doing harm to the civilian population.<sup>226</sup> But two months later, he gives a series of justifications for his decision to shell Cádiz.<sup>227</sup>

Among Jervis's fleet there were crews that had participated in the general mutiny in England during April and May 1797. This was true of the ship *The-seus*, whose command was handed over to Nelson when it arrived in Cádiz that spring. It was necessary to keep these sailors occupied and disciplined, and operations such as the bombing of Cádiz served this purpose.

Jervis also attempted to sow panic in the civilian population through the destruction of property and the killing of some of the city's inhabitants. This strategy was intended to influence public opinion to pressure Mazarredo into leaving the bay and engaging in battle.

From the invention of the bombship in the 1680s, the threat of or the actual shelling of towns from the sea had been common practice in the eighteenth century, but this was the first time in living memory that the British had shelled a city in metropolitan Spain, attacking the property and the lives of civilians, and it was strongly denounced in Spain. It is symptomatic that there is an ominous silence in the documentation of the two antagonists at this juncture: there was no correspondence at all between Jervis and Mazarredo during most of the month of July. A letter written by Nelson to his commander in the midst of the operation provides an accurate reflection of the hostile sentiment that motivated the British, who were frustrated at not being able to force the enemy fleet into a sortie:

‘News from Cádiz, by a Market-boat, that our Ships did much damage; the Town was on fire in three places; a shell that fell in a Convent destroyed several priests (that no harm, they will never be missed); that plunder and robbery was going on – a glorious scene of confusion ...’<sup>228</sup>

Although this news was false, it confirms that Nelson was a staunch advocate for war of annihilation.

Everything said up to now contrasts with the view of war taken by Mazarredo. Nelson was powerfully influenced by his Christian faith, but also by his unmovable determination to win against those whom he saw as heretics and atheist regicides. Mazarredo, on the other hand, was guided by his Christian spirit in a different way. He sought to wear down his powerful and arrogant enemy through whatever damage could be done to his commerce and his navy. It was necessary to combine bravery and mercy. The object of war was not to kill one’s opponents but to defeat them in order to achieve peace. Unnecessary death was to be avoided and the defeated were to be treated with generosity.<sup>229</sup>

### Humanitarianism

War, whether it was of attrition or annihilation, should have its countervailing forces. The strong emotions that it aroused demanded the existence of a plan to harmonise them, according to Clausewitz. With respect to the blockade of Cádiz, this was manifest in two different aspects: the humanitarian treatment of the adversary and the observance of protocol.

The exchange of prisoners was dictated by practical considerations. The care for and surveillance of numerous enemies on board a ship already brimming with people was a difficult task. The return of prisoners also constituted an act of reciprocal generosity towards individuals who had suffered hardship and thus tempered the horrors of war.<sup>230</sup>

This situation is reflected in Jervis and Mazarredo's correspondence, which served to clarify misunderstandings and helped to facilitate coastal fishing, coastal trade and neutral commerce:

'Your Excellency will understand perfectly that on both points I adhere closely to the tacit convention of nations, that proper mutual consideration should not be disregarded by reason of being at war.'<sup>231</sup>

Once the close blockade of Cádiz was established in April 1797, Jervis moved quickly to permit neutral commerce, at Mazarredo's request.<sup>232</sup> The same was true of coastal fishing. Jervis also gave permission for fishermen to perform their labours in the bay and on the Cádiz coast. He reprimanded his captains when they were guilty of excesses towards the fishermen and punished a privateer from Gibraltar for his poor treatment of a fisherman. He also dictated terms for tuna fishing in Conil and sardine fishing in Ayamonte. Jarvis's tone in these letters is highly significant:

'I am engaged in hostilities, by the orders of my Sovereign, whose highest displeasure I should most certainly incur if I did not exercise every degree of humanity towards them in acrid military operations ... nothing will give me greater satisfaction than to soften the scourge of war, between the people of two nations who are formed to live in the friendship and esteem of each other, by every means in my power.'<sup>233</sup>

In contrast, Mazarredo was very cautious in this matter and prohibited deep-sea fishing, since some fishermen made deals with the enemy. For example, he arrested the owners of fishing boats who arranged to sell produce to Jervis's fleet.<sup>234</sup> The same happened with coastal trading in basic necessities. For example, Jervis released two Moroccan ships that were carrying meat and grain to Cádiz and the Spanish fleet.<sup>235</sup>

However, war should not only be licit but also appear to be so. In accordance with the tacit laws of belligerent nations, Mazarredo conformed to the principle of not using merchant ships to relay messages between belligerent parties. From the beginning of the blockade, he refused any communications from the British relayed through fishermen or neutral vessels, even if related to matters of the utmost importance. To exchange letters, he alerted Jervis to have a ship of truce drop anchor in the entry channel, two miles beyond the shoals at the mouth to the Bay of Cádiz. There it would wait for a Spanish messenger to collect the document on board.<sup>236</sup>

Despite this fact, a fishing boat availed itself of this polite treatment at the hands of the British fleet to venture beyond the fishing grounds near the coast.

Nelson then accused the fisherman of spying and threatened to sink any and all ships that surpassed the agreed-upon limits.<sup>237</sup>

Mazarredo intervened in this matter, alleging that it was a Portuguese fisherman, who was fishing without his authorisation. As proof of good faith, he pointed out that the prohibition against using private citizens to carry out naval intelligence missions had allowed a brigantine from America to be captured by the blockading fleet.<sup>238</sup>

## Protocol

In this theatre of war, the two naval leaders staged a performance – concerning honour and public image – of the gallant conduct that two civilised enemies should show one another.

The blockade of Cádiz and the bombing of the city did not prevent Jervis from commending Mazarredo's good judgement and shrewdness, or the latter from extolling the humanity of the former, in highly obsequious language.<sup>239</sup> The two exchanged gifts throughout the campaign. On one occasion, Jervis sent Mazarredo some boxes with illustrations of plants and birds from America addressed to Charles IV that had been found on the frigate *Ninfa*, which had been captured by the British.<sup>240</sup> At another point, the British admiral presented him with a box of cigars, with his emblem and card.<sup>241</sup> Mazarredo sent Jervis a barrel of wine. Jervis in turn sent Mazarredo 36 bottles of beer and a barrel of salted meat, along with a recipe for curing it.

For the two antagonists, this show of courtesy is compatible with the war that they were waging. Mazarredo expressed it thus, when presenting Jervis with a hunting gun for his wife:

‘Since the Countess of St Vincent takes so much pleasure in her duties in the countryside, and in accompanying her, her husband the Admiral might find it expedient to divert himself with hunting quail, Don Joseph de Mazarredo ventures to present Your Excellency with a Spanish piece for such an occasion and to beg him to deign to accept it as a reminder of his friendship, wholly reconcilable with their respective obligations in any circumstances.’<sup>242</sup>

The courtesies between the two foes began at the outset of the blockade. For example, Nelson sent word to Mazarredo that on 4 June, 1797, the fleet would perform a salute in honour of the birthday of the King of Great Britain, at 8 pm, and adds:

‘...and has desired me to mention it to your Excellency, that the Ladies at Cádiz may not be alarmed at the firing.’

In response to which, after praising the urbanity expressed in Nelson's letter, Mazarredo replied in the same cordial tone:

'The Ladies of Cádiz, accustomed to the noisy rounds of salutes of the vessels of war, will sit and will hear what Sir John Jervis means to regale them with, for the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> current, in honour of his Britannic Majesty's birthday; and the general wish of the Spanish nation cannot but interest itself in so august a motive.'<sup>243</sup>

Today it seems strange to us that two weeks before the shelling of Cádiz by Jervis's fleet, the latter would have asked for permission for a British officer and his wife to visit Cádiz, as if it were a stop on the Grand Tour. The Spanish commander refused, with utmost diplomacy, citing reasons that tell us much about the nature of conventional war:

'... making me equally regretful that, due to the appearance of the particular situation, it is not at my discretion that Madame Manfield and this gentleman be satisfied in their curiosity to see Cádiz; since among the public, unacquainted with how the movements of individuals might be combined with the duties of arms, it would cause a sensation, characteristic of this lack of acquaintance, for a lady to appear, especially one of her distinction, and in particular since the General would not be deprived of honouring her as would befit the occasion.'<sup>244</sup>

In August 1797, Mazarredo's diplomacy was again on display, when he enquired after the health of Rear Admiral Nelson and Captain Fremantle, both wounded in the recent attack on Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Jervis in turn extolled the sentiments of honour and humanity in his opponent.<sup>245</sup>

## Epilogue

In conclusion, Jervis excelled as a fleet commander and Mazarredo as a naval leader in the period of transition to total war. Jervis perfected the strategy of the close blockade, utilised by Great Britain during that period to such disastrous effect for her adversaries. He was also one of the promoters of the professionalisation of the Royal Navy. For his part, Mazarredo helped to save the Bourbon navy from further disasters. In spite of innumerable difficulties, the Spanish navy was able to fulfil its function as deterrent in contemporary international relations. What is more, Mazarredo inspired an entire naval ethos among his subordinates, a legacy that would remain part of the institution for many years to come.

Notwithstanding this, there remains much to be explored around the values of a leader. The war of annihilation, developed by the British during the Cádiz

blockade, reached its fullest expression in the shelling of the city in July 1797. Fortunately, it did not extend to its logical conclusion, the destruction of the city, but it represented a ratcheting up of hostile sentiment – a preliminary to total war during the Napoleonic period. Spain would have first-hand experience of this new state of affairs before long, during the Peninsular War.

Some historians argue that war of annihilation was an inevitable development during the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, since the survival of nations such as Great Britain depended on this new view of warfare and its strategy. The ruthless bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, which was, curiously, criticised by Jervis, constitutes ample proof of this.<sup>246</sup>

From this perspective, attritional warfare was becoming a thing of the past. Mazarredo and those who thought like him did not anticipate this new international state of affairs. The violence wrought by incipient nationalism and total war, beginning with the French Revolution, demanded a new approach to waging war in which the end justified the means. Once again, as had been the case in the vicious religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inflicting terrible collateral damage on the civilian population was, once more, part of the game.