



The American War is a really exceptional event in French history. Only during that five years war did the Navy matter more than the Army : naval expenses, naval involvement, naval fighting were far more reaching than all was spent for and done

by the Army, except, of course, the 5000 troops of Rochambeau. To ally himself with the American colonists was an exceptional decision too taken by the king Louis XVI and his powerful foreign minister, the comte de Vergennes. The former enemies turned into brothers in arms and, after a difficult but unavoidable mutual discovery, won together against Britain.

It was not the first time that France had to wage war elsewhere in the world. It had already been done it in the age of Louis XIV against Spain, Britain and the United Provinces. From Europe, the fight then extended as far as to North America, the Caribbean, Africa and even to the Indian Ocean. But, during the American War, for the first time fighting didn't take place essentially in Europe, except for Gibraltar and Minorca. The war was waged at sea and outside Europe. This was largely because of the ubiquitous French Navy.

Unlike in the Seven Years' War (French and Indian for you), the French Navy was from then on able to intervene everywhere in the world and for the whole duration of the conflict. This was a sharp difference with the former war when French Seapower was quite annihilated following 1759, the Year of defeats and bankruptcy (for us !) with naval disasters and the loss of Quebec. During the American War, the French Navy was perfectly able to send squadrons to America and India and never lacked adequate funding.

It's time now to assess the importance of French Naval Involvement, before explaining how the French Navy maintained its communication lines and finally why its indirect strategy against Britain succeeded.

The importance of French Naval Involvement

Where ?

A map is useful to assess the global dimension of naval warfare during the American War.

Les théâtres d'opérations de la Marine française pendant la guerre d'indépendance américaine

Source : Service historique de la Défense



Victoires françaises

Victoires anglaises

Victoires indécises

1 Quessant (27 juil. 1778)

2 Manche (1779)

3 D'Estaing à Rhode Island (8 août 1778)

4 Prise des Antilles

5 Savannah (9 octobre 1779)

6 La Motte-Picquet au Fort Royal (1779)

7 Gibraltar (1780)

8 Gibraltar (13 septembre 1782)

9 La Chesapeake (5 septembre 1781)

10 Les Saintes (12 avril 1782)

11 Baie d'Hudson (1782)

12 Côte d'Afrique (Sénégal) (1779)

13 Suffren à La Praya (16 avril 1781)

14 Le Cap (1781)

15 Suffren dans l'océan Indien (1782-1783)

(Sadras, Negapatam, Goudelour...)

16 Suffren à Ceylan (1782-1783) (Provedien,

Trinquemalé...)

Colloque « L'indépendance américaine - Le rôle de la France »
Ecole militaire, Paris, 18 et 19 mai 2006
Infographie SHD

In the European waters are located the three main French naval bases Brest, Rochefort and Toulon (the third being in the Mediterranean, far away from Britain). The Western Approaches from France and Britain were particularly important for the war could be lost here : for France 1778 if the fleet of Brest would be defeated by the Royal Navy and if sailing to America became impossible ; for Britain, if the French and their Spanish allies could sail into the English Channel and land on the British shore, which was a real threat 1779. Another disputed area in European waters was the surroundings of the famous British naval base of Gibraltar whose recapture was one of the Spanish main objectives and which attracted a large part (perhaps too large part) of French naval means.

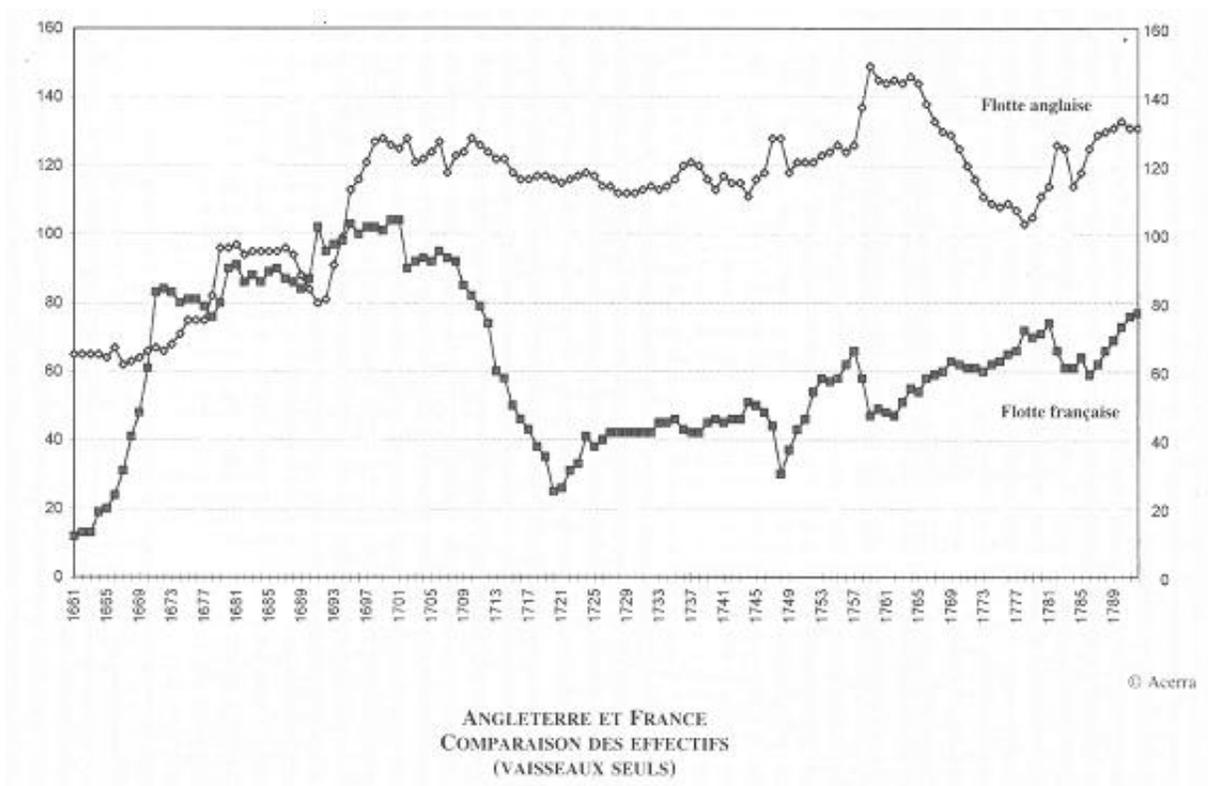
To understand the other areas of French naval involvement, it's necessary to remember the great sea routes in the age of sail and particularly across the Atlantic to America or to the Indian ocean. West Africa was concerned by both and it was too an important area for the slave trade. Then trade winds led directly to the Caribbean sea, first to the French and British West Indies, and then to the Spanish islands. For all the belligerent colonial powers conquering the enemy's sugar islands was seen as the best way to disrupt his war effort by destroying his trade and to compel him to ask for peace. It seemed that victory was here within range. But, unlike their Spanish Allies in Havana, the French lacked a real naval basis. Nevertheless, the West Indies were the rear base for most of the operations in North America.

The third area of French naval deployment was North America, immediately at the beginning of the war as soon as the fleet of the comte d'Estaing arrived. But French squadrons had no real naval basis, except Newport. They had to learn cooperation with their new allies and needed time for it, as was demonstrated by the unsuccessful attempt against Savannah 1779. But it was in the American area that the war was really won when it was possible, in September 1781, to coordinate the Newport squadron led by Barras and the fleet of de Grasse sailing from the West Indies. The French never intended to recapture Canada but they launched in 1782 a very successful attack against the Hudson Bay to destroy British fur trade.

However fighting British colonial trade was the main reason to intervene in the Indian Ocean. A squadron led by the famous Suffren was able to relieve the Dutch colonies (the Cape and Ceylon) from British pressure and then to fight intensively along the Indian shores. It was all the more worthy of praise that Suffren didn't have a real naval basis in that area to repair his ships.

How many ?

Let's examine now a very instructive graph showing the French and British eighteenth century's naval strength. Each curve represents how the number of vessels evolved⁽¹⁾.



First, it's necessary to note the permanent numeric superiority of the Royal Navy even during the American War when the difference was reduced. The Royal Navy always enjoyed a safety margin of 30 or 40 vessels on paper. It explains why the French Foreign minister Vergennes needed the Spanish Alliance to counterbalance British seapower. With more than 50 Spanish vessels added to the French Navy, the Bourbon allies could enjoy numerical superiority, on paper at least because true naval efficiency was something more complicated to obtain.

Secondly, it's easy to see the strength of French naval recovery since 1760. It was the result of the impetus given to the Navy by the duc de Choiseul and his relative the duc de Praslin, both Navy Ministers under Louis XV. Their effort was largely carried on during Louis XVI's reign thanks to Sartine and later to the marquis de Castries. Under these conditions, the number of French vessels culminated 1783, despite the losses suffered previous year because of the defeat of the Saints. Never before in French naval wars had their number be higher at the end of the conflict than at the beginning : 110 to 103. It explains why Louis XVI's Navy is still so highly praised in France today.

Thirdly, we should not forget that we are considering existing vessels, but the number of those effectively operational, in other words 'in commission', was always smaller. When war broke out in 1778, the French had prepared assiduously, while the British Admiralty had not been able to get its fleet on a war footing, partly for financial reasons but also for fear of giving the French a pretext on which to intervene in America⁽²⁾. If British numerical superiority was obvious, the real figures for warships in commission and their geographic dispersion tangibly reduced their advantage at the beginning of the conflict : 66 compared to 52⁽³⁾. This explains why France had chosen such a moment to intervene but it explains, too, why Spanish help was for Versailles such unavoidable. In the summer of 1779 France and Spain could muster on paper more warships than the Royal Navy: 123 compared to 117 and "in commission" 121 to 90.

How much ?

War	Naval expenditure before the war	Years	Naval war expenditure	Years	Total amount	Yearly average expenditure
Seven Years' War	80	1750-1754	295	1756-1763	375	53,5
American War	106	1774-1777	690	1778-1783	796	159

Year	Navy	Army	Total
1778	85	92	177
1779	131	105	236
1780	144	108	252
1781	147	111	258
1782	183	114	298
Total	690	530	1220

The American war was the most costly of the whole Ancient Regime. In France as in Britain, war expenditure became widely out of control, attaining unbelievable heights : 183 millions livres tournois only for the Navy 1782. Immediately before the war, the state's income amounted to 370 millions and its expenditure to 410. Soon afterwards, the debt amounted to 3 billions 315 millions, so she had to pay 165 millions each year, more than four times the total of naval expenditures.

France spent for the American war more than 1 billion livres tournois, perhaps 1 billion 730 millions livres tournois. She had never before spent so much money for waging war and supporting an ally. Such huge spending was for your freedom. According to Robert Harris Britain spent the equivalent of 2 billions 270 millions livres tournois, more than France and she had to pay for interest 313 millions (the whole debt amounted to 5 billions 532 millions). In Britain as in France, the American war was more expensive than the Seven Years War and that time was lost.

We also have to take into account two characteristic features of this sort of conflict :

- First, unlike the previous war, French finances were able to hold out during the whole period of hostilities. The French war effort never failed. We don't have to mistake it for the increasing difficulties met by the French treasury after the peace of 1783. The American war was mainly financed by borrowing and secondly by taxes. France had won the war but financially lost the post war years, unlike Britain. The French Revolution was not inevitable anymore.
- The second feature was the exceptional predominance of naval expenditures among war spending. It can be explained because, unlike the Seven Years War, Europe remained peaceful. Britain had no continental ally. For the first time could France devote the greatest part of its military spending to its Navy and not to its Army, launching many more vessels. But we have to consider too that shipbuilding, fitting out and keeping of squadrons were more and more expensive. The yearly average expenditure for the Navy amounted to 159 millions livres tournois, three times the previous average for wars.

The French monarchy expected to take its revenge on Britain and, unlike the previous war, public opinion was more conscious of the international issues. The Insurgents were very well considered and many people followed with greater interest the revival of French sea power.

For the French Navy, the prime requirement was to maintain sea routes open. On the whole it succeeded in it. Why ?

How the French Navy maintained its communication lines ?

The Royal Navy caught unaware

Thanks to the American revolution, the Royal Navy had to cope with a whole series of problems⁽⁴⁾. It had to keep under close watch the American shoreline and establish a difficult blockade very far away from Britain, to ship to the few loyal naval bases in America troops, weaponry and resupplying, to escort these convoys and increasingly to fight American privateers even in European waters. However the Board of Admiralty had although to maintain in Britain a naval force ready to prevent a possible French attack. But too many missions scattered the British sea power which was unable to meet always more far reaching military commitment in North America and to prepare an unwelcome war with France or perhaps Spain too. Let's remind that revolution started in America because Britain tried to oblige its colonies to pay what she considered to be their part of the previous war's financial burden. British heavy indebtedness after the peace of Paris (1763) explained the financial requirements of king George the third's ministers and the outbreak of American discontent. But it's the reason too why the Royal Navy was kept as late as possible on a peace footing even if there was a fateful contradiction between the growing missions it had to accomplish and the means given to it. The consequences were very serious and really beneficial for the French Navy.

The Royal Navy was not allowed to get on a war footing before the spring of 1778, while the French were actively preparing themselves, opening their ports (in France and the West Indies) to American privateers and smugglers⁽⁵⁾. Such a British self-restraint was due to the desire to avoid as far as possible every casus belli with Versailles which was able to choose the best time to go to war. It was then completely unthinkable for the British government to strike first without declaration of war as the Admiralty had done 1755. But it was exactly what the French feared, especially in the West Indies

Unlike what Britain had succeeded in 1759, it was from then on impossible for the Royal Navy to blockade the French naval bases, particularly Brest the nearest to the British Isles. Even after the formal declaration of war by France, the Admiralty didn't have at its disposal enough ships for forbidding French squadrons and convoys to sail everywhere in the world. Unlike the previous wars, the powerful Western Squadron at the entrance of the English Channel was not established again. Never was the Royal Navy able during that five

years conflict to prevent its main enemy the access to oceans. The consequences were fateful to British sea power. The Royal Navy was not the only one to sail across oceans and to ship troops and merchandise.

Escorting convoys

Each belligerent remained capable to organize convoys from Europe to its own colonies and allies. It was one of the main features of that war. Since 1777 British warships and privateers visited the French merchantmen suspected (not always groundless) for carrying illicit merchandise for the Insurgents) and many incidents aroused for that reason. Once war was declared, it was necessary to protect French merchant shipping along the European shoreline as well to the West Indies and the Indian Ocean against British privateers and squadrons.

First frigates were built for patrols along the French coasts but it appeared quickly not to be enough and the Navy needed them for other missions.

At the end of 1778, the French Navy Minister Sartine ordered that from then on sailing in convoys became compulsory. Each of them needed warships as escorts. Escorting merchantmen became one of the main Navy's missions. It's not the best known side of that war because historians (like Eighteenth century's naval officers before) rather studied famous and spectacular battles than the less rewarding and inglorious task of escorting convoys.

From 1779 on, the French system of convoys was really running well. Ever growing numbers of merchantmen used it amounting sometimes to hundred or more. For the outward journey across the Atlantic, meeting took place near the Aix island at the mouth of the river Charentes in the vicinity of naval base of Rochefort. Some convoys sailed directly for Saint Domingue (the republic of Haïti today) while others called at the Martinique island. On the way back, meeting was ordered at Saint Domingue.

The system didn't work regularly but it worked, and was used too for shipping troops and supplies to the West Indies and the United States. Of course, a lot of convoys were attacked and some of their merchantmen taken. But the same can be said of British shipping at that time. For example, the French admiral La Motte Piquet succeed in capturing the convoy with Rodney's booty made in the Dutch island of Saint Eustachius. Against British privateers threatening sea routes, the French Navy used all the light units it could find : frigates or cutters.

It can be therefore said that the French Navy won that battle of the Atlantic, helping too some Spaniard convoys to cross the Atlantic intact. The consequences of that underestimated efficiency were really far reaching. The first to be noted is the survival of French maritime trade.

Survival of maritime trade

Everyone who studies the history of the main French Eighteenth century trade ports is used to note how obviously each war with Britain diminished their traffic. It's easy to recognize the threat of the Royal Navy and British privateers. Traffic curves sank for many years while shipping was quite impossible and bankruptcies were increasing. It was particularly obvious during the Seven Years War when the Royal Navy eliminated French warships and merchantmen from the seas. One can notice it in Le Havre as well in Bordeaux.

The American War shows us something different. Of course French trade suffered from war's dangers but didn't disappear at all. And it can be attributed to the efficiency of French naval counter-measures.

On the whole, losses were rather low, especially once the convoys system worked. The worst period was the beginning of the conflict. Even in Nantes which endured greater losses than during the previous war, the shipping activity was holding steady. From 1780, when it became obvious that war would last, losses in colonial trade were below 10 % (ten per cent). As a consequence ships insurance premium could be substantially reduced.

It was still possible for French merchants, in France as well in the West Indies, to make profits. So they could in turn subscribe the royal war loans necessary to sustain French war effort. And powerful French squadrons crossing the Atlantic were the best safeguard for re-exporting colonial duties to other parts of Europe, especially the Northern countries and the Baltic sea where governments were more and more sensitive and hostile to British control of neutral shipping.

Royal chartering proved to be very incentive to stimulate private shipping. The king needed to chart merchantmen to ship troops for the West Indies and supplies for them or for the fleets which sailed to the Carribean and North America. It was all the more necessary that France lacked a real naval basis there to repair its warships and it was unavoidable to ship to the West Indies the foodstuffs they were unable to product.

Being powerful and active in the Carribean, the French Navy made it possible to maintain a real trade between the West Indies, especially Saint Domingue, and the east American Insurgents ports. It's not the best known side of that conflict but without trading (legal or not) with the French colonists at Saint Domingue, the Insurgents economy would certainly have collapsed, thus enabling king George III to establish his authority again over his rebellious colonies by force of arms.

The battle for convoys was as decisive as the more famous and quick French naval victory at the Chesapeake bay.

The triumph of indirect strategy

For the whole second part of the Eighteenth century, during each war against Britain, the French government hesitated between two strategies : the direct one, striking Britain directly by landing somewhere in the British isles, and the indirect one, waging war at sea and overseas against British trade and colonial territories. The same dilemma was intensely felt again in 1779 and during the following years.

France alone : the choice of indirect strategy

Who decided what would be French strategy ? The king himself with a few advisers, the Navy minister, Sartine, and, above all, the Foreign minister Vergennes. France didn't have anything like the British Board of Admiralty or a modern general staff.

Two strategies were conceivable :

- Either attack Britain as soon as possible, without waiting Spain, so that France could benefit from surprise and British lack of naval preparation to get a quick and crushing victory before British naval increase of power.
- Or wait for Spanish alliance to attack the enemy, without surprise but with a real and lasting margin of superiority.

In the first case, it is essential to win within a year ; in the second, timing is not so inconvenient. But in both cases, it is highly desirable that war doesn't last too long.

Four strategic plans were presented and discussed at Versailles : landing in Britain as was proposed by the comte de Broglie or the comte de Fleurieu (in a French and Spanish version), support to the Insurgents thanks to convoys across the Atlantic (it was La Fayette's proposal), privateering against British trade or waging war into India (as was proposed by Ternay and the famous seaman Lapérouse). Each of them assigned a leading part to the Navy but nobody could foresee how she could behave at war after twenty years of peace and partial rebuilding.

At that time, the Spanish were reluctant to engage and preferred to wait and see what the French Navy was likely to do (or could she could perform at war). Vergennes chose to negotiate with Spain while supporting the Insurgents. It was clear for him that France could not win alone. He was compelled to wait the Spanish diplomatic and military involvement and the risk inherent to his choice was to spell precious time while the Royal Navy grew further.

He decided to divide French war effort and secret instructions were directly given to admirals to this purpose.

On April 13th 1778 (then before the declaration of war) the comte d'Estaing sailed from Toulon with 12 men of war to North America. He had to support the Insurgents and win in America.

On July 18th the comte d'Orvilliers sailed from Brest with a more significant fleet of 32 vessels. He had to keep in check the British Channel fleet but no landing was prepared in case of victory.

The battle of Ushant (27th July), in the Western Approaches of France and Britain, was the first wide encounter of both navies. Tactically, the fighting was quite indecisive, but d'Orvilliers, got an invaluable strategic outcome : unlike the crushing defeats of 1759, it had held fast against the Royal Navy, restoring French naval pride and enabling d'Estaing to sail unimpeded to North America. D'Orvilliers's advantage remained unexploited and the rich British convoys sailing from Jamaica and Mediterranean went back home without difficulty.

But, unfortunately, a quick victory in America was out of reach too. Disagreement in the French squadron between d'Estaing and his captains, too heterogeneous warships and lack of common understanding and cooperation without the American Allies prevented the admiral from taking the enemy by surprise and fulfill the king's hopes of a quick victory.

The price of Spanish alliance : to strike Carthage in Carthage itself

The first year of war was altogether glorious and quite disappointing. Nevertheless, d'Estaing's results were far from being completely negative, especially in 1779. In the West Indies, he defeated the British at Granada and seized a lot of islands as guarantees for the future peace settlement. Along the North American shoreline, he had obliged the British to evacuate Philadelphia and later Newport when he vainly attacked Savannah on his own initiative.

It seems that Versailles had not really hoped a decisive victory only with the French Navy but waited the conclusion of the Spanish Alliance. But the price was high for France who had to accept all the Spanish war aims : Gibraltar, Minorca, Florida and above all a direct attack against Britain. Vergennes who hoped a quick common victory imposed that different strategy to his fellow minister Sartine. Spain, fearful of British attacks of his own overseas territories, wanted to strike Carthage in Carthage itself.

The main objective, was a French landing on the isle of Wight near Portsmouth, the main British naval base which ought to be blockaded and bombarded. It was foreseen to envoy a combined French and Spanish fleet of 30 vessels into the Channel. The British Admiralty was completely surprised by that shift of strategy and the Royal Navy was here in obvious inferiority, for the first time since the age of Louis XIV. Fears of a French landing aroused in summer and it was perhaps the most dangerous landing's attempt in Britain ever made by Frenchmen so far. But that great design failed : Spaniards were late and lacked naval experience, common sailing to the Channel was all too complicated, diplomats had changed the objectives (now landing in Cornwall near Plymouth) without asking sailors. Precious time was lost and worst of all disease laid waste French crews, leaving the Brest fleet unable to take offensive again. Britain had feared for a few months but succeed in resupplying Gibraltar, despite the inefficacious Spanish blockade.

It became necessary for Vergennes and Sartine to prevent any further Spanish defeat and keep alive the alliance. A French squadron was sent to Cadix. Above all, Versailles revived the indirect strategy in 1780. The French Navy was highly necessary to escort a huge Spanish convoy to Puerto Rico. Admiral Guichen succeeded in it at spring and Cuba, the main Spanish stronghold in the Caribbean, was not left unprotected. Another convoy with far reaching consequences left Brest in May 1780 : the chevalier de Ternay escorted to Newport 5000 French troops under an experienced officer, the comte de Rochambeau. It was called L'expédition particulière to distract the English attention from it. May 2th was one of the most glorious days of the whole French naval history : two convoys sailed together, Ternay to North America and Suffren to the East Indies. From then on, hopes of victory were pinned on indirect strategy.

Back to indirect strategy

1780 was a rather difficult year for France. No victory was in sight and some people sought to find a compromise with Britain. In October, financial difficulties have provoked the fall of Sartine, fiercely attacked by Necker, the Finance minister and replaced by the marquis de Castries, a protégé of the queen Marie Antoinette. Vergennes was threatened too but the king chose to keep him in charge and to wage war further.

The new Navy minister was an energetic officer resolute to get victory outside Europe and he was perfectly aware that it was possible only if local commanders were allowed to act on their own, without asking Versailles for orders. They were encouraged to be enterprising. That form of decentralized command was the first condition for victory. French and British had equal numbers of vessels outside Europe, in the West Indies and North America as well as in the Indian Ocean. The French ambassador in Madrid, Montmorin, had first suggested that became the concentration of naval and land forces that led to the victories of the Chesapeake and Yorktown. Such a success was due to the convergent efforts of the three main allies : France and United States of course but Spain too. French and Spanish had seized together Pensacola in Florida and were now able to cooperate efficiently. Nobody had summed it up more adequately than my colleague Jonathan Dull :

“For the great victory honor must be paid to many men, including :

- *Montmorin, who first urged that the Allied effort be shifted to North America.*
- *Vergennes, who, once convinced of this, pressed for decisive efforts in America.*
- *Castries, who drafted de Grasse's orders and left him freedom to operate.*
- *Gálvez, who released the ships and troops which de Grasse took north.*
- *Saavedra, who according to de Grasse could not have contributed more amenity, good will and disposition for conciliation in the drafting of the plan of operations.*
- *Rochambeau, who served Washington superbly and who pressed for the attack on Cornwallis.*
- *La Luzerne, who shared in Rochambeau's appeal that de Grasse come to the Chesapeake.*
- *Barras, who had the courage to disobey orders in order to remain at Newport and who sacrificed his*

desire for independent command to place his ships at de Grasse's command.

- *Washington, who sacrificed his own desire to attack New York, who undertook an extremely dangerous march on de Grasse's promise to come to the Chesapeake, and finally who commanded the siege of Yorktown.*
- *De Grasse, an indifferent tactician but a commander whose strategic vision made possible the most important naval victory of the 18th century”.*

Jonathan Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence. A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774-1787*, Princeton University Press, 1975, 247-248.

It's not my purpose today to describe the whole military operations that ended in October 1781 by our common victory and persuaded His Majesty's government that it was no more possible to subdue the Insurgents. Finally I'd like to emphasize which part of the credit of victory is due to the French Navy.

Adequately supplied by Spanish governors, de Grasse's vessels had shipped from the West Indies troops to Yorktown while Barras's squadron had sailed later from Newport with on board ordnance for the siege. Speed and efficient concentration of forces were the main features of such an ply and fro of squadrons between New York and Newport in the north and the West Indies in the south.

But this happy encounter was only possible because de Grasse (24 vessels) succeeded in keeping a few days before the British squadrons of Hood and Graves (21 men of war) outside the capes of Virginia, September 4th. Battle in line tactics were more convenient in defense and permitted the French success.

On earth too, the crews and guns of de Grasse's vessels have taken part to siege of Yorktown and contributed to the British defeat.

It's time now to conclude.

De Grasse's victory before the capes of Virginia is the most spectacular and famous event of the naval war in America. But what happened there would have been impossible without the first success of d'Orvilliers at Ushant in July 1778, the campaigns of d'Estaing, Guichen and others in the Carribbean sea and without the long and unrewarding escorts of convoys from France to the West Indies and North America. Truly, the French Navy acted everywhere in the world, even in the remote East Indies, scattering British naval forces.

But it should be noticed that Louis XVI's Navy, too, had reached the limits of its own capacity. The unforeseen but not so catastrophic defeat of the Saints in 1782 (five vessels lost and de Grasse taken) reminds us of the fact that the French fleet in the West Indies since two years out of France was worn out, lacking of repair and homogeneity (some of its ships still not copper bottomed, unlike their adversaries), heavily dependent on insufficient supplies and naval stores shipped from France. A worldwide naval deployment remained an

exhausting feat of strength.

The American victory, as well as Suffren's campaign to the East Indies, explain that this war's memory is still alive by us, of course thanks to the French society of Cincinnati and to the French Navy. Powerful frigates still have the famous names of de Grasse or Suffren. But we have to go back to Rochefort, the former naval base which was very active in the age of the American war, to discover another evidence of that naval memory : the newly rebuilt frigate Hermione. She is the exact replica of the actual Eighteenth frigate which carried La Fayette to America. She is now afloat in her dock awaiting for completion. And the shipbuilders' purpose is to have her to sail again to North America.

(1) M. Acerra et A. Zysberg, *L'essor des marines de guerre européennes 1680-1790*, Paris, SEDES, 1997, p. 102.

(2) See O. Chaline, 'Les causes de l'échec britannique', *Rochambeau, Bulletin de la Société archéologique du Vendômois*, 2008, 52-58.

(3) Concerning this period, see Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence. A Study of Arms and Diplomacy 1774-1787* (Princeton NJ, 1975); Patrick Villiers, *Marine Royale, corsaires et trafic dans l'Atlantique de Louis XIV à Louis XVI*, Société Dunkerquoise d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1991, 2 vols., especially vol 2; Etienne Taillemite, *Louis XVI ou le navigateur immobile* (Paris, 2002).

(4) Nicholas A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean. A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*, London, Allen Lane, 2004, p. 326-367 ; David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in American Waters 1775-1783*, London, Scholar Press, 1989 ; David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters during the American Revolutionary War*, Columbia S.C., University of South Carolina Press, 1998.

(5) Daniel A. Baugh, « Why Did Britain lose Command of the Sea During the War for America ? », Jeremy Black and Philip Woodfine ed., *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century*, Leicester U. P. , 1988, p. 149-169 ; David Syrett, « Home Waters or America ? The Dilemma of British Naval Strategy in 1778 », *The Mariner's Mirror*, t. LXXVII, 1991, p. 365-377.

Sur le même thème :

- [Scipion de Castries, Souvenirs maritimes édités par G. de Colbert Turgis](#)
- [Reconstituer la carrière d'un officier de marine du XVIIIe siècle](#)
- [La France et l'indépendance américaine](#)
- [Marine royale XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles uniformes équipement armement, par Jean Boudriot](#)
- [Les hommes qui ont fait la marine française, par Étienne Taillemite](#)
- [La Bretagne, Vaisseau de 100 canons pour le Roi et la République \(1762-1796\) par Claude](#)