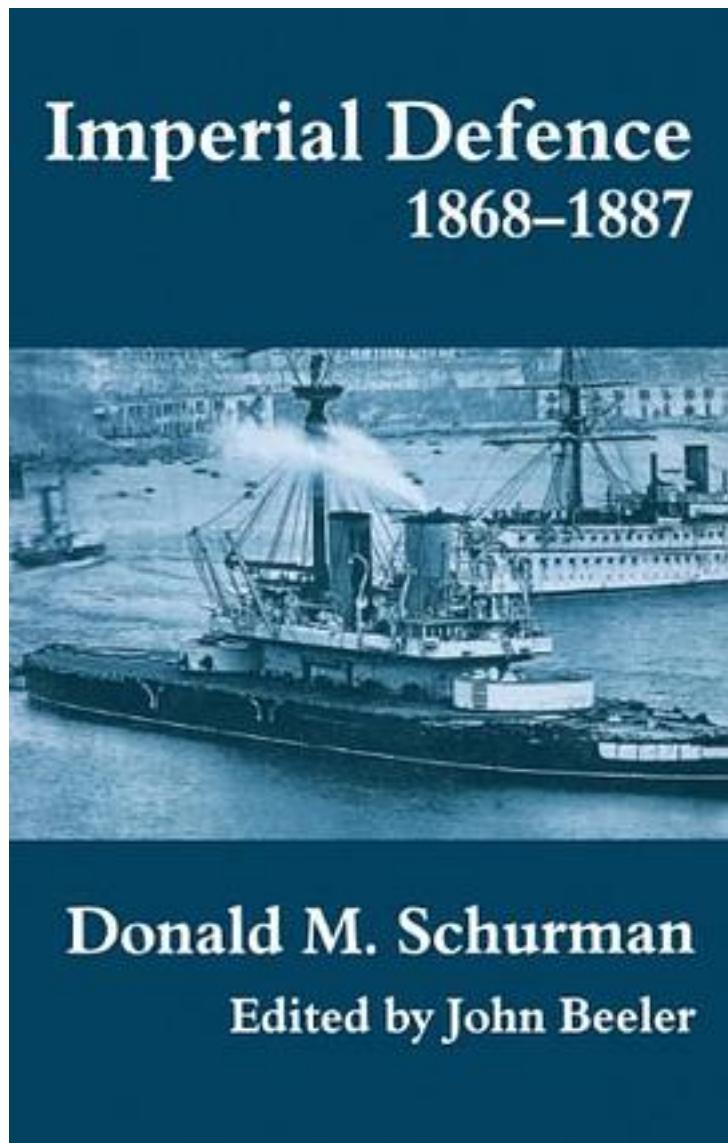


# Imperial Defence, 1868-1887



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The technical transformation of the Royal Navy during the Victorian era posed a succession of bewildering design, tactical and operational problems for administrators from the 1830s onwards. These problems have attracted considerable scrutiny. Far less scrutiny, however, has been paid to an equally fundamental strategic quandary created by the switch from sail to steam. Sailing ships boasted impressive strategic reach, circumscribed only by coasts, shoals and nutritional requirements of crews. As steam supplanted sail, this reach vanished, with vessels whose bunkers required constant refilling from local depots and whose machinery needed frequent maintenance. The task of imperial defence - convoy, patrolling sea lanes between empire and home islands, and defending colonies from seaborne raiders - now required a far more comprehensive logistical infrastructure than had been the case during the 18th and 19th centuries. Donald Schurman's study reveals how British statesmen, military and naval professionals, and administrators evolved a suitable response to this situation based on the creation of a system of defended coaling stations. Schurman also places the creation of this steam-age imperial defence policy in the context of political ideology and partisanship, surveying the divide between Liberals and Conservatives, differences within parties, turf battles among government departments, and divergent views among politicians, soldiers and sailors wrestling with imperial policy.

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