

Abstract

The goal of this study is to describe the way Austria-Hungary followed to create and develop a modern navy in 1897–1914, and to determine, which factors were decisive in creating the final composition of the fleet. As the base for the research, a number of works related to the subject were studied, but far more important was detailed research of primary sources located in Austrian State Archives. The main line of the research as well as of this study follows negotiations on navy's budgets because of the assumption that the very base for building ships and developing the navy are financial resources. Among the more important subtopics are the way the navy had to award producers from both state, Austria and Hungary, with adequate portion of contracts, the Austro–Italian naval arms race, and the structure of the Austro-Hungarian fleet. The research revealed, that the ideal fleet as imagined by the commanders of the navy was a product of theories concerning a decisive battle and naval supremacy then widely widespread, and of the rivalry with Italy. However, the extent to which the ideal could have been followed, depended on the economic situation of both states; in the process of discussing and voting navy's budgets, the decisive word belonged to governments, not to delegations. The way the navy had to divide contracts among domestic producers considerably limited its freedom of decision. The archduke Francis Ferdinand d'Este, although known as a supporter of the navy, played rather contradictory part in the process of its development, at last in the last years before his death. Detailed description of the events forming the shape of Austro-Hungarian navy, as offered by this study, may serve as a base for further research.