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COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

EMPIRE NAVAL POLICY AND CO-OPERATION, 1923.

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1. *Empire Naval Policy and Co-operation, 1923.*

THE British Empire is an Oceanic Commonwealth. The economic and defensive organisation of each nation and community of that Commonwealth has grown up and is based to-day on the presupposition that the use of the sea routes is free to us for mutual co-operation in peaceful development and for mutual assistance against external aggression. The control by a hostile Power of the sea routes which are the arteries of the Empire would involve all of us in economic disaster, and leave us individually isolated in the face of attack or invasion by superior forces.

2. *The Task of the Empire's Naval Forces.*

The task of the Naval Forces of the Empire is to destroy or neutralise Enemy Naval Forces and thereby to keep open the Sea Communications of the Empire. In doing so they can secure:—

1. The protection of our sea-borne trade.*
2. The destruction of the enemy's sea-borne trade.
3. The free movement by sea of our own Military and Air Forces.
4. The prevention of the despatch overseas of enemy Military or Air Forces.

Wherever this task can be most effectively fulfilled, there, and there alone, the Empire as a whole, and each part of it, however remote from the actual scene of operations, will be effectively defended.

The capacity of the Naval Forces of the Empire to carry out their duties in the actual event of war will enable them to fulfil their primary and continuous function, which is to preserve peace and to enable British interests to be safeguarded by peaceful diplomacy.

* The vital importance of oversea trade is shown in the Appendices.

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